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NATOUNISAROKERTA ON THE KAPROS. NEW NUMISMATIC EVIDENCE FROM THE BRITISH MUSEUM•

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Introduction

Something that has in recent decades been very noticeable is a considerable growth of interest in Adiabene, a Parthian *regnum minus* located on the Upper Tigris. In most cases where Adiabene appears in modern scholarship, it occurs in one of two contexts – Roman-Parthian relationships and the conversion of the Adiabene royalty to Judaism in the 1st century CE. The latter topic in particular has always brought much attention to Adiabene. Namely, some members of the royal dynasty from Adiabene emigrated to Palestine in the 1st century CE and, as we know from literary sources, built a magnificent mausoleum (see Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 20.95, *De Bello Judaico* 5.55; 5.119; 5.147; Pausanias, *Graeciae descriptio*, 8.16.4–5; Eusebius of Caesarea, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2.12.3, and Jerome, *Epistulae*, 108) and three palaces (see Jos. Bell. 4.567; 5.252; 6:355) there – all of them accounted for the most eye-catching landmarks of 1st-century CE Jerusalem. Not surprisingly, it is the search for physical remains of the Adiabene royalty in Jerusalem that has brought much attention to Adiabene in recent years. By way of illustration, in 2007 two Israeli archaeologists excavating in the City of David suggested that one of the newly unearthed

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structures could be identified as the palace of Queen Helena.[1] Again, from 2008 to 2012 French archaeologists (esp. from the *École biblique et archéologique française* in Jerusalem and the *Institut français du Proche-Orient*) conducted a new survey of *Le Tombeau des Rois,* a monumental burial complex once identified as the resting place of the Adiabene royalty in Jerusalem.[2]

Unlike in Jerusalem, the search for material remains that might shed light on Hellenistic-Parthian Adiabene has always been a painful task. First, a lot depends on our understanding of Adiabene's borders over the course of history. Namely – where was ancient Adiabene located, and which parts of its territory are most relevant to our understanding of its material culture? Secondly, paraphrasing the *Zohar*, one can say that "ancient texts need luck," that is, "some are far luckier than others,"[3] as some wait decades before finding an editor, while others are lucky enough for this to happen faster. The same goes for ancient kingdoms located at the crossroads of cultures, especially for those which happened to have had famous predecessors occupying the same geographical area – Adiabene was indeed located where the heartland of the great kingdom of Assyria once was. As a result, most 19th- and early-20th-century excavations of sites in northern Iraq paid very little attention to what became labeled as "post-Assyrian layers" (implicitly meaning "of little interest"). Would we know more about Hellenistic-Parthian Adiabene nowadays if this attitude had been different? We will never know, but this situation enhances "the potential significance of each source" and should lead the historian to "carefully appraise the quality of each and every source."[4]

Coins from Adiabene

One such source is coins. In the case of Adiabene, one can distinguish two main groups of coinage – one apparently being the official coinage of this kingdom, since these coins bear the images of Adiabene's rulers, and another group which has unfortunately, as we shall demonstrate, been labeled as "Natounia coins."

As far as the first group of coins is concerned, we know of one coin struck on behalf of King Monobazos, and this item bears an inscription (ΕΒΛΤ) most likely indicating a date (ἐνιαυτός): ΒΛΤ (332).[5] Provided the Seleucid era is

[1] Ben-Ami/Tchekhanovetz 2011a; Ben-Ami/Tchekhanovetz 2011b.
[2] Murphy-O'Connor 2010, 18–19.
[3] Koller 2009.
[4] Herman 2012, 141.
[5] For this coin, see Klose 1992, 82; Hendin 2001, 455, pl. 937; and Tameanko 2005, 19.

used, the coin is dated to 20/21 CE (and belongs to Monobazos I).[6] If, however, it is the Parthian era, then the date is 84/85 CE. It is then theoretically possible to attribute this coin to Monobazos II, which would imply that he reigned until at least 84/85 CE (otherwise the last reference to him as the current king of Adiabene concerns the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE).[7] Yet it is safer to base our identification on positive data – we know that Monobazos I reigned in the 20s of the 1st c. CE, but we do not know if Monobazos II was still alive in 84/85 CE; the coin should therefore be attributed to the former. Furthermore, there is a series of coins attributed to King Abdissares, who was once believed to be king of Armenia or Sophene, but more recently has been suggested, convincingly, to have been the ruler of Adiabene.[8] His coinage is dated exclusively on stylistic grounds, and consequently its possible dating can vary from the end of the 3rd c. BCE to the early 1st c. BCE.[9]

Our attention here will be devoted to the second group of numismatic evidence ("Natounia coins"). In fact, there is some diversity even in this group, and the basic criterion is the presence of inscriptions or otherwise. That is to say, we know of six coins that bear an inscription. Additionally, there are coins in this group that bear no inscriptions; these anepigrahic coins have been brought into connection with epigraphic items exclusively on stylistic grounds. Since the coins which bear inscriptions have a better potential of being unambiguously identified (so to speak), our attention in this paper will be devoted only to the six epigraphic items.

