ANABASIS 2 (2011)
STUDIA CLASSICA ET ORIENTALIA

**Michał Marciak**
(Leiden, the Netherlands; Kraków, Poland)

# SELEUCID-PARTHIAN ADIABENE IN THE LIGHT OF ANCIENT GEOGRAPHICAL AND ETHNOGRAPHICAL TEXTS*

**Keywords:** Adiabene, Arbela, Nineveh, Strabo, the Zabs

## Introduction

In December 2007, the story of the Adiabene royal family made the front pages of newspapers in Israel when the press service of the Israeli Antiquities Authority announced the discovery of a building in the Lower City of David in Jerusalem. Doron Ben-Ami, the main archaeologist responsible for the excavation in the Givati Parking Lot, suggested that a newly discovered building could be identified as the palace of Queen Helena from Adiabene,[1] one of three such structures known to us previously only from Josephus (*Bellum Iudaicum* 4.567; 5.252; 5.253; 6.355).[2] Such archaeological news arouses a great deal of interest in the origin of a well-known family of royal converts from Adiabene who lived

* The Foundation for Polish Science (Programme START) is gratefully acknowledged by the author for its financial support which, among other things, enabled me to prepare this paper in the summer 2011. The paper results from my current PhD research being conducted at Leiden University (in cotutelle with Jagiellonian University in Kraków) with the aim of reviewing all available sources on the Adiabene royalty in the 1st century CE. Special thanks are due to Dr. J. Reade (London) who provided me with many invaluable comments on my PhD research. Of course, the sole responsibility for the content of this paper, and its all potential deficiencies, lies with the author.

[1] Ben-Ami, Tchehanovetz 2008; Ben-Ami, Tchehanovetz 2010. See also Mazar 1978, 236–237 for the first attempt ever to identify one of the Adiabenean palaces in Jerusalem.

[2] Vincent, Steve 1954, 235–236; Bieberstein, Bloedhorn 1994, 397.

and adopted Jewish traditions in the 1st century CE. Consequently, one arrives at the question as to what we actually know about Adiabene in the Seleucid and Parthian periods. More specifically, what does the name Adiabene mean, where was this country located, what were its environment and culture? One of the ways to answer these questions is to take a look at ancient literary texts that convey geographical and ethnographical information on Adiabene. Thus, ancient writings frequently classified as "ethnographies",[3] that is literature focused on "the land, the history, the marvels and the customs of a people",[4] will be of primary interest to us. However, some useful information of a geographical and ethnographical character can also be found in historiographical accounts.[5]

## Geographical and ethnographical texts on Adiabene

The most important geographical and ethnographical passages on ancient Adiabene can be found in Strabo's *Geographika* (11.4.8, 11.14.12, 16.1.1, 16.1.3–4, 16.1.8, 16.1.18, 16.1.19), Pliny the Elder's *Historia Naturalis* (5.13.66; 6.9.25; 6.16.44; 6.10.28; 6.16.42), and Ptolemy's *Geographike Hyphegesis* (6.1.1–7), as well as in two historiographical writings – Cassius Dio's *Romaike Historia* (68.26.1–4) and Ammianus Marcellinus' *Res Gestae* (18.7.1; 23.3.1; 23.6.20–22). Other writings providing important references to Adiabene include Plutarch's *Bioi Paralleloi* (*Lucullus* 26–29**,** esp. 26.1, 26.4, 27.6, 29.2 and *Pompey 36*), Josephus' *Antiquitates Iudaicae* (20.17–96) and Tacitus' *Annales (*12.13).

In Strabo's *Geog.* (64 or 63 BCE – ca. 24 CE)[6] we can tentatively distinguish two different groups of references to Adiabene. The first group includes five brief references (Strabo 11.4.8, 11.14.12, 16.1.1, 16.1.8, 16.1.18), while the second one contains two excurses directly focusing on Adiabene (16.1.3–4 and 16.1.19). The references from the first group list Adiabene among many other countries and peoples in very general descriptions of large geographical areas (in a manner customary for ancient geographical and ethnographical texts). In such descriptions, the location of Adiabene is mentioned only in relation to other countries. Especially striking is Strabo 11.4.8 and 11.14.12, where Adiabene is presented as being located on the frontier of Armenia.[7]

[3] On this term see Sterling 1992, 20–102 and Murphy 2004, 77–128 (esp. 77–87).

[4] Sterling 1992, 53.

[5] On the difference between geographical and ethnographical texts on the one hand, and historiographical accounts containing relevant data on the other see Murphy 2004, 79–80; Lerouge 2007, 39.

[6] Romm 1997, 359–362.

[7] In 11.4.8 and 11.14.12 Strabo gives no details enabling us to demarcate an exact border line between Armenia and Adiabene. The only hint is that Adiabene is located "outside" (ἔξω) the Ar-

Ulrich Kahrstedt suggests that both accounts present a "*Siedlungslegende*" for Adiabene.[8] However, the origin of Adiabene is not directly the subject of Strabo's interest in both accounts (unlike in 16.1.4), and the Adiabene topic appears only as an aside to Armenia. In writing that Armenia took its name from Armenos the Thessalian (who together with his companions settled in these lands after the Argonautic expedition), Strabo in fact presents the mythical origin of Armenia. In so doing, he does refer to Adiabene, and partly includes this country in his portrayal of Armenia's early history. Consequently, we can say that Strabo 11.4.8 and 11.14.12 account for a *Siedlungslegende* for Armenia and not for Adiabene; at the same time, both accounts convey a political agenda that presents Adiabene (alongside other neighbors of Armenia) as part of the pan-Armenian heritage.[9]

Of special importance are two passages in Strabo (16.1.3–4 and 16.1.19) where Adiabene as a country with its inhabitants and culture comes to the fore directly. In Strabo 16.1.3–4 we have the following account:[10]

*Now the city Ninos was wiped out immediately after the overthrow of the Syrians. It was much greater than Babylon, and was situated in the plain of Aturia. Aturia borders on the region of Arbela, with the Lykos River lying between them. Now Arbela, which lies opposite to Babylonia, belongs to that country; and in the country on the far side of the Lykos River lie the plains of Aturia, which surround Ninos. In Aturia is a village Gaugamela, where Dareios was conquered and lost his empire. Now this is a famous place, as is also its name, which, being interpreted, means "Camel's House." Dareios, the son of Hystaspes, so named it, having given it as an estate for the maintenance of the camel which helped most on the toilsome journey through the deserts of Skythia with the burdens containing sustenance and support for the king. However, the Macedonians, seeing that this was a cheap village, but that Arbela was a notable settlement (founded, as it is said, by Arbelos, the son of Athmonon), announced that the battle and victory took place near Arbela and so transmitted their account to the historians. After Arbela and Mt. Nikatorion (a name applied to it by Alexander after his victory in the neighborhood of Arbela), one comes to the Kapros River, which lies at the same distance from Arbela as the Lykos. The country is called*

menian mountains. For the historical quest for Armenian borders see Hewsen 1978–1979, 77–97; Hewsen 1984, 347–365; Wheeler 1991, 505–511; Syme 1995, 51–57.

[8] Kahrstedt 1950, 59 n. 7.

[9] See Sellwood 1985, 457 (referring to Pliny's texts).

[10] All citations are taken from the Loeb Classical Library, even if different readings or translations are later suggested by the author. However, readings of proper names are sometimes corrected in the text of citations by the author, and so can depart from the LCL translation. Strabo's text used here is that of Jones 1928 and 1930.

*Artakene. Near Arbela lies the city Demetrias; and then one comes to the fountain of naphtha, and to the fires, and to the temple of Anea, and to Sadrakai, and to the royal palace of Dareios the son of Hystaspes, and to Kyparisson, and to the crossing of the Kapros River, where, at last, one is close to Seleukeia and Babylon.*

Strabo 16.1.3–4 is a geographical description that proceeds along a route from Nineveh to Babylon. Three distinctive regions on this route are Aturia (around Nineveh), the region around Arbela and Babylonia. The region of Arbela is clearly located around the city of Arbela and between two rivers, the Lykos and the Kapros.[11] Surprisingly, the name of Adiabene does not appear in this passage, but rather we have the toponym Artakene, although this term is believed to be textually suspicious.[12] It is emendated either into *'Αρβηληνή (and treated as a synonym for Arbelitis, that is the Arbela region between the Lykos and Kapros rivers, known from Pliny the Elder's, *HN* 6.16.42 and Plutarch's *Pomp.* 36), or by Herzfeld into *'Αρπαχηνή, a region known from Ptolemy *Geog*. 6.1.2 (as 'Αρραπαχῖτις) which corresponds to the Assyrian Arrapha.[13] There can be no doubt that the Arrapha region was located south of the Little Zab in Assyrian texts[14] (on the identification of all hydronyms and toponyms mentioned here see below). Additionally, Herzfeld suggests that Strabo's second reference in the passage to the Kapros river is mistaken for the Gorgos river (which is indeed closer to Seleukeia than the Kapros).[15] If Herzfeld's interpretation is correct, then Strabo's description in 16.1.4 concerns not only the territory of the Arbela region (between the Lykos and Kapros), but also the Arrapha region south of the Kapros. At the same time, approximately the same region is explicitly called Adiabene by Strabo in 16.1.19. Thus, it seems that Strabo's Adiabene (in 16.1.4 and 16.1.19) indeed subsumes both the Arbela region and the Arrapha region with Demetrias as its main city. Likewise, Strabo's sentence on Adiabene's relation to Babylonia in 16.1.3 is textually controversial.[16] It should

[11] Fränkel 1894, 360; Sellwood 1985, 456; Oelsner 1996, 112; Radt 2009, 256 and 273.

[12] 'Αρτακηνή is otherwise unknown, and consequently this reading is believed to be a mistake. While Kramer 1853, 285 leaves 'Αρτακηνή, Müller, Dübner 1853, 628 and Coray 1814, 160 n. 3 correct it to *'Αρβηληνή.

[13] Herzfeld 1968, 226.

[14] Schrader 1878, 164; Fränkel 1896, 1225; Unger 1932, 154; Herzfeld 1968, 229.

[15] Herzfeld 1968, 226.

[16] A classic reading according to Meineke 1877, 1027–1029, Kramer 1853, 284, Coray 1814, 159 n. 2, and Jones 1930, 194: τὰ μὲν οὖνΑρβηλα τῆς Βαβυλωνίας ὑπάρχει˝α κατ' αὐτήν ἐστιν. The underlined part gets different corrections. Biffi 2002, 135 reads: ὑπάρχει 'αλλὰ κατ' αὐτήν ἐστιν. Madvig suggests reading it as ἐπαρχία instead of ὑπάρχει ἅ. This reading is accepted by Radt 2005, 276 n. 23 and 2009: 254 n. 23 (he also thinks that the reading ὑπαρχία is possible) who then translates the text as follows: "Arbela is eine selbständige Provinz Babylo-

probably be read that the region of Arbela is a province ("hyparchia") of Babylonia, and not that it lies opposite Babylonia. This interpretation can be enhanced by Strabo 16.1.19, where Adiabene is explicitly called part of Babylonia, though with its own ruler.

