Meaning and λόγος

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EPIC EARLY PROFESSIONAL INTERDISCIPLINARY CONFERENCE

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FOREWORD

INTERDISCIPLINARITY AND THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

PETER D'SENA

For over a generation, scholars in the humanities have faced a series of critiques about the relevance, credibility and in some cases the future of their disciplines in higher education. It was very much with this in mind that over a hundred scholars, most of them at the early stage of their professional career, gathered at the University of Liverpool in April 2013 to discuss and debate academic contexts of meaning and logos.

The conference, on which this book is based, also provided a space, which I was happy to support with Higher Education Academy funding[1], for a detailed consideration of questions about what those new to teaching might think about knowing, to begin to inform and enhance their approaches to teaching and learning. Systematic reflection about the provenance and learning styles of our students is one place to start in practitioner research. It is worth being mindful that though far from a golden rule, most students new to undergraduate study have been accustomed, for very good reasons, to taking an intellectual approach to knowledge acquisition and data processing that is quite different to our own. Finding out more about this can not only benefit the student experience, but also address any staff-held misconceptions and even prejudices based on parochial and personal experiences or simple forgetfulness due to the passage of time. The move to higher education places most students in a strange world inhabited by a host of alien academic approaches and artefacts - in terms of types of texts, tasks, language, lectures, content, contact (or the lack of it) and modes of expression, etiquette and expectations. From an anterior environment, with a strong focus on three or more disciplines (their A levels or equivalents)

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where study skills, techniques and sometimes even content learned in one might inform another, a majority certainly in the UK find themselves ported into a single honours landscape. There's an irony here that should not be lost on us: the journey into in-depth study not only tends to curtail students' opportunities for explicit multidisciplinarity especially as they start in higher education[2], but as a consequence also limits the implicit or part-developed interdisciplinarity that tended to accrue from earlier modes of study.

These issues and a host of others presented delegates with opportunities to examine the ways in which their research and scholarly activity could both inform and enhance the student experience. Academic staff are increasingly pressured to demonstrate engagement with the seemingly never ending cascade of institutional agendas about graduate attributes ranging from employability and citizenship, to internationalisation, digital capability and so on; and conference delegates generally agreed that interdisciplinary approaches can play a vital role. There are, however, testing questions, for example how might we as academics think about decoding our disciplines and reconstruct them for students in order to convey the essence of their methodological approaches, key discourses and epistemologies.[3]

The contexts of intellectual and structural disruption and enhancement in higher education led to particularly heated debate in the conference session on teaching and learning. Can, for instance, students learn what it is to be a historian, classicist, philosopher, etc. without the digital humanities? What are the concomitant needs for academic staff in terms of training and, more than that, what are the implications and opportunities for disciplinary and interdisciplinary understanding? If we are teaching in the somewhat disturbing, yet exciting and constantly changing higher education landscape then we should take some comfort from the general proposition that activity, including intellectual activity, tends to be most abundant at the edge of order and chaos. Moreover, teaching across and between disciplines is an obvious, additional escalating factor, since it

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[2] If students come to university straight from school they will be in a good position to draw focused conclusions about the meaning of comparisons between the extent and quality of learning in schools and HE. Then, they may well disagree with the view held by some academics that universities are there to correct the wrongs and fill the deficits in school education.

[3] For a set of extremely useful insights that can help academics, at all stages of their careers, to support the student learning experience see Pace, D. & J. Middendorf. (eds.) 2004. *Decoding the Disciplines: Helping Students Learn Disciplinary Ways of Thinking*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

should also provide a challenge to deep-seated, mostly inherited attitudes and over-reliance on orthodox pedagogies. Yet (returning to our example of the digital) educationalists both inside and outside the humanities are currently lauding the strange attractors of the hybrid pedagogies associated with the use of new technologies that give particular support to interdisciplinarity.[4]

