

## = Battle of Tigranocerta =

The Battle of Tigranocerta ( Armenian : ??? , Tigranakerti tchakatamart? ) was fought on October 6 , 69 BC between the forces of the Roman Republic and the army of the Kingdom of Armenia led by King Tigranes the Great . The Roman force was led by Consul Lucius Licinius Lucullus , and Tigranes was defeated . His capital city of Tigranocerta was lost to Rome as a result .

The battle arose from the Third Mithridatic War being fought between Roman Republic and Mithridates VI of Pontus , whose daughter Cleopatra was married to Tigranes . Mithridates fled to seek shelter with his son @-@ in @-@ law , and Rome invaded the Kingdom of Armenia . Having laid siege to Tigranocerta , the Roman forces fell back behind a nearby river when the large Armenian army approached . Feigning retreat , the Romans crossed at a ford and fell on the right flank of the Armenian army . After the Romans defeated the Armenian cataphracts , the balance of Tigranes ' army , which was mostly made up of raw levies and peasant troops from his extensive empire , panicked and fled , and the Romans remained in charge of the field .

## = = Background = =

Tigranes ' expansion into the Near East led to the creation of an Armenian empire that stretched almost across the entire region . With his father @-@ in @-@ law and ally securing the empire 's western flank , Tigranes was able to conquer territories in Parthia and Mesopotamia and annex the lands of the Levant . In Syria , he began the construction of the city of Tigranocerta ( also written Tigranakert ) , which he named after himself , and imported a multitude of peoples , including Arabs , Greeks , and Jews , to populate it . The city soon became the king 's headquarters in Syria and flourished as a great center for Hellenistic culture , complete with theaters , parks and hunting grounds .

This period of Armenian hegemony in the region , however , was coming close to an end with a series of Roman victories in the Roman ? Mithridatic Wars . Friction between the two had existed for several decades , although it was during the Third Mithridatic War that the Roman armies under Lucullus made significant progress against Mithridates , forcing him to take refuge with Tigranes . Lucullus sent an ambassador named Appius Claudius to Antioch to demand that Tigranes surrender his father @-@ in @-@ law ; should he refuse , Armenia would face war with Rome . Tigranes refused Appius Claudius ' demands , stating that he would prepare for war against the Republic .

Lucullus was astonished upon hearing this in the year 70 , and he began to prepare for an immediate invasion of Armenia . Although he had no mandate from the Senate to authorize such a move , he attempted to justify his invasion by distinguishing as his enemy king Tigranes and not his subjects . In the summer of 69 , he marched his troops across Cappadocia and the Euphrates river and entered the Armenian province of Tsop 'k ' , where Tigranocerta was located .

## = = The siege of Tigranocerta = =

Tigranes , who was residing at Tigranocerta in the summer of 69 , was not only astonished by the speed of Lucullus ' rapid advance into Armenia but by the fact that he had even launched such an operation in the first place . Unable to reconcile with this reality for a certain period of time , he belatedly sent a general named Mithrobarzanes with 2 @,@ 000 to 3 @,@ 000 cavalymen to slow down Lucullus ' advance but his forces were cut to pieces and routed by the 1 @,@ 600 cavalry led by Sextilius , one of the legates serving under Lucullus . Learning of Mithrobarzanes ' defeat , Tigranes entrusted the defense of his namesake city to Mancaeus and left to recruit a fighting force in the Taurus Mountains . Nevertheless , Lucullus ' legates were able to disrupt two separate detachments coming to the aid of Tigranes and even located and engaged the king 's forces in a canyon in the Taurus . Lucullus , nevertheless , chose not to pursue Tigranes while he had an unimpeded path towards Tigranocerta ; he advanced and began to lay siege to it .

Tigranocerta was still an unfinished city when Lucullus laid siege to it in the late summer of 69 . The

city was heavily fortified and according to the Greek historian Appian , had thick and towering walls that stood 25 meters high , providing a formidable defense against a prolonged siege . The Roman siege engines that were employed at Tigranocerta were effectively repelled by the defenders by the use of naphtha , making Tigranocerta , according to one scholar , the site of " perhaps the world 's first use of chemical warfare . "

However , the loyalty of the city 's population was untested : since Tigranes had forcibly removed many of its inhabitants from their native lands and brought them to Tigranocerta , their allegiance to the king was cast into doubt . They soon proved their unreliability : when Tigranes and his army appeared on a hill overlooking the city , the inhabitants " greeted his [ Lucullus ] appearance with shouts and din , and standing on the walls , threateningly pointed out the Armenians to the Romans . "

= = Forces = =

Appian claims that Lucullus had embarked from Rome with only a single legion ; upon entering Anatolia to make war against Mithridates , he added four more legions to his army . The overall size of this force consisted of 30 @, @ 000 infantry and 1 @, @ 600 cavalry . Following Mithridates ' retreat to Armenia , Appian estimates Lucullus ' invading force to be only two legions and 500 horsemen , although it is highly improbable that he would have undertaken the invasion of Armenia with such a small army . Historian Adrian Sherwin @-@ White places the size of Lucullus ' force to 12 @, @ 000 seasoned legionaries ( composed of three legions ) , and 4 @, @ 000 provincial cavalry and light infantry . The Roman army was further bolstered by several thousand allied Gallic , Thracian , and Bithynian infantry and cavalry .