What can be said about the many Greek toponyms that feature in Strabo 16.1.3–4? Mt. Nikatorion is mentioned only in Strabo 16.1.4. According to Sturm, it corresponds to one of the peaks of Jebel Maqlub, reaching 493 m.[17] Other possible identifications are Qaracoq or Demir Dagh.[18] The city of Demetrias is again recalled by Stephanus Byzantinus (*Ethnica* D, 62), but this reference may be borrowed from Strabo himself.[19] Hoffman suggests the present Baba Gurgur, close to Kirkuk, as Strabo's Demetrias.[20] This identification is likely since Strabo locates Demetrias close to eye-catching naphtha springs which in turn could be those near Kirkuk.[21] If this identification is correct, it additionally enhances Herzfeld's emendations of Strabo 16.1.4. Demetrias must have been founded by a ruler who gave his own name to it. There were three Seleucid rulers bearing the name Demetrios (Demetrios I Soter – 162–150 BCE, Demetrios II Nikator – 145–140 and 129–125 BCE and Demetrios III Philopator 95–88 BCE), but due to Parthian gains in Mesopotamia, only the first two rulers can be taken into account. Thus, Demetrias in Adiabene was most likely founded in the 2nd c. BCE.

Interestingly, in saying that the city was founded by Arbelos, son of Athmonon, Strabo conveys a Greek *Siedlungslegende* for Arbela, and so indirectly for the whole region. The very existence of such a legend is significant in itself. First, it is the Greek inhabitants in the first place who are supposed to come up with such interpretations of local places ("interpretatio graeca").[22] Furthermore, the name Athmonon seems to be a hint at the Attic Demos Athmonon.[23] According to this tradition, Arbela is directly linked with Athens, the cultural capital of Hellada. One cannot possibly think of a more prestigious Hellenic origin. Only a local elite of a high cultural profile could come up with such a construct. Therefore, this is clear proof of the strongly Hellenistic character of Arbela. Addition-

niens". Indeed, the reading is problematic but Strabo's perception of Adiabene as part of Babylonia is undoubtedly confirmed by another passage in Strabo 16.1.19. Thus, we follow Madvig's correction and Radt's interpretation.

[17] Sturm 1936b, 283.

[18] Herzfeld 1907, 128. See also Reade 2001, 187.

[19] Radt 2009, 256 n. 8.

[20] Hoffman 1880, 273.

[21] Herzfeld 1968, 229.

[22] See Tcherikover 1959, 20–36, esp. 24; Hengel 1973, 23–27 and 464–486; Hengel 1976, 73–93.

[23] Radt 2009, 255 n. 31.

ally, since Arbela is termed a polis in other ancient writings,[24] and Nineveh, another important city in the Parthian Adiabene (see below), undoubtedly acquired such a status by 31 BCE,[25] there is every reason to believe that at some point in its Seleucid history Arbela had this kind of Greek civic arrangement too. To sum up, the text of Strabo provides us with a good number of details on Greek elements of the cultural environment of Adiabene. Interestingly, this kind of cultural tradition is not the only one conveyed by Strabo.

The name "Sadrakai" is interpreted either as a designation of an unknown place[26] or as the name of Dareios' palace,[27] or as an Iranian version of a specific toponym ("Altynkopru").[28] If the etymology of Sadrakai indeed goes back to the Old Persian and simply means "palace",[29] then only the second interpretation can be correct, especially that Dareios' place of dwelling is mentioned in the text immediately after the reference to "Sadrakai". Kyparisson in turn denotes a certain plantation of cypress trees.[30] The reference to "the fountain of naphtha" and "the fires" is puzzling.[31] On the one hand, the Mesopotamian area has always been known for oil resources, and this phenomenon was well known to Greek travellers ever since Xenophon, and consequently "the fountain" and "the fires" could simply be a natural phenomenon connected with naphtha.[32] On the other hand, as Wikander points out, Strabo also mentions a plantation of cypress trees, and in some Zoroastrian traditions cypresses are said to be planted at fire temples.[33] Thus, "the fountain" and "the fires" could well correspond to some fire rituals so typical of Iranian cults.[34] Another element, this time undisputed, of the Iranian cultural background in Strabo's passage is the temple of Anea (τὸ τῆς Ἀνέας ἱερὸν).[35] The identity of this female goddess is not clear-cut, since such a

[24] It is explicitly called a polis in Arrian, *Anabasis* 3.8.7 and 6.11.6.

[25] The fact is undisputed, but its dating depends on an ambiguous reading of the Apollophanes inscription. See Rostovtzeff 1935, 57 n. 5; Le Rider 1967, 15–16; Oates 1968, 61; Reade 1998, 68; Thommen 2010, 459–460. I follow here Rostovtzeff's reading and Reade's interpretation.

[26] Jones 1930, 196–197; Biffi 2002, 136.

[27] Wikander 1946, 77 n. 5; de Jong 1997, 274; Radt 2005, 278–279.

[28] Sarre, Herzfeld 1920, 327–328.

[29] Wikander 1946, 77 n. 5; Radt 2005, 278–279.

[30] Wikander 1946, 78.

[31] Both words have determined articles, although they appear for the first time in the narrative. Radt 2009, 256 n. 2 explains this irregularity by the sloppiness of the authors of the excerpts.

[32] De Jong 1997, 274 and 274 n. 95.

[33] Wikander 1946, 78.

[34] Wikander 1946, 78. On this aspect of Zoroastrianism see Boyce 1975, 454–465; de Jong 1997, 343–350. Remarkably, de Jong 1997, 274–275, who otherwise opts for a natural phenomenon, remarks that "the presence of natural fires in this region would probably also have attracted the attention of Zoroastrians".

[35] Jones 1930, 196.

divine name is otherwise unknown and is consequently given two different emendations, into either ’Αναίτιδιος or Ναναίας.[36] Each reading should lead to different identifications.[37] The reading ’Αναίτιδιος can be referred to two other places in Strabo, namely 11.8.4 and 15.3.15, wherein he mentions a goddess named ’Αναίτις. This would correspond to the Iranian goddess Anahita.[38] The second emendation can be enhanced by a parallel in Polybios 10.27, who recalls the temple of the goddess Αἴνη in Ecbatana. This reading suggests a different identification of a female goddess in Strabo 16.1.4 – Nanaia.[39] The origin of this goddess is not Iranian in character, since she originated as a Babylonian and Elamite goddess.[40] However, Nanaia was later integrated into the Zoroastrian pantheon, and worshipped throughout the Iranian-speaking world, and in other places of the Middle East.[41] This identification should be preferred since it is based on a more-straightforward emendation. To sum up, Strabo’s text is very informative about the cultural background of Adiabene and testifies to the presence of two traditions in Adiabene – Greek and Iranian.

According to Strabo, the region of Arbela has clearly defined borders to the north and south marked by two rivers. Λύκος and Κάπρος are Greek names given to many rivers and humans in ancient times,[42] meaning “wolf” and “boar” respectively.[43] It was quite customary to give names of wild animals to rivers in order to express the unbridled and frequently dangerous nature of their streams. Indeed, the impetuous course of both Zabs made such a strong impression on Arab geographers that they called them “demonically possessed”.[44] Apart from Strabo, the Lykos river as a tributary of the Tigris is also mentioned in Polyb. 5.51.3 and Ptol. *Geog*. 6.1.7 (in both cases coupled with the Kapros).[45] Further, the Lykos river is also recalled in sources describing the retreat of the Persian

[36] Jones 1930, 196, Radt 2005, 278–279 and Radt 2009, 256 n. 2: ’Αναία; Kramer 1853, 285: τῆς ’Αναίας ἱερὸν; Coray 1814, 338 suggests ’Αναίτιδιος; Müller, Dübner 1853, 628: τῆς ’Ανέας ἱερὸν.

[37] This is sometimes overlooked by commentators, who do not always distinguish between these, in fact, different goddesses. See Biffi 2002, 136; Radt 2009, 256.

[38] Biffi 2002, 136; Radt 2009, 256 n. 2.

[39] Hoffman 1880, 273.

[40] De Jong 1997, 273–275.

[41] De Jong 1997, 273–275. On Nanaia (and Anahita) see Hoffman 1880, 134–161; de Jong 1997, 268–284; Briant 2002, 253–254.

[42] See on Lykos in *RE* 13.2, 2389–2417.

[43] Weissbach 1919b, 1921; Swoboda 1919, 1921–1922.

[44] Bosworth 2002, 366.

[45] Besides this, another Lykos is mentioned by Pliny in *HN* 5.20.84, but it cannot be identified with that of Strabo (according to Biffi 2002, 135), but is rather a tributary of the upper Euphrates in Armenia (according to Weissbach 1927, 2391). Our Lykos is apparently mentioned in *Ant*. 13.251 but without reference to either the Tigris or the Kapros.

army after the battle near Gaugamela. They mention a bridge built upon the Lykos that accounted for the only retreat route of Dareios and the Persians (Curtius Rufus 4.9.9; 4.16.8; 4.16.16 and Arr., *Anab*. 3.15.4). In turn, Κάπρος is recalled as one of the main rivers in Laodikea, often coupled with another Laodikean river, the Lykos.[46] The Kapros river as a Tigris tributary is mentioned in Str. 16.1.4, Polyb. 5.51.3, and Ptol. *Geog*. 6.1.7, always paired with the Lykos.

Both the Lykos and the Kapros are widely identified as the Great and Little Zab.[47] "Zabu elu" ("the upper Zab") and "Zabu shupalu" ("the lower Zab") occur in Assyrian texts from the times of Tukultiapilesarra I (c. 1100 BCE) to the reigns of Ashurnasipal II (883 to 859 BCE) and Shalmaneser III (859–824 BCE).[48] Ζάβας or Ζαβᾶς, sometimes with the additions of ὁ μέγας or ὁ μικρὸς or ὁ ἕτερος are used in Byzantine sources to refer to the Great Zab and the Little Zab respectively.[49] Further, "Zaba" and "Zav" function in Syriac and Later Armenian to describe the rivers around the region of Arbela. By the same token, two Hellenistic sources make use of names in Greek that may closely echo indigenous names of the Lykos and Kapros rivers. This would not be unusual for a region that has always featured multilingualism. The first candidate is the Zerbis river, recalled by Pliny in *HN* 6.30.118 as a tributary of the Tigris in Mesopotamia. According to Weissbach, the Zerbis is identical to the Kapros.[50] This is, however, unlikely, since in the next sentence Pliny uses the Greek name Lykos for a river rising in the mountains of Armenia (and this is apparently the Great Zab). It would be inconsistent for Pliny to have once used a Greek name and once a local non-Greek name to refer to two twin rivers within two consecutive sentences. What is more, Pliny's Zerbis is said to flow through the country of the Azoni, who in turn are reported to adjoin the Gordueni and the Silices with the Orontes (west of which is located Gaugamela). In contrast, Pliny's Lykos is said to rise in the mountains of Armenia and to flow through the country of the Sitrae, located above ("supra") the above-mentioned Silices.[51] Thus, geographically we have two different rivers: Pliny's Lykos can relatively easily be identified with the river bearing the same name in other sources (Polyb. 5.51.3; Ptol. *Geog*. 6.1.7; Curt. 4.9.9, 4.16.8, 4.16.16; and Arr. *Anab*. 3.15.4), while the Zerbis seems to be placed more north-west than the Great Zab, perhaps it can be tentatively

[46] Ruge 1919, 1921.

[47] Weissbach 1919b, 1921; Hansman 1987, 277; Kessler 1999b, 265; Kessler 1999c, 575; Bosworth 2002, 366.