Developing interdisciplinarity in the undergraduate experience is often the product of research-led teaching and the contributions to this book suggest that early career academics will have the foundations to make an enormous contribution if this continues to inform pedagogic principles. However, the common unit of organisation in higher education institutions – structuring staff and students within disciplinary courses, corridors and buildings – can tend to militate against the crossing of intellectual boundaries. So how might we, pragmatically, work from both within and from without? Interdisciplinary meaning, logos, practice and practise in the educational sense can, I would suggest, be enhanced without sacrificing scholarly integrity by strategic deployment of the following eight approaches in the student experience:

- *Developing authenticity*. By bridging divides between the academic and public. In history and history-related disciplines museums and archives have always been an obvious starting point, but the humanities reveal themselves in other less obvious places too.[5]
- *Developing interactivity*. Between tutors and students; and involving members of communities and professions.
- *Valuing the student (at) work*. By setting and valuing tasks which reveal student engagement **in the processes** of learning, not just the end product. For example, taking theory into practice in the creation of an exhibition or other artefact, which will be placed in the public sphere.

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[4] For more about hybrid pedagogies and *Hybrid Pedagogy*, a digital journal of learning, teaching and technology, go to Jesse Stommel's homepage: www.jessestommel.com/ The relationship between the digital and interdisciplinarity clearly warrants a further conference and book.

[5] On the many manifestations of history in the public sphere see Kean, H. & P. Martin. (eds.) 2013. *The Public History Reader*. London: Routledge Readers in History.

- *Empowering staff and students to find the best way to learn*. By taking seriously agendas about students as co-producers of knowledge and systems of dissemination.[6]
- *Scaffolding the development of criticality - as always*. By decoding our disciplinary processes (processes which we might, as experienced researchers take for granted), in order to create building blocks to encourage systematic progression. In many humanities subjects one starting point is to investigate the ways in which we educate, over time, our students to use primary and secondary data to support critical engagement and debate and discourse analysis.
- *Understanding and applying currency*. By working to de-centre the tutor from academic processes of teaching and learning to refocus the student through extrinsic motivations and thereby situating them in post-graduate processes. One very easy way to do this, whatever the discipline, is to ask them how they would disseminate their findings to a broader audience or even in public, perhaps electronically – and then get them to do it!
- *Providing meaningful feedback*. By understanding that the most valuable feedback is given quickly, concisely and with actionable commands which students can use as feed-forward for future tasks.[7]
- *Facing and engaging with, rather than avoiding risk and uncertainty*. By enjoying using different pedagogic options and strategies in teaching and learning.[8] This issue, like most others is acutely problematic. With increased financial stakes and commitments, students may also become more risk averse, while institutions are characteristically schizophrenic – seemingly demanding demonstrable innovation, but without their attendant risks of failure or dissatisfaction.

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[6] Though difficult to quantify, there are some indications that student involvement in a 'community of scholarship' brings positive benefits to their educational quality, satisfaction and outcomes. See Gibbs, G. 2010. *Dimensions of Quality*. York: The Higher Education Academy. Page 47.

[7] For a very short introduction to feedforward and on implementing a longitudinal approach to supporting student progress, see Jisc's pages on 'Feed forward for Informed Learning (FfiL)', available at:

http//:www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/…/FfiL.aspx

[8] An excellent example of an exciting, but probably originally risky (at the start) innovation in teaching and learning, can be found in the work of classicist Matthew Nicholls on *Virtual Rome*, which uses computer modelling to explore ancient structures in order to bring them to life. Available at:

http://www.reading.ac.uk/classics/about/staff/m-c-nicholls.aspx Dr Nicholls won the Guardian's national Teaching Excellence in Universities Award in 2014.

These approaches are not magical antidotes to disciplinary tribalism[9], though their potential to encourage students to research at their own level through tried and tested techniques such as problem-based learning and its related pedagogies are manifold. As well as the development of the obvious discipline specific skills, there is inherent potentiality to cross boundaries and engage with an array of more general creative and technical graduate attributes. Of course what is being advocated here is not novel, it is what many of us tend to do or at least hope to do for ourselves in our own intellectual and professional lives. We can lament all we like, as Chaucer did, that 'the lyf (is) so short, the crafte so long to lerne'[10], but if we owe it to ourselves to advance our research and scholarly activity through interdisciplinarity, then we should also look to creative approaches and hybrid pedagogies to proffer the same to our students. This volume provides a valuable set of stimuli for setting about that task.