Tigranes ' army clearly held a numerical superiority over that of Lucullus ' . According to Appian , it numbered 250 @, @ 000 infantry and 50 @, @ 000 cavalry . Many scholars , however , doubt these figures accurately reflect the true number of Tigranes ' army and believe they are highly inflated . Some historians , most notably Plutarch , wrote that Tigranes considered Lucullus ' army far too small , and upon seeing it , is quoted to have said that " If they come as ambassadors , they are too many ; if they are soldiers , too few , " although some have expressed doubt on the veracity of this quote . Tigranes also possessed several thousand cataphracts , formidable heavily armored cavalry that were clad in mail armor and armed with lances , spears or bows .

= = Disposition and engagement = =

The two armies converged toward the Batman @-@ Su river slightly to the southwest to Tigranocerta .

Tigranes ' army was positioned on the east bank of the river while Lucullus , who had left a rear guard to continue the siege of the city , met the Armenian army on the river 's west bank . The Armenian army was formed of three sections . Two of Tigranes ' vassal kings led the left and right flanks , while Tigranes led his cataphracts in the center . The rest of his army stood in front of a hill , a position Lucullus soon exploited .

Roman troops at first attempted to dissuade Lucullus from engaging in battle since October 6 marked the day of the disastrous battle of Arausio , where the general Quintus Servilius Caepio and his Roman army were delivered a crushing defeat by the Germanic Cimbri and Teuton tribes . Ignoring his troops ' superstitious beliefs , Lucullus is said to have responded , " Verily , I will make this day , too , a lucky one for the Romans . "

Cowan and Hook suggest that Lucullus would have deployed the Romans in a simplex acies , that is to say a single line , so making the frontage of the army as wide as possible as a counter to the cavalry . He took several of his troops downriver , where the river was the easiest to ford , and at one moment , Tigranes believed that this move meant Lucullus was withdrawing from the battlefield .

Lucullus had initially decided to make a running charge with his infantry , a Roman military tactic that minimized the amount of time an enemy could utilize its archers and sling infantry prior to close

combat engagement . However , he decided against this at the last moment when he realized that the Armenian cataphracts posed the greatest threat to his men , ordering instead a diversionary attack with his Gallic and Thracian cavalry against the cataphracts .

With the cataphracts ' attention fixated elsewhere , Lucullus formed two cohorts into maniples and then ordered them to ford across the river . His objective was to outflank Tigranes ' cataphracts by circling counterclockwise around the hill and attacking them from the rear .

Lucullus personally led the charge on foot and upon reaching the top of the hill , he yelled to his soldiers in an effort to buoy their morale : " The day is ours , the day is ours , my fellow soldiers ! " With this , he gave special instructions to the cohorts to attack the horses ' legs and thighs , since these were the only areas of the cataphracts which were not armored . Lucullus charged downwards along with his cohorts and his orders soon proved fatal : the lumbering cataphracts were caught by surprise and , in their attempts to break free from their attackers , careened into the ranks of their own men as the lines began to collapse .

The infantry , which was also made up of many non @-@ Armenians , began to break rank and confusion spread to the rest of the body of Tigranes ' army . While the great king himself took to flight with his baggage train northwards , the entire line of his army gave way . The casualties reported for Tigranes ' army are immense , with estimates given from 10 @,@ 000 to as many as 100 @,@ 000 men .

Plutarch says that on the Roman side , " only a hundred were wounded , and only five killed , " although such low figures are highly unrealistic . Cowan and Hook , while considering these losses ridiculous , think it 's clear that the battle was won with disproportionate losses .

= = Aftermath and legacy = =

With no army left to defend Tigranocerta , and a foreign populace that gleefully opened the gates to the Romans , Lucullus ' army began the wholesale looting and plunder of the city . The city was literally deconstructed piece by piece . The king 's treasury , estimated to be worth 8 @,@ 000 talents , was looted and each soldier in the army was awarded 800 drachma . The battle also resulted in severe territorial losses : most of the lands in Tigranes ' empire to the south of the Taurus fell under the sway of Rome .

Despite the heavy losses Tigranes suffered , the battle was not decisive in ending the war . In retreating northwards , Tigranes and Mithridates were able to elude Lucullus ' forces , though losing again against the Romans during the battle of Artashat . In 68 , Lucullus ' forces ' began to mutiny , longing to return home , and he withdrew his forces from Armenia the following year .

The battle is highlighted by many historians specifically because Lucullus overcame the numerical odds facing his army . The Italian philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli remarked upon the battle in his book , The Art of War , where he critiqued Tigranes ' heavy reliance on his cavalry over his infantry .