[48] Weissbach 1919b, 1921; Bosworth 2002, 366.

[49] Weissbach 1927, 2391–2392; Bosworth 2002, 366.

[50] Weissbach 1919b, 1921.

[51] As Kahrstedt 1950, 65 puts it, these peoples, as well as the Azoni mentioned above, are "obscure Stämme" or "Räuberkantone zwischen den politischen Einheiten".

identified as the Botan river.[52] Again, according to Kessler, the Ζαπάτης mentioned by Xenophon (*Anab.* 2.5.1 and 3.3.6 as a river of four plethra in width) corresponds to the Lykos.[53] This Greek word is indeed linguistically close to the Semitic original; and so this identification is likely.[54] Summing up, the identification of the Lykos and Kapros rivers as the Zabs is based mainly on geographical grounds, namely the references to the Zabs and the Lykos and Kapros rivers have the same location. This is especially true for the Great Zab and the Lykos, since the Lykos as a tributary of the Tigris is mostly referred to the vicinity of Gaugamela. Furthermore, Marquart has advanced a philological hypothesis aiming to back up this geographical identification. He argues that there is a link between the etymology of Zab, through the old Aramaic and Syriac "deba" and the old Armenian "gail", both meaning "wolf",[55] and that of Lykos, also meaning "wolf".[56]

Another important passage devoted to Adiabene by Strabo can be found in 16.1.19:

*Now as for Adiabene, the most of it consists of plains; and though it too is a part of Babylonia, still it has a ruler of its own; and in some places it borders also on Armenia. For the Medes and the Armenians, and third the Babylonians, the three greatest of the tribes in that part of the world, were so constituted from the beginning, and continued to be, that at times opportune for each they would attack one another and in turn become reconciled. And this continued down to the supremacy of the Parthians. Now the Parthians rule over the Medes and the Babylonians, but they have never once ruled over the Armenians; indeed, the Armenians have been attacked many times, but they could not be overcome by force, since Tigranes opposed all attacks mightily, as I have stated in my description of Armenia. Such, then, is Adiabene; and the Adiabeni are also called Sakkopodes; but I shall next describe Mesopotamia and the tribes on the south, after briefly going over the accounts given of the customs of Assyria.*

This passage is differently organized than Strabo 16.1.3–4. The mention of Babylonia and Armenia leads him to a digression on the Parthians and the Armenians, and only by the end of the passage does he go back to the Adiabene topic. In the end, Strabo 16.1.3–4 ends up delivering only two – though still significant – details on Adiabene. First, Adiabene's relation to Babylonia helps us understand 16.1.3–4 – Adiabene, being geographically a distinctive region south of the the Lykos, is presented as a district politically dependent on Babylonia, though

[52] Marquart 1930, 340. By contrast, see Minorsky 1944, 244–245.
[53] Kessler 1999c, 575, Biffi 2002, 135.
[54] Kessler 1999b, 265; Kessler 1999c, 575.
[55] Marquart 1930, 429–430.
[56] *LSJA* 1968, 1064.

with a certain amount of independence. Secondly, the name Sakkopodes (Σακκόποδες) used here for the Adiabeneans is otherwise unknown.[57] It literally means "sack feet";[58] its uniqueness leads Kramer to call it "suspicious"[59] and Meineke to eject it from the text.[60] The only attempt to correlate its meaning to the other data we have on Adiabene was made by the French classical scholar of the 17th century CE, Claudius Salmasius, who related the meaning of Sakkopodes to the etymology of Adiabene based on the verb διαβαίνειν (see Amm. Marc. 23.6.20–22). Consequently, the Adiabeneans would be those who cannot go out of Adiabene [by crossing the rivers at a ford], and the Sakkopodes – those who move as if they had their legs inside a sack.[61] Yet, as we shall see below, the etymology of Adiabene based on the Greek verb διαβαίνειν is secondary, and as such cannot be used to explain another unknown etymology. Thus, the meaning of Sakkopodes still remains unexplained.

*Geographika* is a work that Strabo probably created during the last decades of his life that ended shortly after 24 CE.[62] Strabo's work is not, however, based on his own travels, but mainly on written sources.[63] In fact, Strabo is known for using many sources, both older and more recent ones.[64] One of the most important vehicles of information for Strabo is said to come from the traditions on Alexander's expedition to Persia.[65] This source tradition may go back to Eratosthenes, and consequently his sources to "the Alexander historians".[66] Taking into account the abundance of information on Greek elements in Adiabene and the fact that the vicinity of Adiabene happened to be the scene of the most important event during Alexander's campaign, the battle near Gaugamela, a lot of data in Strabo 16.1.3–4 can be attributed to that source tradition.[67]

The early dating of this stratum of Strabo's traditions is further confirmed by his, at first sight troubling, descriptions of Adiabene's subordinate connection to Babylonia. Yet, Strabo is indeed known is for transmitting older traditions, particularly with regard to Alexander, and *not always* attempting to bring them up to

[57] Kramer 1853, 293; Meineke 1877, 1039; Jones 1930, 224–225 n. 2; Radt 2009, 274; Biffi 2002, 160. Groskurd 1834, 398 instead suggests reading Saulopodes meaning "delicate walkers".

[58] Jones 1930, 224–225 n. 2.

[59] Kramer 1853, 293.

[60] Meineke 1877, 1039.

[61] Salmasius 1689, 662–663.

[62] Drijvers 1998, 279.

[63] Romm 1997, 360–361.

[64] Drijvers 1998, 281–282.

[65] Aly 1957, 158. What is more, the tradition of Alexander's campaign into Persia was still alive among Roman leaders embarking on Parthian wars – see Sonnabend 1986, 266; Lerouge 2007, 79–80.

[66] Pearson 1983.

[67] Aly 1957, 158–159.

date with the conditions of his own time.[68] This is the case with the Babylonian region, among others.[69] In this light, Strabo's remarks on Adiabene can be understood very well. Babylon (as the center of the province of Babylonia) of the Seleucid period underwent a rapid decline in its importance from "world center to a provincial town".[70] Especially the foundation of new political centers of the Seleucid kingdom, Seleukeia-on-the-Tigris and Antiochia-on-the-Orontes, contributed to this change.[71] Thus, the picture of Adiabene as a province (ὑπαρχία or τόπος)[72] of the satrapy of Babylonia is reliant on the early-Seleucid perspective.[73] Such a constellation would never occur again in the Hellenistic and Parthian periods, and later on the Adiabene region would tend politically and culturally towards north-western Mesopotamia.[74]

At the same time, Strabo explicitly names in his opus some more recent sources, particularly Apollodoros of Artemita and Poseidonios of Apameia.[75] Especially the contribution of Apollodoros must have been important to Strabo's knowledge of Adiabene, since Artemita was located on the Diyala river, close to Adiabene, and consequently Apollodoros must have been very familiar with this region. For instance, it is most likely that the foundation of Demetrias in Adiabene should be attributed to one of the Seleucid rulers of the 2nd c. BCE bearing this name, and so Strabo's information on Demetrias cannot be referred to earlier writers. To summarize, Strabo apparently used a number of different sources in 16.1.3–4, but regardless of their provenience they all reflect earlier conditions than those in Strabo's own time, and can be judged as very reliable, particularly with regard to Greek cultural elements in Adiabene.

Next, the provenience of Strabo's 16.1.19 is harder to establish due to its non-uniform structure. On the one hand, Adiabene's relation to Babylonia speaks in favor of the same background as in 16.1.3–4; on the other, the digression material focused on Tigranes cuts the passage into two parts and the report on Tigranes is believed to belong to a different tradition, namely to reports on

[68] Clarke 2002, 301; Lerouge 2007, 224–226.

[69] Clarke 2002, 301; Lerouge 2007, 225.

[70] Boiy 2004, 137–166

[71] Boiy 2004, 193.

[72] Bickerman 1983, 8; Boiy 2004, 193.

[73] Jacobs 1994, 65, 147–152 (esp. 150: "spätachämenidische Verhältnisse").

[74] This conclusion is based on our knowledge of the Adiabene material culture, especially on the character of pottery finds (from Nimrud, Abu Sheetha, and Arbela), as well as on the circulation of coins found in Nimrud and the craftsmanship of coffins from Qasr Shemamok and Ashur. On some important points concerning ceramics from Adiabene see D. Oates, J. Oates 1958, 134; D. Oates 1968, 65–66 and 125–126, as well as Nováček et al. 2008, 279–281. On the coffins see Colledge 1977, 110 and on the coins, Jenkins 1958, 166–168.

[75] Lasserre 1975, 13–15; Nikonorov 1998, 107–122; Drijvers 1998, 281–282.

Pompey's expedition in the East.[76] Thus, we apparently have two traditions in 16.1.19, not really mixed together but set next to each other: one goes back to the tradition of the oldest Greek reports on the Persian world handed down to later Greek historians, and the other belongs to the late 1st-century BCE tradition with its roots in the Roman campaigns in Armenia.[77] The latter tradition is apparently the source of those passages in Strabo (11.4.8 and 11.14.12) which convey the idea of Armenian Adiabene.

Another important writing contributing to our knowledge of the geography of Adiabene is *Historia Naturalis* by Pliny the Elder (23 CE–79 CE).[78] Like Strabo's *Geographika*, *Historia Naturalis* contains a considerable number of references to Adiabene that briefly recall this country while sketching the borders of other countries and peoples (*HN* 5.13.66; 6.9.25; 6.16/42.44; 6.10.28). Precisely, Adiabene is located beyond ("ultra") Armenia (5.13.66), as far as Armenia's frontier extends (6.9.25). When Pliny characterizes Armenia's frontier by mentioning other countries and peoples, Adiabene is recalled as adjoining the "Ceraunian Mountains" and Sophene,[79] Armenia's neighbor (6.10.28 and 6.16.42), and the part of Adiabene bordering on Sophene is presented as a mountain range ("iugum").

Though most of Pliny's references to Adiabene appear as an aside to his interest in Armenia, three times – in 5.13.66, 6.10.28 and 6.16.42 – he goes on to focus more directly on Adiabene. In 5.13.66 Pliny briefly adds that Adiabene was anciently called Assyria ("Adiabene Assyria ante dicta"), and in 6.10.28 he specifies Adiabene's own borders as marked by the Tigris and inaccessible mountains ("montes invii"), as well as by Media "on the left" ("ab laeva eius regio Medorum"). Finally, Pliny's most profound reference to Adiabene can be found in 6.16.42 where, having recalled the extension of Armenia's frontier towards Commagene, he goes on to say:

*Adiabene, where the land of the Assyrians begins; the part of Adiabene nearest to Syria is Arbelitis, where Alexander conquered Darius. The Macedonians have given to the whole of Adiabene the name of Mygdonia, from its likeness to Mygdonia in Macedon. Its towns are Alexandria and Antiochia, the native name for which is Nesebis; it is 750 miles from Artaxata. There was also once the town of Ninos, which was on the Tigris facing west, and was formerly very famous.*

Indeed, Pliny's Adiabene is most frequently recalled as an aside to the descriptions of Armenia. However, such descriptions are of a strictly geographical

[76] Aly 1957, 162–163.
[77] Aly 1957, 159–160.
[78] Keyser 1999, 235–242. Pliny's text used here is that of Rackham 1942.
[79] On Sophene see Syme 1995, 51–57 and Kessler 2001, 721–722.

character, and there is really not much of a hint at a political agenda that in turn seems to be underlying some of Strabo's references to Adiabene as located within the realm of Armenia. Thus, an ingenious term, Armenian Adiabene, coined by Sellwood[80] fits more appropriately some of Strabo's descriptions of the relation between Armenia and Adiabene than those in Pliny.