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[9] For more on the debate about academic tribes, see Paul Kleiman's chapter in this volume, pp. 112-122.
[10] Geoffrey Chaucer's poem *The Parliament of Fowls* (c.1381-2), line 1.

PART I:

CREATING MEANING, INFLUENCING PERCEPTION

CHAPTER ONE

CREATING MEANING,
INFLUENCING PERCEPTION

ERICA HUGHES

The ways in which students of particular disciplines are trained to approach information affect the types of questions that can be asked of data, as well as the structure of inquiry and presentation of results. The first session brought together scholars in the fields of Assyriology, Marketing, and Art History. As each of their presentations directly or indirectly concerned the manipulation of meaning, delegates to the conference were invited to examine the methods and theoretical underpinnings of each type of approach. While the marketing paper focuses on the generation of data and the processes of data collection, the textual and Art Historical approaches focus on interpretation and the context of previously-collected data.

In her comparison of different types of Assyrian textual sources, Julia Linke shows how language was deployed to create favourable images of the Assyrian king and, more importantly, miserable images of his rival. Her analysis of the rhetorical devices used in the Assyrian royal annals with those of the Letters to the Assyrian patron god shows different levels of acceptable poesy and direct juxtaposition between the rulers. There are several common themes between the types of inscriptions, even across generations of Assyrian kings, such as a demeaning escape on a mare, a focus on troop numbers, and an effort to dehumanize the Urartian kings through bestial similes. As Zimbardo (1970: 26) pointed out, dehumanization is frequently used as a "means to an end," such as the justification of the destruction of whole groups of people. Urartian kings are described variously, "like a crawling creature," his heart "palpitating like a bird pursued by an eagle," who eventually "stabbed himself in the heart like a pig" (Linke, this volume). Interestingly, the Assyrian kings more often use metaphor to describe their greatness in their Annals,

releasing "stormy steeds" and "roaring weapons," yet rely on both metaphor and simile in their Letters to Assur.

Comparisons with humans were also used to humiliate the leadership and masculinity of their rivals. The simile of a woman in labour was intended "to disregard the equal human status" (Stollznow 2008: 181) of the Urartian king, and to describe him as one unworthy of consideration. Comparisons with ignoble persons reinforce the shameful actions of the Urartian king, "fleeing like a thief in the night." The repeated focus on the ignominious night time escape of at least two different Urartian kings after battle served not only to glorify the Assyrian king's courage, but to provide evidence that the defeat of the unworthy was inevitable. No serf could possibly pity those who should fly "like an animal from a hunter," even though they themselves may have been deported or displaced due to war or the resettlement programs of the Neo-Assyrian kings (Postgate 1970: 231, 237). The probability of a serf in the first millennium BC having the capability to read cuneiform is as low as the probability that a serf ever saw these texts. It has recently been suggested, in defiance of earlier assertions that literacy sharply declined after the 2nd millennium BC, that the basics of cuneiform writing were "within the reach of every affluent Assyrian family, and there was certainly no prohibition against it" (Parpola 1997: 321). The primary audience for the texts would have been those capable of reading them, yet they may have been read aloud at public festivals and dedications in order to spread the news of their mighty kings around their territory.

The juxtaposition of the glorious Sargon with the humiliation and the defeat of Rusa reinforces the use of these texts as propaganda and the important role of dehumanization in affecting the audience's perception during the controlled presentation of a series of events. Linke demonstrates the efficacy of simile and metaphor in conjunction with listed facts in directing the comprehension of events to non-witnesses. In the process, she provides a cautionary tale of modern scholarship's reliance on extant (Assyrian) accounts, suggesting yet again, that history truly is recorded by the victors.