Coin no. 1 is stored in the British Museum. It was first published by B.W. Head in 1887,[10] and consequently found its way into G. Wissowa's *Realencyclopädie* under the heading *Atusia*.[11] However, the first thorough analysis of this coin can be found only in 1922, in the British Museum *Catalogue of Greek coins of Arabia, Mesopotamia and Persia* by G.H. Hill.[12] Next, it was also commented on by H. Seyrig and G. Le Rider in their discussions of the Nisibis hoard.[13] Finally, J.T. Milik wrote a very influential paper in which he discussed the London specimen together with three other epigraphical coins bearing similar inscriptions.[14]

[6] Klose 1992, 82; Hendin 2001, 455, pl. 937.
[7] See Marciak 2012, 190–191.
[8] Lipiński 1982: 117–124 and de Callataÿ 1996: 135–145.
[9] De Callataÿ 1996: 142.
[10] Head 1911, 817.
[11] Wissowa 1896, 2260.
[12] Hill 1922, CXVIII, 147 and plate no. XXIII.22.
[13] Seyrig 1955; Le Rider 1959–1960.
[14] Milik 1962.

The obverse of the London specimen shows a female head,[15] turreted and diademed, facing left.[16] Because of the form of a turret, this image is widely identified as that of city goddess, Tyche.[17] There is no legend on the obverse. The reverse features a palm branch and an arrow (or a spear), and there is also an inscription in a square.[18] The interpretation of the inscription is not clear-cut.

Head proposes the following reading: ΑΤΟΥΣΙΕΩΝ Τ**.** ΠΡΟΣ Τ**.** ΚΑΠΡΟΝ (sic, the **.** being a dot apparently indicating a stop).[19] This reading indicates that the coin was struck in a city called *Atusia* (Ἀτουσία), located on the Little Zab (known to Greek sources as Κάπρος). This interpretation is essentially supported by Hill in the British Museum *Catalogue of Greeks of Arabia, Mesopotamia and Persia*, though with some modifications. First, Hill reports the alternative opinion of Robinson, who suggested that the reading of the first sigma (in ΑΤΟΥΣΙΕΩΝ) should be corrected to M or NI.[20] Furthermore, he also proposes that the Greek N in the word ΚΑΠΡΟΝ should actually start the inscription (therefore: ΝΑΤΟΥΝΙΕΩΝ) and not finish it (and as a result: what was considered as an omīcron in the word ΚΑΠΡΟ can merely be a dot functioning as a stop: ΚΑΠΡ•).[21] All in all, Hill catalogues the London specimen under "Assyria. Atusia (?), Atumia (?), or Natumia (?)", and gives the following reading of the inscription: ΝΑΤΟΥΝΙΕΩΝΤ• ΠΡΟΣΤ•/ ΚΑΠΡΟ.[22]

Robinson's suggestions included in the BM catalogue were followed by other scholars. Seyrig offers the following reading:
ΝΑΤ•ΥΝΙCΛΝΤ•ΠΡ•CΤ•ΚΑΠΡ• (• comes from Seyrig's paper and can apparently mean both an omīcron and an abbreviation sign).[23] In turn, Le Rider, who had a molding of the London specimen at his disposal, suggests the reading as follows: ΝΑΤΟΥΝΙΕΩΝΤ □ ΠΡΟΣΤ□ ΚΑΠΡ• (□ reproduces Le Rider's sign differently than •, □ apparently stands for illegible parts).[24] Lastly, Milik, relying on Robinson's remarks, reads the inscription in the following way: ΝΑΤΟΥΝ/ΙΕΩΝ Τ[ΩΝ]/ΠΡΟC ΤΩ/ΚΑΠΡΩ (both / and [] are taken from

[15] Hill 1922, 147 speaks of a bust of Tyche. It is true that, in addition to a head, Tyche's neck can be seen on the coin, but there are no shoulders visible. Therefore, we should rather speak of the head than of the bust of Tyche.

[16] Le Rider 1959–1960, 30. In Hill 1922, 147, the head of Tyche is described as facing left. However, according to Butcher 1991, 4, it is "facing right or left."

[17] Meyer 2006: 336–337. For the image of Tyche on Parthian coins, see also Sinisi 2008, 231–248.

[18] Hill 1922, 147.

[19] Head 1911, 817.

[20] See Hill 1922, CXVIII.

[21] See Hill 1922, CXVIII.

[22] Hill 1922, 147.

[23] Seyrig 1955, 104–105.

[24] Le Rider 1959–60, 30.

Milik's paper, the former stands for a line division, the latter reproduces Milik's renderings of what may have been abbreviations in the inscription).[25]

Attached below is a photograph of the London specimen (see plates 1–2). I confirm the reading suggested by Le Rider and Milik when it comes to the first, third and fourth lines (NATOYN, ΠΡΟC T•, KAΠP•). It should be noted, however, that the first line of the inscription is not entirely preserved – after NATOYN there are visible signs of another letter of which at least a vertical dash can now be reconstructed. More problematic is the second line of the inscription – it seems that a tentative reading of the following letters can suggested: I, E or C (sigma), A or W, N, T.