Pliny's Adiabene is a very different notion from Strabo's Adiabene. In Strabo Adiabene was a small district separated from the region of Nineveh ("Ninos") and politically dependent on Babylonia. In Pliny Arbelitis, that is the region around Arbela, is only one district of Adiabene. Pliny's Adiabene includes Nineveh and stretches far north-west. What is more, its extension goes so far that it goes over the western side of the Tigris and consequently reaches Nisibis ("Nesebis"), located on the Mygdonios river, a tributary of the Khabur river (the so-called Syrian Khabur).[81] Nisibis is not only included in the description of Adiabene, but the very name of Adiabene is attached to the region of Nisibis.

Where does the difference between Strabo and Pliny in the size of Adiabene come from? Strabo completed his work probably by 25 CE,[82] but his description of Adiabene's borders came from the Early Seleucid tradition.

Pliny in turn prepared his opus magnum by 79 CE.[83] A valuable insight into the political processes in the region that echo in Pliny's texts can be gained from three historiographical writings reporting on the events from the 70s BCE until 50 CE. First, in Plutarch's *Bioi Paralleloi* we hear of an anonymous ruler of Adiabene engaged in military operations at the battle of Tigranocerta (*Luc*. 26.1, 26.4, 27.6, 29.2) during the Third Mithridatic War (74 or 73–63 BCE). Especially telling is the political constellation of that time. The theater of war was around the city of Tigranocerta and, except for great players like Rome and Parthia, participating regional armed forces included Pontus, Armenia, Sophene, Gordyene, and Adiabene. The king of Adiabene was an ally of the Parthians, but his role on the political scene was somewhat less important than that played by the kings of Sophene and Gordyene, not to mention the rulers of Armenia and Pontus. During the Third Mithridatic War Adiabene was still a small state between the Lykos and Kapros rivers (see Arbelitis in *Pomp. 36*), plus perhaps some territory south of this river basin. The situation is very different in our second historiographical source, that is Josephus' *Ant.* 20.17–96. This passage,

[80] Sellwood 1985, 457.

[81] At least two cities in Mesopotamia bore this name. The geographical context of Adiabene's extension in Pliny clearly excludes another Nisibis near Neherdea in Babylonia. On both locations see Sturm 1936a, 714–757; Pigulevskaja 1963, 49–59; Kessler 2000, 962–963; Oppenheimer 1983, 319–334 (a basic collection of sources on Nisibis); Oppenheimer 1993, 313–333.

[82] Romm 1997, 359.

[83] Keyser 1999, 235–242, Murphy 2004, 4.

which is extremely panegyrical towards the Adiabene royalty, conveys only two, albeit very important, geographical details concerning the territory of 1st-century CE Adiabene. Firstly, a young Izates was given by his father Monobazos I the territory of Gordyene[84] (*Ant*. 20.24). Izates' stay in Gordyene can probably be dated to a period between 22/23 and 30 CE, thus Gordyene must have been incorporated by Adiabene by that time.[85] Secondly, Izates as king of Adiabene received Nisibis from Artabanos II (*Ant*. 20.68). This episode can be dated to the last years of Artabanos' reign, most likely between 37 and 40–41 CE.[86] Josephus' portrait of the political and territorial significance of 1st-century CE Adiabene is akin to that presented in Pliny. In both cases, Adiabene is a considerable political entity extending far north-west out of a small region of Arbelitis. The 1st-century CE political landscape in the upper Tigris and Euphrates region is additionally enlightened by Tacitus' report (*Ann.* 12.13) on Meherdates' expedition against Gotarzes in 49–50 CE.[87] The invasion forces are said to have camped at Edessa, and then detoured via Armenia. As Tacitus puts it, once the coalition crossed the Tigris, they reached the country of Adiabene ("tramissoque amne Tigri permeant Adiabenos").[88] On their further march, the coalition captured the city of Nineveh ("urbs Ninos"), described additionally as "the capital of Assyria" and "a fortress" ("sedes Assyriae" and "castellum").[89] What does Tacitus' report on Meherdates'

[84] This interpretation is based on an emendation of the otherwise unknown Καρρων into Καρδων. This was suggested first by Bochart 1651, 22 and thoroughly argued for by Marquart 1903, 289–291 n. 4. This emendation is widely accepted. See Debevoise 1938, 165; Kahrstedt 1950, 66; Feldman 1965, 402 n. b; Kahle 1959, 270 n. 4; Barish 1983, 69–70. Another emendation of Carron into Carrhae (according to Boettger 1879, 78–79) is highly unlikely both geographically and historically. By contrast, the following premises speak in favor of Bochart's reading. Firstly, Josephus can distinguish between Carrhae in Mesopotamia (Κάρρα or Χάρρα) and Gordyene in Armenia (*Ant*. 1.152, 244, 285 and *Ant*. 1.93). Secondly, *Ant*. 20.25 characterizes Carron as a country where the remains of Noah's ark are preserved, and where a great abundance of amomum is produced. Thirdly, Josephus locates Noah's ark in Armenia (*Ant*. 1.93; 1.95; 10.23). Fourthly, some Jewish and Hellenistic traditions, known to Josephus, also locate the ark in Armenia or Gordyene or in Gordyene as part of Armenia (Berossos and Nikolaos apud *Ant*. 1.93 and 1.94–95; *Targum Gen*. 8.4). Last of all, the fact that the Adiabene kingdom possessed Gordyene at the time of Monobazos I makes perfect sense for the subsequent acquisition of Nisibis, located west of Gordyene, during the reign of Izates II.

[85] For a basic chronology of the Adiabene royalty in the 1st century CE see Brüll 1874, 65–72; Graetz 1877, 241–255; Neusner 1969: 64–65. However, Neusner's chronology, being indebted to Brüll, needs some corrections.

[86] Schottky 1991, 86–87; Olbrycht 1997, 82.

[87] Dąbrowa 1983, 121–122.

[88] The text according to Jackson 1937a, 332- 333.

[89] This phrase in Tacitus is highly problematic. Most commentators have inserted a conjunction, "et" to separate "sedes Assyriae" from "castellum" either for philological reasons or thinking that *Ann*. 12.3 understands the castellum as a place of the battle between Alexander and Dareios, and in fact this was not Nineveh. Thus, the troops would have passed first by Nineveh and then by

expedition tell us about the geographical and political shape of Adiabene at that time? First, besides the Romans and the Parthian sovereigns, we have two local rulers who play important roles on the political scene; these are Acbaros and Izates, rulers of Osrhoene and Adiabene respectively. Remarkably, there is not a word about Sophene and Gordyene. If we compare this political landscape with the reality of the Third Mithridatic War, it becomes clear that substantial geopolitical developments took place in the region that led to the disappearance of Sophene and Gordyene as political entities in the region and the space left by them was filled by Osrhoene and Adiabene.[90] Secondly, it is revealing to observe the route along which the coalition forces moved. The route led from Edessa to Armenia, and across the Tigris to Adiabene. The territory of Adiabene is said to have been accessible to the coalition only upon the crossing of the Tigris. More precisely, the name of Adiabene is applied by Tacitus when the coalition crossed the Tigris from Armenia but before it reached Nineveh. Thus, in *Ann.* 12.3 Adiabene in fact serves as a name for the territory north of the Tigris and west of its tributary, Lykos,[91] and Nineveh is part of that region.

The historiographical accounts by Plutarch, Josephus and Tacitus, though not focused on the geography of Adiabene, help us understand the difference between Strabo's and Pliny's description of Adiabene and, secondly, show us the nature of Pliny's contribution. The difference between Strabo and Pliny does not result from inaccuracies on the part of the writers, but reflects the geopolitical processes that took place in the upper Tigris and Euphrates region. At some point between the mid–1st century BCE and the mid–1st century CE, Adiabene started to expand its territory northwest. Secondly, the case of Pliny's text, being formally only a geographical description, shows that geographical and political dimensions can very easily overlap in ancient geographical and ethnographical accounts. This phenomenon becomes even more acute when we take a look at our next source – Ptolemy's *Geographike Hyphegesis*.

Ptolemy's opus magnum is explicitly acknowledged by its author to be heavily (though not entirely) based on Marinos of Tyre, whose work is believed to reflect

---

a certain "castellum". See Furneaux 1907, 76–77 (his idea that a fort on the site of the battle near Gaugamela may have been built by the Macedonians is not confirmed by any sources, and as such is a pure guess); Jackson 1937a, 332–333, n. 6; Wuilleumier 1976, 55, n. 2; Koestermann 1967, 130–131. Remarkably, the manuscript Agr contains the phrase "et Arbela castellum", and Bivar 1983, 77 and n. 3 follows this reading. By contrast, Furneaux 1907, 76 and Koestermann 1967, 130 deem it as gloss and reject it. We in turn follow the interpretation of Hutchinson 1934, 85–88 (assessed positively by Reade 1998, 66) who, on philological and historical grounds, opts for the unemended text, in keeping with Tacitus' style and because Nineveh could again have become a castellum.

[90] Kahrstedt 1950, 65.

[91] According to Furneaux 1907, 76.

the state of Roman knowledge on the geography of the inhabited world from the first decade of the 2nd century CE.[92]

Adiabene in Ptolemy's work appears on the account of the treatment of Assyria in the sixth book (6.1.1–7).[93] Assyria is understood by Ptolemy as the whole area between Armenia to the north, Mesopotamia to the west, Susiane to the south, and Media to the east (6.1.1). According to Ptolemy (6.1.2) Adiabene (Ἀδιαβηνή) is located between the Arrapachitis (Ἀρραπαχῖτις) and the Garamaioi (Γαραμαῖοί). Next, Καλακηνή, lies above Adiabene, and the Arbelitis region (ἡ Ἀρβηλίτις χώρα) above the Garamaioi. Furthermore, Ninos (6.1.3), Gaugamela (6.1.5) and Arbela (6.1.6) (Νῖνος, Γαυγάμηλα, Ἄρβηλα) are recalled by Ptolemy among many Assyrian "town and villages" (πόλεις καὶ κῶμαι). Finally, Ptolemy mentions three rivers in Assyria joining the Tigris. The first and the second are the Lykos (Λύκος) and Kapros (Κάπρος) rivers (ποταμοί), and the third is the Gorgos (Γόργος).