In order to draw attention to the constructions of meanings associated with the uses of polychrome marble during the Roman Empire, Katie Clare McCann sets the stage with modern colour theory and its applications in archaeology. However, as the subjects of art are bound up in the culture from which the art was produced (Margolis 1974), the reception of these marbles cannot be approached from a contemporary perspective alone. These highly prized stones were part of a rich vocabulary of visual propaganda and, as McCann argues, the Roman

conception of colour was so bound in the physical object that it is impossible to understand their form and their matter separately. The materiality of colour allowed emperors to "present a version of events dictated from the perspective of power" (Peirce 1989: 388) in order to promote both personal and factional ideas of legitimacy. Legitimization of imperial power can be understood in the presence of these exotic marbles in Rome, which would have required dominion over foreign quarries as well as the manpower to extract and transport heavy material hundreds of kilometres. The deployment of specific colours in the portraits of emperors or the vanquished could also help to tune public opinion. McCann (this volume) provides the example of purple porphyry, an Egyptian stone of such hue as to recall the purple-dyed cloaks of high-status Anatolians. As restrictions on the public display of ostentatious purple clothing had recently gone into effect in Rome, the free use of this stone in imperial building projects and particularly in imperial portraits publicly reinforced the distribution of power.

Purple porphyry, like other polychrome marbles, was also used to refer to the foreign land whence it came. Statues of barbarians were often created from foreign marble, and the combination of foreign dress expressed in the medium of coloured marbles reinforced the alien nature of the other. McCann uses *giallo antico*, a warm golden stone from Numidia in Africa, to demonstrate how the meanings presented by the same stone's location changed over time. It is important to recall that the nuances of deployment may have been lost on the uneducated, and that changes in the "conventionalized consciousness" (Dewey 1916) of symbols were not immediate. The yellow stone would have made a striking contrast from white and painted Italian marbles, and was originally used to signify the alien nature of barbarians. The first monumental use of *giallo antico* was the construction of a column celebrating Cesar's conquest of African lands. As expensive marble was taken from the new province as a testimony to the deed, the use of the stone directly refers to the status of Rome and the emperor, the location of glorious acts and the act of conquest itself. Two centuries later, an emperor of North African descent came to power, and used *giallo antico* as a celebration of his origins. The evolving meanings associated with this stone show how the epistemic defect of propagandistic argument is tailored to influence the perceptions of the intended audience. By making the association between colour and foreign origins appear natural to the viewer; a Central Anatolian may be depicted using African marble. While it is true that both Africans and Central Anatolians would have been considered foreign, a true statement is rendered in an epistemically

defective manner "...in virtue of its seemingly natural but unwarranted connection with other beliefs" (Ross 2002: 23). The use of symbols and metaphors in art makes artworks particularly susceptible to conscription as propaganda, as inapt metaphors are easily forced upon interpretations.

Catherine Wilkinson's study of artistic agency is presented from the perspective of marketing branded items. While she (and Anthony Patterson) explicitly focus on the impact of consumer generated media (CGM) on the reputation of a spokescharacter, the devotion to the factors motivating such creations open the discussion to ideas beyond their field. Their unique methodology is an important contribution to the growing body of literature surrounding CGM, and the results derived from both data analysis and personal interactions with the creators of the data (specifically YouTube vdeos) show how scientific inquiry must evolve along with forms of human communication.

Wilkinson and Patterson begin with the description of a popular British cartoon character, Peppa Pig, and the reception of her branded image in the early days when consumer interaction was entirely passive. With the advent of widely-available computer platforms, programs and shared spaces, consumers are now able to interact with branded images and spokecharacters in previously unimaginable ways. One of the new methods available to consumers is the alteration and sharing of branded content, often in the form of parody. Wilkinson and Patterson focused on the user-generated videos starring Peppa Pig, frequently engaged in or serving as the subject of violence, and the reactions of other consumers to these videos. As other consumers are seen as less biased than marketers, and possibly even more credible, the potential threat to brand reputation though CGM is immense (Pornpitakpan 2004). However, as the epistemic defect is not subtle, the creation is more likely to be seen as parody than as propaganda, reflecting more on the creator of the content, than the content itself (Wilkinson and Patterson, this volume). If we agree that "…individuals actively and creatively sample available cultural symbols, myths, and rituals as they produce their identities... for teens, the mass media are central to this process because they are a convenient source of cultural options" (Brown *et al.* 1994: 813), then it should not be surprising that CGM is used as a platform for expressing personal likes and dislikes. Belk (1998: 140) has shown that consumption and branding are used in the construction of individual identities, and it is only logical that the reaction against consumption via rejection, disgust or the re-purposing of branded content is also deployed in the production of personal identity.