What can be said about the toponyms and ethnonyms used by Ptolemy to refer to Adiabene's borders? The toponym Arrapachitis is a little problematic, since this Greek form appears only in Ptolemy 6.1.2.[94] However, this Greek form has a linguistically close parallel in Assyrian sources: "Arrapha" (a region around modern Kirkuk).[95] This identification, however, means that Strabo's location of Arrapachitis is mistaken, since Arrapachitis is in fact located south of the Little Zab, and not north of the Great Zab.[96] The Garamaioi of Ptolemy 6.1.2 may be identical to the Assyrian "Gurumu" attested since Tiglatpileser I (745–727 BCE).[97] According to Streck, the Syriac name of the medieval Beth-Garmai is akin to the Greek "Garamaioi".[98] Beth-Garamai can undoubtedly be located south of the Little Zab.[99] Next, Kalachene is also attested in Str.11.4.8, 11.14.12 and 15.1.1, and the Greek form seems to correspond to the Assyrian "Kalah" or "Kalhu", and so can be identified as the city of Nimrud and its surroundings.[100] Finally, Streck identifies the Gorgos river as the modern Diyala on exclusively geographical grounds.[101]

Ptolemy's Adiabene lies south of Nimrud and its southern border is marked by the Kapros river. This is in fact the territory recognized as Adiabene by Strabo and the region of Arbelitis known to Pliny and Plutarch. Did Adiabene then re-

[92] Berggren, Jones 2000, 23–24.
[93] The text and translation used here is that of Humbach, Ziegler 1998.
[94] Fränkel 1896, 1225.
[95] Fränkel 1896, 1225; Herzfeld 1968, 229.
[96] Herzfeld 1968, 229.
[97] Streck 1912a, 750–751.
[98] Streck 1912a, 750–751.
[99] Streck 1912a, 750–751.
[100] Weissbach 1919a, 1530; Kessler 1999a, 146.
[101] Streck 1912b, 1660.

turn by the first decade of the 2nd c. CE to its modest territorial shape from before the 1st century CE? As we shall see on the basis of the historiographical writings of Cassius Dio and Ammianus Marcellinus, the answer can by no means be positive. The thing is rather that Ptolemy's descriptions are of an entirely geographical character, and there is no hint whatsoever of a political meaning of terms applied to proper names. Ptolemy's description is devoted to that part of the Adiabene territory that was also known as the core of the old Adiabene to Pliny, who otherwise located Nisibis in Adiabene too.

Both Cassius Dio's (circa 155/164 CE – post 229 CE)[102] and Ammianus Marcellinus' (c. 330 – c. 395 CE)[103] references to Adiabene are made in the context of the Roman military campaigns in Mesopotamia. Cassius Dio's *Romaike Historia* 68.26.1–4 describes the advance of the Roman troops under the command of Emperor Trajan against Parthia in 115 BCE, and Adiabene happened to lie on the route of the Roman legions.[104]

*Trajan at the beginning of spring hastened into the enemy's country. And since the region near the Tigris is bare of timber suitable for building ships, he brought his boats, which had been constructed in the forests around Nisibis, to the river on wagons; for they had been built in such a way that they could be taken apart and put together again. He had great difficulty in bridging the stream opposite the Gordyaean Mountains, as the barbarians had taken their stand on the opposite bank and tried to hinder him …. And the Romans crossed over and gained possession of the whole of Adiabene. This is a district of Assyria in the vicinity of Ninos; and Arbela and Gaugamela, near which places Alexander conquered Dareios, are also in this same country. Adiabene, accordingly, has also been called Atyria in the language of the barbarians, the double S being changed to T.*

Is Dio's Adiabene a tiny region known to us from Strabo and Ptolemy? Not only does Adiabene include Gaugamela and Nineveh ("Ninos"), both located outside the Arbelitis, but Dio even sees Nineveh as the center of Adiabene. Furthermore, as in the case of the Meherdates' campaign, only upon crossing the Tigris does Adiabene become accessible to invading troops. The crossing of the Tigris took place between the region of Nisibis (on the western bank of the Tigris) and the Gordyaean Mountains. Thus, Adiabene's extension can safely be located as reaching north-west along the eastern bank of the Tigris and at least as far as the region of Gordyene. Additionally, as in Pliny we again hear of another name of Adiabene – Assyria/Atyria.

[102] Mathisen 1997, 101–109.
[103] Mathisen 1999, 7–16.
[104] The translation used here is that of Cary 1925.

In turn, in his *Res Gestae* Ammianus Marcellinus (c. 330 – c. 395 CE)[105] refers to Adiabene only briefly in 18.7.1 and 23.3.1, but he also devotes a distinctive account to Adiabene (23.6.20–22) within his lengthy geographical and ethnographical digression on Persia in Book 23.[106] In 18.7.1 Ammianus mentions Nineveh on the occasion of the march of the Persian expedition of Sapor II in 359 CE. Nineveh is characterized as a great city of Adiabene ("Postquam reges Nineve Adiabenae ingenti civitate transmissa"). Again, in 23.3.1 Ammianus refers to Adiabene as a transit country through which runs one of two royal routes out of Carrhae to Persia (on the occasion of Emperor Julian's stay in Carrhae in 363 CE) – through Adiabene and the Tigris region ("laeva per Adiabenam et Tigridem"), while the other goes through Assyria and the Euphrates area ("dextra per Assyrios et Euphraten").

Finally, Ammianus' main passage on Adiabene can be found in *Res Gestae* 23.6.20–22, which informs us of the name of Adiabene and its location, and finally gives an enumeration of the cities on its territory:

*Within this area is Adiabena, called Assyria in ancient times, but by long custom changed to this name because, lying between the navigable rivers Ona and Tigris it could never be approached by a ford; for we Greeks for transire say διαβαίνειν. At least, this is the opinion of the ancients. But I myself say that there are two perpetually flowing rivers to be found in these lands, the Diabas and Adiabas, which I myself have crossed, and over which there are bridges of boats; and therefore it is to be assumed that Adiabena was named from them, as from great rivers Egypt was named, according to Homer, as well as India, and the Euphratensis, before my time called Commagena; likewise from the Hiberus, Hiberia (now Hispania), and the province of Baetica from the noble river Baetis. In this Adiabena is the city of Ninus, which once possessed the rule over Persia, perpetuating the name of Ninus, once a most powerful king and the husband of Semiramis; also Ecbatana,*[107] *Arbela, and Gaugamela, where Alexander, after various other battles, overthrew Darius in a hot contest.*

[105] Mathisen 1999, 7–16. Ammianus' text used here is that of Rolfe 1940.

[106] Let us recall the discussion as to whether Ammianus' remarks on Adiabene come from the realm of his personal experience as one of the participants in the Roman campaign, or whether they were copied by Ammianus from Dio's description of Trajan's invasion. See Dilleman 1962, 306–307; Seyfarth 1970, 228: 88; den Boeft, Drijvers, den Hengst, Teitler 1998, XV-XX; 36, 152; Teitler 1999, 216–217; Feraco 2004, 154.

[107] The reference to Ecbatana must be Ammianus' lapsus, since in 23.6.9 he himself recalls Ecbatana as a Median city. Fontaine 1977b, 73 n. 164 suggests that Ammianus could have misread "Ecbatana" for Σαρβίνα (or Σάρβηνα) in his source, Ptol. *Geog*. 6.1.5, since the latter is enumerated by Ptolemy between Gaugamela and Arbela. Alternatively, the origin of this mistake could come from that fact all three cities, Gaugamela, Arbela and Ecbatana are reported in the Alexandrian traditions as being captured one by another, thus the link between

For the third time in ancient literature (Plin. *HN* 13.66 and Cass. Dio 68.26.1–4 previously) we read that Adiabene used to be called Assyria. The link between Adiabene and Assyria is not only based on the etymology, though it is its most striking expression, but also has a geographical dimension. Namely, in Plin. *HN* 6.16.42 Adiabene is called the most advanced frontier of Assyria, ("Adiabene Assyriorum initium"); in Ptol. *Geog*. 6.1.1–7 Adiabene is presented as one of many countries in Assyria; by the same token, for Cass. Dio 68.26.1–4 Adiabene is the part of Assyria around the city of Nineveh. The strong connection in our sources between Adiabene and Assyria is undisputed, and calls for an explanation.

Linguistically, there is not the slightest link between the Greek Adiabene and Assyria, and so there is no possibility that one evolved from the other. Further, the etymology of Adiabene based on the Greek verb διαβαίνειν is a *Volksetymologie*.[108] What other options do we have left? Basically, we have two possibilities. First, the Greek term Adiabene is widely said to be connected with the Aramaic Hadyab that appears in the Talmudic literature (in different forms such as הדייב or חדייב or הדייף), as well as in *the Chronicle of Arbela*.[109]

Unfortunately, the meaning of neither linguistic version is known. In terms of its provenience, most scholars think that the Greek form is derived from the Aramaic one,[110] although, theoretically, the other way round is possible too. However, the former option can be better explained historically. Namely, the Seleucid administration is believed to have been based on administrative units of the Achaemenid Empire and to have rendered their Aramaic names into Greek calques.[111] The other option is to look for the origin of the Greek Adiabene in Assyrian texts.[112] Namely, the striking parallel between Adiabene and the Assyrian place-name Zaban, that is thought to lie either on the Lower Zab or, more likely, south-east of the modern Kirkuk near the Diyala river.[113] Where, then, does the idea of Adiabene as Assyria come from? First, as a matter of introduction, we must remark that ancient sources do not always use terms such as Assyria, Atyria and Syria uniformly.[114] Even within one writing (e.g. *Res Gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus) Assyria can

---

these three cities and Alexander's exploits echoed in Ammianus' enumeration in 23.6.22 – see Feraco 2004, 160.

[108] Boettger 1879, 11–12; Fränkel 1894, 360; Huyse 1993, 97; Oelsner 1996, 112; Huyse 1999, 20.

[109] See Gottheil 1901, 191; Sokoloff 2002, 342. On *the Chronicle of Arbela* see Neusner 1966: 144–145, 147–150; Kawerau 1992: 548–549.

[110] Boettger 1879, 11–12; Fränkel 1894, 360; Sellwood 1985, 456; Huyse 1993, 97; Oelsner 1996, 112; Huyse 1999, 20.

[111] Bickerman 1983, 7–12, esp. 8; Sellwood 1985, 456.

[112] I owe this idea to Dr. J. Reade.

[113] See Parpola 1970, 379 and Abusch 2002, 261–262 n. 41.

[114] Nöldeke 1871, 443–468 and Herzfeld 1968, 306–308.

mean a specific part of the territory of the Persian kingdom (Amm. Marc. 23.6.14–15) or refer to all the territory between the Euphrates and the Tigris (Amm. Marc. 24.1.1; 23.2.6).[115] It seems, then, that Adiabene started to be associated with Assyria in a narrow sense because it lay more or less over there, where the ancient writers could locate the center of the ancient kingdom of Assyria and Adiabene accounted for the only recognizable political entity at the time of formation of relevant traditions.[116] Additionally, I suggest that particularly Adiabene's control over Nineveh contributed to this identification. After all, Nineveh was widely known by the ancients as the primeval capital of the great kingdom of Assyria (Pliny *HN* 5.13.6; Cass. Dio 68.26.1–4; Amm. Marc. 18.7.1 and 23.6.20–22).[117] Further, the identification of Adiabene with Assyria could additionally be clinched by the fact that Ashur too lay in the Parthian Adiabene,[118] and consequently Ashur could pass its city name to the name of the whole kingdom.

The identification of hydronyms recalled by Ammianus is somewhat complicated. The Ona river is not attested elsewhere. Fontaine suggests that "Onam" can be seen as a corrupted version of "Aboram", the river mentioned in Amm. Marc. 16.3.4, 23.5.1 and 23.5.4.[119] According to Fontaine, the corruption resulted from the removal of "ab", mistakenly understood as a preposition and consequently as doubling "inter".[120] Another change took place due to a spelling error, replacing "r" with "n".[121] Fontaine's corrected reading allows us to identify Ammianus' Ona river as the Khabur river[122] (two modern rivers bear this name – the Assyrian Khabur, a tributary of the Euphrates and the Syrian Khabur, a tributary of the Tigris). In the case of the Diabas and Adiabas, Streck identifies them as the Dialas (in Streck's opinion, Ammianus confused Diabas with Dialas) and Adialas rivers, thus the modern Diyala and Adhaim.[123] Streck's identification is rejected by Dilleman, mainly for geographical reasons. Dilleman instead proposed that Ammianus' Diabas and Adiabas correspond to the modern Great and Little Zabs.[124] This view is widely ac-

[115] De Jonge 1980, 263 n. a; den Boeft, Drijvers, den Hengst, Teitler 1998, 30–31, n. 2.7 and 148, n. 6.15.