Appropriating cultural symbols and brands to create one's own identity places the subject and object of criticism in parodic proximity. Humorous

disparagement, one of the types of comedy found in advertisements (Speck 1991), becomes a tool beyond self-determination; it can also be used for social criticism and for the control of un-owned ideas and objects. The reactions of consumers to the Peppa Pig clips showed that the disparagement was neither appreciated nor did it change their engagement with the spokescharacter.

The first three papers given during the inaugural conference proved the thought-provoking potential of thematic interdisciplinarity. While each paper focused on the creation or alteration of specific meanings, the creative agent, intended audience, and raw material from which meanings were generated differed greatly. The juxtaposition of these widely different approaches to research spurred discussion of broader themes relevant to each discipline, such as parody, consumption, legitimization, propaganda, and identity creation.

These papers demonstrate the changing positions of power of the creative agents and the relationship of individual authority to creation of a critical understanding of events. The audience may have been a select few (as in Akkad), or the general public. Meanings were tailored by the elite (as in Rome and Akkad) or the rabble. Each act reflected on the social mores of the time, and can be understood by modern scholars as a kind of critique. Conspicuous consumption of raw materials was used to demonstrate meanings to those viewing a statue, inscription or monument; while icons of consumption could, themselves, be re-purposed and consumed. In both instances there is a flagrant display of power through the presentation of an identity or identities. The direct violation of a public figure through slander or visual means exercises authority over that figure, and, in contrast, works to legitimize the creator of the presented identity.

In *Wit and its Relation to the Unconscious*, Freud describes some of the functions of parody, including the "degradation of the exalted" and unmasking someone who "...has attached to himself dignity and authority which in reality should be taken from him" (1916: 39). The degradation of the beloved Peppa Pig, and the outcry in response to the denigration, demonstrates that fictional characters, even those used to sell products, can be considered exalted by the populace. While the Urartian king has been degraded, it was in the style of an unmasking, revealing the negative qualities behind the furnished appearance. He has been made "...contemptible in order to deprive him of his claims to dignity and authority" (1916: 15).

While, at face value, it seemed as if the studies with their objects in the Near East and Rome would have borne similar approaches, it turns out that the treatment of Akkadian text had more in common with the marketing

approach. The analyses of the Akkadian texts and the consumer-generated videos of Peppa Pig focused more on the message than the materials, while in the case of the Roman sculpture, the material *was* the message. The intended message is not always clear to the audience, so the attempts at propaganda or parody may fail. The meaning that was intentionally created by the Akkadian texts was perfectly clear; those of the Roman marbles a little more muddled in reception – perhaps due to the changing associations over time, and in the case of the Peppa Pig clips, often there was no intended meaning other than the deformation of appearance. Each of these studies has shown how the creation of meaning can be achieved through artistic representation, and how perception is influenced by presentation.

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THE TOPOS OF THE COWARD KING: URSA OF URARTU IN ASSYRIAN ROYAL INSCRIPTIONS

JULIA LINKE

For a long time the historical debate about the kingdom of Urartu was strongly influenced by the Assyrian point of view and their historical records – above all because we have very few textual evidence from Urartu itself and the Urartian language is less well understood than the Assyrian. Consequently, modern scholars often rely on the image Assyrian inscriptions are creating when dealing with Urartu and its kings.

In this chapter, I will take a closer look at these two empires and especially at the Assyrian perception of the Urartian king. In order to set the context, I will begin by outlining the increasing conflict between these states of the first millennium B.C.; a conflict that reaches its peak under the Assyrian king Sargon and his Urartian counterpart Rusa (who is frequently called Ursa in the Assyrian records). I will try to show to what extent we, as modern scholars, depend and therefore rely on the available sources and how this picture can change if we reconsider these sources.