[116] Boettger 1879, 12; see also Kahrstaedt 1950, 58–59.

[117] Moses of Chorene (*History of the Armenians* 1.8–9) places the royal archives of the Arsacids in Nineveh. Whatever we make of the accuracy of Moses' location of these archives, the information is significant in itself, since it shows the great importance of this city (it was important enough to think of it as the city of royal archives).

[118] Dilleman 1962, 112; Zehnder 2010, 341.

[119] Fontaine 1977b, 71 n. 159.

[120] Fontaine 1977b, 71 n. 159.

[121] Fontaine 1977b, 71 n. 159.

[122] Den Boeft, Drijvers, den Hengst, Teitler 1998, 152.

[123] Streck 1905a, 300–301; Streck 1905b, 319.

[124] Dilleman 1961, 141; Dilleman 1962, 305–308.

cepted.[125] Nevertheless, there is one problem with this hypothesis. Namely, in 18.6.19 and 18.7.1 Ammianus employs the name Anzaba (and not Diabas) to refer to the river widely identified as the Great Zab.[126] Fontaine attempts to alleviate this contradiction by interpreting Anzaba as a Latinized corruption of Adiabas.[127] Accordingly, "dy" could switch to "dz" ("ndz") or even "(n)dy".[128]

If Dilleman's and especially Fontaine's identifications are correct, Adiabene' extension in Ammianus fits what we know from Tacitus and Cassius Dio. Adiabene was from around the mid–1st century BCE until the 4th century CE not a small region between the Zabs; its extension reaches along the eastern bank of the Tigris far into the Gordyaean Mountains. The question arises as to whether Adiabene's political power reached the western bank of the Tigris, among others, the region of Nisibis. Some scholars believed that Nisibis still belonged to Adiabene at least in the 2nd century CE,[129] while others left the question open.[130] On the one hand, we lack positive testimony concerning Nisibis, and both Tacitus and Dio point to the Tigris as Adiabene's boundary. Furthermore, in the 2nd c. CE there is another very important player in this region – Hatra.[131] On the other hand, during Trajan's and Septimus Severus' campaigns the rulers of Adiabene, alongside the kings of Edessa, belonged to the most active players in the region (including the western bank of the Tigris).[132] Besides this, the emendation of Ammianus' Ona into Abora (the Khabur) could be used to enhance either interpretation, depending on which modern river bearing this name we consider to be a fit. Taking this all into account, we conclude that we cannot count Nisibis among Adiabene's possessions in the 2nd century CE, but we have to acknowledge the fact that Adiabene was an important player in the Upper Tigris and Euphrates region, and its political influence cannot be limited to the eastern bank of the Tigris alone.

## Conclusions

1. In fact, we possess a good number of sources containing geographical and ethnographical information on Adiabene. Our sources range from the 1st century BCE until the 4th century CE. Therefore, we are not forced to rely on only one

[125] Weissbach 1919b, 1921; Weissbach 1927, 2391–2392; de Jonge 1980, 205; Kessler 1999b, 265; Kessler 1999c, 576; Bosworth 2002, 366.
[126] De Jonge 1980, 204–205; den Boeft, Drijvers, den Hengst, Teitler 1998, 152.
[127] Fontaine 1977b, 71–72 n. 160.
[128] Fontaine 1977b, 71–72 n. 160.
[129] Longden 1931, 11; Debevoise 1938, 225.
[130] Kahrstedt 1950, 70, n. 48 and 50.
[131] See Frye 1984: 278–281.
[132] Longden 1931, 11.

text to obtain information on the environment and culture of Adiabene.[133] Further, we can distinguish a few groups in our sources on the basis of their character. First, the only text that can be categorized as ethnography in the strict sense is Strabo. Secondly, most of our sources offer geographical descriptions. Thirdly, some data of geographical and ethnographical character can also be gleaned from historiographical accounts. The question also arises as to the character of the terms used in our accounts. When can we speak about Adiabene in terms only of a geographical area and when can we state that we have to deal with Adiabene as a political entity that could temporarily expand its natural borders? Only in the case of Ptolemy can we say that his account is of an entirely geographical character. Strabo in turn focuses on the country, its culture and inhabitants, but also introduces political notions (hyparchia, archon) into his predominantly ethnographical treatment. Pliny is a good example of blending geographical and political dimensions, since he describes the geographical territory of Adiabene that is in fact a result of geopolitical processes. The same is true for historiographers like Tacitus, Dio and Ammianus.

2. It can hardly be said that Adiabene did not interest ancient geographers and ethnographers at all. However, a few thematic trends can be distinguished in our texts that apparently served as vehicles of transmission of information for Adiabene. First, in some traditions present in Strabo and Pliny that can be dated to the first half of the 1st century BCE Adiabene is recalled as an aside to Armenia, so to say, in the shadow of its mighty neighbor. This tradition has two dimensions – a geographical and a political one. In terms of geography, Adiabene was located on the frontier of Armenia; and politically speaking, this kind of tradition implies that Adiabene belonged to Armenia's realm of influence. The most probable setting of this tradition is the height of Armenia's power under Tigranes the Great.

Secondly, Adiabene is frequently recalled as part of the geographical region of Assyria, or even as a successor to the old Assyrian kingdom. This link is particularly enhanced by Adiabene's control over Nineveh, the primeval capital of the old Assyrian Empire. Thirdly, many brief references to Adiabene are made in the context of invasion of foreign troops into the Persian/Parthian territory. It is simply so because one of main travel routes from Rome to the Persian Gulf led through Adiabene.[134]

[133] See Oppenheimer 1983 who in his, otherwise excellent, listing of Greek and Latin sources on Adiabene includes only Amm. Marc. 23.6.20–22. In this way, Ammianus became for many scholars the best-known source of knowledge on Adiabene (except for *Ant*. 20.17–96). By contrast, as we could see, it is not the only source, and as a relatively late text it is not very representative either.

[134] There were several trade and long-distance routes between Rome and the Persian Gulf – one along the Euphrates by way of Carrhae, another traveled via Hatra, and finally the old Royal road on the eastern side of the Tigris (from modern Baghdad via Kirkuk, Erbil, Nineveh to Mosul;

Fourthly and finally, two other places located on the territory of Adiabene – Gaugamela and Arbela – frequently attract the attention of ancient writers. This interest was due to one event that happened to occur in the vicinity of both places – the battle between Alexander the Great and Dareios III of Persia. The 3rd-century CE writer Solinus (who otherwise slavishly copied Pliny's account on Adiabene in his work *Memorabilia* 46.1) smartly remarked that it was that battle that made the region around Arbela famous. Greek writers were naturally very interested in details of Alexander's campaign, and especially in its final battle. The fame of Alexander's exploits in the East also attracted the imagination of the Roman leaders, who embarked on Eastern campaigns and, in doing so, wanted to approximate the ideal of the great Alexander.[135] Thus, in all probability it was the tradition of Alexander's exploits in the East that served as a vehicle for transmission of information on Adiabene, especially on its Greek cultural elements (see also other very crisp references to Arbela in Diod. Sik. 17.53.4; Arr., *Anab*. 3.8.7, 6.11.5). In fact, our most detailed report on the cultural environment of Adiabene found in Strabo has its roots in this tradition. Therefore, but for the Alexander tradition, we would have probably known much less about Adiabene.

3. The fact that our sources come from a span of four centuries and also draw on older traditions enables us to sketch the geopolitical development of Adiabene in the Seleucid and Parthian periods. Adiabene originated as a relatively small province between the Lykos and Kapros rivers, plus perhaps some territory south of the Arbelitis. In the Early Seleucid Period, it was politically dependent on the mighty province of Babylonia. With the gradual decline of Babylon and the growing diversification of political centers in the Seleucid kingdom, Adiabene became emancipated from Babylonia. With the advent of the Parthian leadership in the region, Adiabene acquired the status of a vassal kingdom of the Parthian Empire. During the Third Mithridatic War it was still a small vassal kingdom of the Parthian Empire. However, in the second half of the 1st century BCE and especially in the first three decades of the 1st century CE Adiabene started to expand its territory north-west. From then on, Adiabene included Ashur and Nineveh, and extended alongside the eastern bank of the Tigris River to include Gordyene. Adiabene's influence is also recorded on the western bank of the Tigris. In the first half of the 1st century CE Nisibis belonged to Adiabene.

---

an alternate route went along the western bank of the Tigris from Baghdad to Mosul, but it was much less frequented as it was less secure). Adiabene proper controlled directly only the Royal route, but its influence over the western bank of the Tigris must have had an impact on at least some parts of the route via Nisibis and Hatra (a route section via Ashur and a connection from Nineveh to the Hatra route). For more details see Hauser 1995: 225–335, Reade 1998: 81, fig. 2; Reade 1999: 286–288 (esp. 287, fig. 5).

[135] Sonnabend 1986, 266; Lerouge 2007, 79–80.

Its influence on the western bank of the Tigris is also attested for the whole 2nd century CE. However, even at the height of Adiabene's territorial expansion in the 1st century CE Pliny shows awareness that the region of Arbelitis used to be the heartland of Adiabene. At the same time, the territory north-west of the Arbelitis alongside the eastern side of the Tigris appeared to be closely integrated into Adiabene as a political entity. The link between it and Nineveh seems even to be inherent. Apparently, while Adiabene's influence on the western bank of the Tigris was much more susceptible to changeable political constellations, the territory north-west of Arbelitis (along the eastern bank of the Tigris) became organically integrated with Adiabene's heartland.

4. It is in fact only Strabo who informs us directly on the cultural environment of Adiabene. In the light of his description of Adiabene, two cultural elements of its cultural landscape can be distinguished. Firstly, the Greek tradition in the form of political civic municipal organizations in Arbela, Demetrias and Nineveh (which of course must have brought further cultural consequences); secondly, the traditions of Iranian origin (the temple of Nanaia, probably places connected with the cult fire) are also well attested in Strabo. The literary sources presented above give us then a direct insight into a cultural environment of the Seleucid and Parthian Adiabene. Furthermore, they can also provide a starting point for further research. Namely, on the basis of the results of our analysis of geographical and ethnographical texts on Adiabene, we can accurately determine the territory whose archaeological sites will be of interest in the search for knowledge on its material culture. Indeed, one of the most urgent research tasks on Adiabene is to present its archaeological record, and secondly to confront this with the data inferred from geographical and ethnographical texts on Adiabene. We may then gain a broader picture of Adiabene as the country of origin of royal converts.

## Bibliography

**Texts, translations and commentaries**

Aly, W. 1957: *Strabon von Amaseia: Untersuchungen über Text, Aufbau und Quellen der Geographika*, Bonn.

Berggren, J.L., Jones, A. 2000: *Ptolemy's Geography: An Annotated Translation of the Theoretical Chapters*, Princeton.