The question about the "value" and materiality of textual sources is addressed by discourse analysis or theory. Basically, it is impossible to look behind the curtains of the sources that are at our disposal, and thus it is impossible to reconstruct a reality behind it that is independent of these sources. This means that the reconstruction of the past and of history is always more a reconstruction of the available sources. From this, we might not learn about a historical reality but, instead, we are granted access to the social relations of media and communication, and the creation of meanings (Sarasin 2003: 58). If we apply these ideas to the royal inscriptions of the Assyrians and Urartians concerning each other, we can detect two different levels on which these texts work. First, they describe events, in this case mainly warlike activities between the two rival kingdoms. And

second, only appearing in the Assyrian inscriptions, we find some literary embellishments to these events: detailed and vivid descriptions of the Urartian kings. These royal images of the Urartian kings that are created in the Assyrian inscriptions are almost as sophisticated as the self-images of the Assyrian kings – but of course in complete opposition to the glory and courage of the latter. Still, the images that are used, as well as the underlying symbolic system, are more or less the same.

The Urartian and the Assyrian Kingdom were political neighbours with the high mountain range of the South-eastern Taurus acting as a separating boundary. This natural separation makes any contact between the two states highly difficult, yet contacts have been recorded:

The first written evidence for the existence of Urartu is found in the annals of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser I (1273-1244 B.C.). He records a campaign against the hostile land "Uruaṭri" that consists of different areas.[1] Nearly 400 years pass before the Assyrians tell us about this region again. Shalmaneser III (858-824 B.C.) reports in texts and pictures from his war against a king "Aramu, the Urartian" whose "fortified city" Sugunia[2] as well as his "royal city" Arṣaškun[3] were destroyed by the Assyrian king. These campaigns of Shalmaneser III are depicted on the bronze gates of Balawat. Still from this period there are neither any records from Urartu itself nor from a king called Aramu. Nevertheless – at least from an Assyrian point of view – Aramu seems to be the first king of Urartu. And with him we already get a certain image of the Urartian king – that of a coward who escapes into the mountains in the face of defeat:

> "Aramu the Urarṭian became frightened in the face of the flash of my strong weapons and stormy onslaught, abandoned his city, (and) ascended Mount Adduru…" [4]

> "To save his life he ascended a rugged mountain." [5]

The first evidence from Urartu itself comes from a king named Sardure (c. 840-830 B.C.[6]). He is the founder of the Urartian capital Tušpa at modern Van Kale where his inscriptions can be found. Sardure is probably referred to by his Assyrian counterpart Shalmaneser III on the Black Obelisk. According to this inscription Sardure fought a battle with Shalmaneser's field marshal that was lost by the Urartians:

> "When Sēduru (ᵐse-e-du-ri), The Urarṭian, heard (of this [i.e. the Assyrian army approaching Urartu]), relying on the might of his mighty army he attacked to wage war and battle. He [Shalmaneser's field marshal] fought with him, defeated him, (and) filled the wide plain with the corpses of his warriors." [7]

Sardure's son Išpuini (c. 830-810 B.C.) and, later, his grandson Minua (c. 810-780 B.C.) use Assyria's temporary political weakness following the death of Shalmaneser III to expand the Urartian kingdom in all directions. Muṣaṣir, the city of the Urartian state god Ḫaldi and thus an important religious centre for the Urartians, was part of the kingdom at least from the time of Išpuini's reign, too. The next recorded contact between Assyria and Urartu takes place under Minua's son and successor Argišti (c. 785-760 B.C.), who is mentioned in a letter of the Assyrian field marshal Šamši-ilu to his king Adad-nerari III (805-783 B.C.). In this letter Argišti's troops are described as quite enormous. Following a rebellion of the Urartian king, Šamši-ilu fights with him and finally defeats him. "Frightened" by his defeat, Argišti escapes "like a thief" which allows Šamši-ilu to seize his properties:

> "At that time Argištu, the Urarṭian, the number of whose forces is huge like a thick cloud and who had no relations with (lit. stretched out his hand to) any previous king; he (Argištu) rebelled and assembled the people together at the land of the Guti. He put his (forces for) battle in good order (and then) all his troops marched into the mountains for battle.
>   […] he (Šamšī-ilu) rushed forth like a terrible storm. He let fly the stormy steeds, harnessed to his chariot, against him (Argištu) like the Anzu-bird and defeated him. He (Argištu) abandoned his troops (and) scattered people (and), frightened by the battle, he escaped like a thief. He (Šamšī-ilu) captured from him his camp, his royal treasure, (and) is …" [8]

We also know from Argišti's own annals found at Ḫorḫor at the Urartian capital in Van that he conducted a campaign that reached the Assyrian land and took a lot of booty as well as deportees from there.[9] What we don't know is if this Urartian campaign against the Assyrian border took place before or after Argišti's defeat by Šamši-ilu.

During the reign of Argišti's son Sardure II (c. 760-730 B.C.), Urartu reached its highest expansion. Sardure II is notable as the only Urartian king to mention an Assyrian king by name in his inscriptions: namely Ashur-nirari V (754-745 B.C.), son of Adad-nirari III. This mention comes as Sardure II is describing his victory over the Assyrian king in the annals that were erected at Hazine Kapısı at Van Kale.

> "Ḫaldi went out to war with his lance, […] I defeated Aššurnirari, son of Adadnirari, king of the land of Aššur. […]Ḫaldi is victorious(?), the lance of Ḫaldi is victorious (?). He left together with Sarduri, son of Argišti…"[10]

In contrast to the Assyrian descriptions, the Urartian kings provide no further details or propaganda except Aššur-nirari's name and title as a

king, which were given by Sardure II. This Urartian report is thus much
more clinical and fact-based than the rather dramatic and vivid Assyrian
texts, and remains on par with the first level of the Assyrian royal
inscriptions: simply describing the events without any elaborated
humiliation of the enemy.

Due to the ongoing Urartian expansion West into Northern Syria,
where Assyria also has many interests, the conflict intensifies. This
situation reached its peak when Sardure II demanded tribute from several
of the Northern Syrian city states, thus destroying important trading routes
of the Assyrians, now under the reign of Tiglath-pileser III (744-727
B.C.). This conflict terminates in the battles of Kištan and Ḫalpi, where the
Assyrians are victorious over the alliance of the Urartians and the Syrian
states. In his annals, Tiglath-pileser III describes the behaviour of the
Urartian king following the battle: Sardure, in the face of his defeat,
escapes at night on a mare, but is persecuted by Tiglath-pileser who, in the
end, loots his possessions:

> "In the midst of that battle, I captured Sarduri's … [… I …] 72,950 of
> their … from … [……]. In order to save his life, [Sardu]ri fled at night
> and (thus) [escaped] very quick[ly] before [sun]rise. [… With an arrow
> that cuts] off lives, I drove him back to the bridge (crossing over) the
> Euphrates River, on the border of his land. I took away from him his bed,
> […], his royal processional chariot, the cylinder seal (that hung around)
> his neck, together with his necklace, [his] royal chariot, […], their […],
> (and) many other things, without number."[11])

> "They fled to save [their] lives and Sarduri of the land Urarṭu rode off
> alo[ne on a] mare [and] escaped during the night. […] … […], who like a
> crawling (creature) […] into […], thistles (and) box thorns that … […],
> crawled (away) and vanished. He returned to his land." [12]

We can detect some common threads in these early texts about Aramu,
Argišti and Sardure that will also be important in the later inscriptions of
Sargon concerning Rusa of Urartu, and that are also very common in the
Assyrian enemy-propaganda as such. First: The rebellion of the Urartian
that caused the conflict in the first place. Second: The escape of the king
and/or his troops; the king is not only escaping but is doing so on a mare
and/or during the night, showing his immense cowardice. And last: This
cowardly behaviour of the Urartian king allows the Assyrian king to loot
his properties.

After the reign of Sardure II, the Urartian throne goes to a king named
Rusa. Which one of the several Rusas in Urartian history this particular
Rusa might be is still uncertain. For me, the most convincing chronology