Biffi, N. 2002: *Il Medio Oriente di Strabone. Libro XVI della Geografia. Introduzione, traduzione e commento*, Bari.

Boeft, J. den, Drijvers, J.W., Hengst, D. den, Teitler, H.C. 1998: *Philological and Historical Commentary on Ammianus Marcellinus,* vol. XXIII, Groningen.

Cary, E. 1925: *Dio's Roman History, with an English Translation by E.Cary*, vol. VIII, the Loeb Classical Library, London – New York.

Clark, C.U. 1910: *Ammiani Marcellini Rerum Gestarum libri qui supersunt, vol. I, Libri XIV-XXV*, Berlin.

Coray, A. 1814: *Géographie de Strabon, trad. du grec en français [par François Jean Gabriel de La Porte du Theil, Adamantios Coray, et Antoine-Jean Letronne; avec des notes et une introd. par Pascal François Joseph Gosselin], t. IV, p. I,* Paris.

Eyssenhardt, F. 1871: *Ammiani Marcellini Rerum Gestarum libri qui supersunt,* Berlin.

Feldman, L.H. 1995: *Josephus Jewish Antiquities, Book XX*, the Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts – London.

Feraco, F. 2004: *Ammiano Geografo. La digressione sulla Persia (23,6),* Napoli.

Fontaine, J. 1977a: *Ammien Marcellin, Histoire, livres XXIII-XXV. Texte et Traduction*, Paris.

Fontaine, J. 1977b: *Ammien Marcellin, Histoire, livres XXIII-XXV, Commentaire*, Paris.

Furneaux, H. 1907: *P. Cornelii Taciti Annalium ab excessu divi Augusti libri = The Annals of Tacitus, ed. with Introd. and Notes by Henry Furneaux*, *Vol. II, Books XI-XVI*, Oxford.

Gardthausen, V. 1874: *Rerum gestarum libri qui supersunt, recensuit notisque selectis instruxit V. Gardthausen*, vol. I, Leipzig.

Humbach, H., Ziegler, S. 1998: *Ptolemy. Geography, Book 6: Middle East, Central and North Asia, China. Part 1, Text and English/German Translation by S. Ziegler*, Wiesbaden.

Jackson, J. 1937a: *Tacitus, The Annals*, *with an English transl. by J. Jackson, vol. IV, books V–VI, XI–XIII*, the Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts – London.

Jackson, J. 1937b: *Tacitus, The Annals*, *with an English transl. by J. Jackson, vol. V, books XIII–XVI*, the Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts – London.

Jones, H.L. 1928: *The Geography of Strabo. With an English Translation by H.L. Jones, vol. V*, the Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts – London.

Jones, H.L. 1930: *The Geography of Strabo. With an English Translation by H.L. Jones, vol. VII*, the Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts – London.

Jonge, P. de 1980: *Philological and Historical Commentary on Ammianus Marcellinus, vol. XVIII*, Groningen.

Koestermann, E. 1967: *Cornelius Tacitus, Annalen, B. III, Buch 11–13*, Heidelberg.

Kramer, G. 1852: *Strabonis Geographica: recensuit indicem geographicum et historicum, adiecit Gustavus Kramer*, vol. II, Berlin.

Lasserre, F. 1975: *Géographie, Strabon, t. VIII, livre XI,* texte établi et trad. par F. Lasserre, Paris.

Meineke, A. 1877: *Strabonis Geographica recognicit A. Meineke*, vol. III, Leipzig.

Mommsen, T. 1895: *Collectanea Iulii Solini Collectanea rerum memorabilium, iterum recensuit Th. Mommsen*, Berlin.

Müller, C., Dübner, F. 1853: *Strabonis Geographica = Strabōnos Geōgrafika, Græce cum versione reficta, accedit index variantis lectionis et tabula rerum nominumque locupletissima, curantibus C. Müllero et F. Dübnero*, Paris.

Perrin, B. 1914: *Plutarch's Lives, with an English Translation by B. Perrin*, vol. II, the Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts – London.

Perrin, B. 1917: *Plutarch's Lives, with an English Translation by B. Perrin*, vol. V, the Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts – London.

Rackham, H. 1942: *Pliny, Natural History, with an English Translation by H. Rackham, vol. II, Books III-VII*, the Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts – London.

Radt, S. 2004: *Strabons Geographika, B. 3, Buch IX-XIII, Text und Übersetzung*, Göttingen.

Radt, S. 2005: *Strabons Geographika, B. 4, Buch XIV-XVII, Text und Übersetzung*, Göttingen.

Radt, S. 2008: *Strabons Geographika*, *B. 7, Buch IX-XIII, Kommentar*, Göttingen.

Radt, S. 2009: *Strabons Geographika*, *B. 8, Buch XIV-XVII, Kommentar*, Göttingen.

Rolfe, J.C. 1940: *Ammianus Marcellinus, with an English Translation by J.C. Rolfe, vol. II, Books XX-XXVI*, the Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts – London.

Salmasius, C. 1689: *Cl. Salmasii Plinianae exercitationes in Caii Julii Solini polyhistora. Item Caii Julii Solini polyhistor ex veteribus libris emendates*, Paris.
Seyfarth, W. 1970: *Ammianus Marcelinus, Römische Geschichte, Lateinisch und Deutsch mit einem Kommentar versehen von W. Seyfarth*, B. III, Buch 22–25, Berlin.
Walter, H. 1969: *Die 'Collectanea rerum memorabilium' des C. Iulius Solinus: ihre Entstehung und die Echtheit ihrer Zweitfassung*, Wiesbaden.
Wuilleumier, P. 1976: *Tacite, Annales; texte établi et trad. [du Latin] par P. Wuilleumier*, Paris.

**Literature**

Abusch, T. 2002: *Mesopotamian Witchcraft: Toward a History and Understanding of Babylonian Witchcraft Beliefs and Literature*, Leiden.
Barish, D. 1983: *Adiabene: Royal Converts to Judaism in the First Century C.E.: a Study of Sources*, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati (unpublished doctoral dissertation).
Baumgartner, A. 1912: 'Γορδυνηνή' *RE* 7, 1594–1595.
Ben-Ami, D., Tchehanovetz, Y. 2008: 'Jerusalem, Giv'ati Parking Lot' *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* 120 (online edition).
Ben-Ami, D., Tchehanovetz, Y. 2010: 'Jerusalem, Giv'ati Parking Lot Preliminary Report' *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* 122 (online edition).
Bickerman, E. 1983: 'The Seleucid Period' in E. Yarshater (ed.), *The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian Periods* (*CHI*, vol. 3.1), Cambridge, 3–20.
Bieberstein, K., Bloedhorn, H. 1994: *Jerusalem: Grundzüge der Baugeschichte vom Chalkolithikum bis zur Frühzeit der osmanischen Herrschaft*, B. 3, Wiesbaden.
Bivar, A.D.H. 1983: 'The Political History of Iran under the Arsacids' in E. Yarshater (ed.), *The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian Periods* (*CHI*, vol. 3.1), Cambridge, 21–99.
Bochart, S. 1651: *Geographia sacra. Phaleg, seu de dispersione gentium et terrarum divisione, facta in aedificatione turris Babel*, Cadomi.
Boettger, G. 1879: *Topographisch-historisches Lexicon zu den Schriften des Flavius Josephus*, Amsterdam.
Boiy, T. 2004: *Late Achaemenid and Hellenistic Babylon*, Leuven.
Bosworth, C.E. 2002: 'Al-Zab' *Encyclopaedia of Islam* 11, 366.
Boyce, M. 1975: 'On the Zoroastrian Temple Cult of Fire' *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 95, 454–465.
Briant, P. 2002: *From Cyrus to Alexander. A History of the Persian Empire*, Winona Lake.
Brüll, N. 1874: 'Adiabene' *Jahrbuch für Jüdische Geschichte und Literatur* 1, 58-86.
Burstein, S. 1985: *The Hellenistic Age from the Battle of Ipsos to the Death of Kleopatra VII. Translated Documents of Greece and Rome*, vol. 3, Cambridge.
Clarke, K. 2002: *Between Geography and History: Hellenistic Constructions of the Roman World*, Oxford.
Colledge, M.A.R. 1977: *Parthian Art*, London.
Dąbrowa, E. 1983: *La politique de l'état parthe à l'égard de Rome – d'Artaban II à Vologèse I (ca 11 – ca 79 de n.e.) et les facteurs qui la conditionnaient*, Kraków.
Debevoise, N.C. 1938: *A Political History of Parthia*, Chicago.
Dilleman, L. 1961: 'Ammien Marcellin et les pays de l'Euphrate et du Tigre' *Syria* 38: 87–158.
Dilleman, L. 1962: *Haute Mesopotamie Orientale et pays adjacent. Contribution a la geographie historique de la region du Ve siecle avant EC au VI siecle de l'EC*, Paris.

Drijvers, W.J. 1998: 'Strabo on Parthia and the Parthians' in J. Wiesehöfer (ed.), *Das Partherreich und seine Zeugnisse: Beiträge des internationalen Colloquiums, Eutin (27.–30. Juni 1996)*, Stuttgart, 279–293.
Fränkel, S. 1894: 'Adiabene' *RE* 1, 360.
Fränkel, S. 1896: 'Arrapachitis' *RE* 2, 1225.
Frye, R. N. 1984: *The History of Ancient Iran*, München.
Gilmartin, K. 1973: 'Corbulo's Campaigns in the East: An Analysis of Tacitus' Account' *Historia* 22, 583–626.
Gottheil, R. 1901: 'Adiabene' *The Jewish Encyclopedia* 1, 191–192.
Graetz, H. 1877: 'Zur Anwesenheit der Adiabenischen Königin in Jerusalem und des Apostel Paulus' *Monatschrift für die Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 26, 241–255, 289–306.
Groskurd, Ch.G. 1834: *Vollständiges Sach- und Namenregister zu allen Ausgaben von Strabos Erdbeschrebungen welche die Causabonischen Seitenzahlen führen*, Berlin.
Hansman, J.F. 1987: 'Arbela' *EncIr* 2, 277–278.
Hauser, S. 1995: 'Die mesopotamischen Handelswege nach der Tabula Peutingeriana' in R. Dittmann, U. Finkbeiner, H. Hauptmann (Hrsg.), *Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte Vorderasiens. Festschrift für Rainer Michael Boehmer*, Mainz, 225–235.
Hengel, M. 1973: *Judentum und Hellenismus: Studien zu ihrer Begegnung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Palästinas bis zur Mitte des 2. Jh.s v. Chr.,* Tübingen[2].
Hengel, M. 1976: *Juden, Griechen und Barbaren: Aspekte der Hellenisierung des Judentums in vorchristlicher Zeit*, Stuttgart.
Herzfeld, E. 1907: 'Untersuchungen über die historische Topographie der Landschaft am Tigris, kleinen Zab und Gebel Hamrin' *Memnon* 1, 89–143, 217–238.
Herzfeld, E. 1968: *The Persian Empire*, Wiesbaden.
Hewsen, R.H. 1978–79: 'Introduction to Armenian Historical Geography' *REArm* 13, 77–97.
Hewsen, R.H. 1984: 'Introduction to Armenian Historical Geography III: The Boundaries of Orontid Armenia' *REArm* 18, 347–366.
Hoffmann, G. 1880: *Auszüge aus Syrischen Akten Persicher Märtyrer*, Leipzig.
Hutchinson, R. W. 1934: 'The Nineveh of Tacitus' *Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology (Liverpool)* 21, 85–88.
Huyse, Ph. 1993: 'Vorbemerkungen zur Auswertung iranischen Sprachengutes in den *Res Gestae* des Ammianus Marcellinus' in W. Skalmowski, A. Van Tongerloo (eds.), *Medioiranica: Proceedings of the International Colloquium organized by the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven from the 21st to the 23rd of May 1990*, Leuven, 87–98.
Huyse, Ph. 1999: *Die dreisprachige Inschrift Šābuhrs I. an der Kaʿba-i Zardušt (ŠKZ),* B.2., London.
Jacobs, B. 1994: *Die Satrapienverwaltung im Perserreich zur Zeit Darius' III*, Wiesbaden.
Jenkins, G.K. 1958: 'Hellenistic Coins from Nimrud' *Iraq* 20, 158–168.
Jong, A. de 1997: *Traditions of the Magi: Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin Literature*, Leiden – New York – London.
Kahle, P. 1959: *The Cairo Geniza*, Oxford.
Kahrstedt, U. 1950: *Artabanos III. und seine Erben*, Berlin.
Kawerau, P. 1992: 'Chronicle of Arbela' *EncIr* 5, 548–549.
Kessler, K. 1999a: 'Kalachene' *DNP* 6, 146.
Kessler, K. 1999b: 'Kapros (2)' *DNP* 6, 265.
Kessler, K. 1999c: 'Lykos (14)' *DNP* 7, 575.
Kessler, K. 2000: 'Nisibis' *DNP* 8, 962–963
Kessler, K. 2001: 'Sophene' *DNP* 11, 721–722.

Keyser, P.T. 1999: 'Pliny the Elder' in W.W. Briggs (ed.), *Ancient Roman Writers,* Detroit-Washington-London, 235–242.
Le Rider, G. 1967: 'Un tresor de petites monnaies de bronze trouve a Ninive' *Iranica Antiqua* 7, 4–20, pl. III-IV.
Lerouge, Ch. 2007: *L'image des Parthes dans le monde gréco-romain: du début du Ier siècle av. J.-C. jusqu'à la fin du Haut-Empire romain*, Stuttgart.
Liddell H.G., Scott, R., Jones, H.S., McKenzie R. 1968: *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford.
Longden, R.P. 1931: 'Notes on the Parthian Campaigns of Trajan', *JRS* 21, 1–35.
Marquart, J. 1903: *Osteuropäische und ostasiatische Streifzüge: ethnologische und historisch-topografische Studien zur Geschichte des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts (ca. 840–940),* Leipzig.
Marquart, J. 1930: *Südarmenien und die Tigrisquellen nach griechischen und arabischen Geographen*, Wien.
Mathisen, R.W. 1997: 'Cassius Dio' in W.W. Briggs (ed.), *Ancient Greek Authors,* Detroit-Washington-London, 101–109.
Mathisen, R.W. 1999: 'Ammianus Marcellinus' in W.W. Briggs (ed.), *Ancient Roman Writers,* Detroit-Washington-London, 7–16.
Mazar, B. 1978: 'Herodian Jerusalem in the Light of the Excavations South and South-West of the Temple Mount' *Israel Exploration Journal* 28, 230–237.
Mellor, R. 1999: 'Tacitus' in W.W. Briggs (ed.), *Ancient Roman Writers,* Detroit-Washington-London, 306–313.
Millar, F. 1964: *A Study of Cassius Dio*, Oxford.
Minorsky, V. 1944: 'Roman and Byzantine Campaigns in Atropatene' *BSOAS* 11, 243–265.
Murphy, T. 2004*: Pliny the Elder's Natural History. The Empire in the Encyclopedia*, Oxford.
Neusner, J. 1966: 'The Conversion of Adiabene to Christianity' *Numen* 13, 144–150.
Neusner, J. 1969: *A History of the Jews in Babylonia, vol. I: The Parthian Period,* Leiden.
Nikonorov, V.P. 1998: 'Apollodoros of Artemita and the Date of his Parthica Revisited' in E. Dąbrowa (ed.), *Ancient Iran and the Mediterranean World*, (=Electrum Vol. 2), Kraków 1998, 107–122
Nöldeke, Th. 1871: 'ΑΣΣΥΡΙΟΣ ΣΥΡΙΟΣ ΣΥΡΟΣ' *Hermes* 1871, 443–468.
Nováček, K., Chabr T., Filipský D., Janiček L., Pavelka K., Šída P., Trefný M., Vařeka P. 2008: 'Research of the Arbil Citadel, Iraqi Kurdistan, First Season' *Památky archeologické* XCIX, 259–302.
Oates, D. 1968: *Studies in the Ancient History of Northern Iraq*, London.
Oates, D., Oates, J. 1958: 'Nimrud 1957: the Hellenistic settlement' *Iraq* 20, 114–157.
Oelsner, J. 1996: 'Adiabene', DNP 1, 112.
Olbrycht, M.J. 1997: 'Vardanes contra Gotarzes II. Einige Überlegungen zur Geschichte des Partherreiches ca. 40–51 n. Chr.' *Folia Orientalia* 33, 81–100.
Oppenheimer, A. 1983: *Babylonia Judaica in the Talmudic Period*, Wiesbaden.
Oppenheimer, A. 1993: 'Nehardea und Nisibis bei Josephus (Ant 18)' in D.-A. Koch, H. Lichtenberger (Hrsg.), *Begegnungen zwischen Christentum und Judentum in Antike und Mittelalter: Festschrift für Heinz Schreckenberg*, Göttingen, 313–333.
Parpola, S. 1970: *Neo-Assyrian Toponyms*, Neukirchen – Vluyn.
Pearson, L. 1960: *The Lost Histories of Alexander the Great*, New York.
Pigulevskaja, N. 1963: *Les villes de l'Etat Iranien aux époques Parthe et Sassanide*, Paris.
Reade, J. 1998: 'Greco-Parthian Nineveh' *Iraq* 60, 65–83.
Reade, J. 1999: 'An Eagle from the East' *Britannia* 30, 286–288.
Reade, J. 2001: 'More about Adiabene' *Iraq* 63, 187–199.

Romm, J. 1997: 'Strabo' in W.W. Briggs (ed.), *Ancient Greek Authors,* Detroit-Washington-London, 359–362.

Rostovtzeff, M. 1935: 'ΠΡΟΓΟΝΟΙ' *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 55, 56–66.

Ruge, W. 1919: 'Kapros (1)' *RE* 10, 1921.

Sarre, F., Herzfeld, E. 1920: *Archäologische Reise im Euphrat- und Tigris-Gebiet*, B. 2, Berlin.

Schottky, M. 1991: 'Parther, Meder und Hyrkanier. Eine Untersuchung der dynastischen und geographischen Verflechtungen im Iran des 1. Jhs. n. Chr.' *Archäeologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 24, 61–134.

Schrader, E. 1878: *Keilinschriften und Geschichtsforschung: ein Beitrag zur monumentalen Geographie, Geschichte und Chronologie der Assyrer*, Giessen.

Sellwood, D. 1985: 'Adiabene' *EncIr* 1, 456–459.

Sokoloff, M. 2002: *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods,* Ramat – Galan.

Sonnabend, H. 1986: *Fremdenbild und Politik: Vorstellungen der Römer von Ägypten und dem Partherreich in der späten Republik und frühen Kaiserzeit*, Frankfurt am Main.

Sourdel, D. 1978: 'Irbil' *EncIsl* 4, 76–77.

Sterling, G.E. 1992: *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephos, Luke-Acts, and Apologetic Historiography*, Leiden.

Streck, M. 1905a: 'Diabas' *RE* 5, 300–301.

Streck, M. 1905b: 'Dialas' *RE* 5, 319–320.

Streck, M. 1912a: 'Garamaioi' *RE* 7, 750–751.

Streck, M. 1912b: 'Gorgos (1)' *RE* 7, 1660.

Sturm, J. 1936a: 'Nisibis' *RE* 17.1, 714–757.

Sturm, J. 1936b: 'Νικατόριον ὄρος' *RE* 17.1, 283.

Swoboda, H. 1919: 'Kapros (3)' *RE* 10, 1921–1922

Syme, R. 1995: 'Sophene and Gordyene' in R. Syme, *Anatolica: Studies in Strabo*, Oxford, 51–57.

Tcherikover, V. 1959: *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, Jerusalem.

Teitler, H. 1999: 'Visa vel Lecta. Ammianus on Persia and the Persians' in W.D. Drijvers, D. Hunt (eds.), *The Late Roman World and its Historian: Interpreting Ammianus Marcellinus,* London, 216–223.

Thommen, L. 2010: 'Griechische and Lateinische Texte' in U. Hackl, B. Jacobs, D. Weber (hrsg.), *Quellen zur Geschichte des Partherreiches. Textsammlung mit Übersetzungen ud Kommentaren, Bd. 2: Griechische und Lateinische Texte, Parthische Texte, Numismatische Evidenz,* Göttingen, 1–491.

Unger, E. 1932: 'Arrapha' *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* 1, 154.

Vincent L.H., Steve M.A. 1954: *Jerusalem de l'Ancien Testament*: *recherches d'archéologie et d'histoire, p. 1: Archéologie de la ville*, Paris.

Weissbach, F.H. 1919a: 'Kalachene' *RE* 10, 1530.

Weissbach, F.H. 1919b: 'Kapros (2)' *RE* 10, 1921.

Weissbach, F.H. 1927: 'Lykos (12)' *RE* 13.2, 2391–2392.

Wheeler, E. L. 1991: 'Rethinking the Upper Euphrates Frontier: Where Was the Western Border of Armenia?' in V.A. Maxfield, M.J. Dobson (eds.), *Roman Frontier Studies 1989: Proceedings of the XVth International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies*, Exeter, 505–511.

Wiesehöfer, J. 1998: 'Gordyaia' *DNP* 4, 1149.

Wikander, S. 1946: *Feuerpriester in Kleinasien und Iran*, Lund.

Zehnder, M. 2010: 'Aramäische Texte' in U. Hackl, B. Jacobs, D. Weber (hrsg.), *Quellen zur Geschichte des Partherreiches. Textsammlung mit Übersetzungen ud Kommentaren. Bd. 3: Keilschriftliche Texte, Aramäische Texte, Armenische Texte, Arabische Texte, Chinesische Texte,* Göttingen, 175–401.

## Abstract

This paper surveys ancient texts in search of geographical and ethnographical information on Adiabene in the Seleucid and Parthian Periods. Adiabene originated as a relatively small province between the Lykos and Kapros rivers, perhaps including the Arrapachitis region. In the early Seleucid period, Adiabene was politically dependent on the mighty province of Babylonia. At some point in its Parthian history (between the mid–1st century BCE and the mid–1st century CE) Adiabene started to expand its territory northwest. From then on, it included Ashur and Nineveh, and extended along the eastern bank of the Tigris river to include Gordyene. Adiabene's influence is also recorded on the western bank of the Tigris. In the first half of the 1st century CE (incorporation between 37–40/41 CE) Nisibis belonged to Adiabene. Its influence on the western bank of the Tigris is also attested for the whole 2nd century CE. As for Adiabene's cultural profile, it featured a great deal of diversity, since it consisted of co-existing Iranian and Greek and Semitic elements.