Two other epigraphic specimens come from a coin hoard discovered at the site of ancient Nisibis in 1955. The first item (16 mm diameter, 4.38 grams), known as Nisibis 6 (see plates 5–6), features a turreted and diademed head of Tyche facing right on the obverse, while the reverse presents a palm branch (tied at the tip by a bandelette/diadem), an arrow (or a spear), as well as an inscription.[26] Likewise, the second item (16 mm diameter, 2.96 grams), called Nisibis 7 (see plates 7–8), presents a turreted and diademed head of Tyche facing right on the obverse, and on the reverse a palm branch, a star and an inscription.[27] The following readings of the inscriptions on the two coins have been suggested:

Nisibis 6:

NI•YNIICΛI [28] (or NT•YNIIΩ CΛI)[29] by Seyrig

NT•YNIEΛI by Le Rider[30]

ANTOYNH/CAP[OKEPTΩN] by Milik[31]

Nisibis 7:

IAT•YNICCΛP•K by Seyrig[32]

IAT•YNICCΛP•KEP by Le Rider[33]

NATOYNIC/CAPO/KEP[TΩN] by Milik[34]

[25] Milik 1962, 51.

[26] Seyrig 1955, 88, 105; Butcher 1991, 4.

[27] Seyrig 1955, 88, 105.

[28] Seyrig 1955, 105. The last letter is only partly preserved, therefore a vertical dash (which might also seem to be a iōta) is most likely only a part of the full letter.

[29] Seyrig 1955, 88. The first letter is only partly preserved, see above my note n. 20.

[30] Le Rider 1959–60, 30.

[31] Milik 1962, 51

[32] Seyrig 1955, 88, 105;

[33] Le Rider 1959–60, 30. The last letter is only partly preserved, see above my notes 20–21.

[34] Milik 1962, 51.

Another epigraphic item in this group is said to have been bought in Beirut on behalf of the *Cabinet des Médailles*, and was first published by Le Rider in 1960 (5.28 grams, known as the Paris item since then). The obverse shows the turreted and diademed head of Tyche facing right, surrounded by a palm branch border to the left; the letter N is visible above the head.[35] The reverse presents a palm branch with a bandelette/diadem, as well as an arrow (or a spear) and an inscription.[36] Le Rider reads the inscription in the following way: NATOYNICΛPOKEPTΩN, and this reading is followed by Milik.[37]

In recent years two more specimens have been published.[38] In 1991 Kevin Butcher published a drawing of another inscribed specimen from a private collection in Turkey. Butcher's specimen features the turreted and diademed head of Tyche, facing right and surrounded by a palm branch border.[39] A letter (perhaps N) is visible behind the head. The reverse is obscured by corrosion, but part of the legend is still illegible: NΛTOVNICΛ[]PO []PΩN (square brackets in Butcher's paper apparently stand for illegible parts). Next, in 2011 a paper by H. Loeschner was published in the journal *Shekel*, in which the author gives a picture and transcription of another coin of this type (14–15 mm diameter, 2.4 grams).[40] The obverse presents the turreted and diademed head of Tyche facing right. On the reverse, there appear an arrow and a palm branch as well as an inscription; the author suggests the following reading: NATOVN(P)EΩN T(ΩN ΠPOΣ TON) KAΠPON. However, it should be noted that the resolution of the photograph is not very high, which makes it difficult to verify this reading. What is more, it seems that the author's interpretation is heavily indebted to Milik's reading of the London specimen.

In addition to the specimen already published in the *Catalogue of Greek Coins of Arabia, Mesopotamia and Persia*, the British Museum collection contains yet another specimen which belongs to this group of coins. It is described in the BM online collection database as "minted in Atumia (?)", with the registration number 1929,1108.1. The photograph is shown below (see plates 3–4).

The obverse presents a head facing left; it is definitely wearing a headdress, but due to erosion it is hard to specify any details. The reverse features a palm branch and an arrow (or a spear) and an inscription in a square. I suggest the

[35] According to Le Rider 1959–1960, 30: "bordure en arête de poisson."

[36] According to Le Rider, the coin was overstruck and one can still notice a contour of a head at the right angle of the palm.

[37] Milik 1962, 51.

[38] Yet another coin of this type is reported (non vidi, personal communication of an anonymous reviewer) to be on available at Coinarchives.com (in the restricted access part of the archive).

[39] Butcher 1991, 4.

[40] Loeschner 2011, 20–25.

following identification of letters:[41] the two most legible parts are to the right and below the image of palm branch and arrow: to the right one can read ATO, but this is preceded and followed by two other letters: the last seems to be N. Below the image four other letters are clearly visible – ICΛP – and this is the most legible part of the whole inscription. Above the palm branch and arrow is ΣIΛE. Some text before and after these four letters is worn out, and Σ and E are less visible than IΛ; the left side of the square is completely worn out.

How can we understand these partly preserved and frequently illegible inscriptions? As a matter of fact, we can distinguish two different identifications. First, scholars, especially on the basis of the London specimen, suggested that one can see a toponym in the word ATOYΣIEΩNT or NATOYNIEΩNT. The coins would then be the coinage of the city located on the Little Zab called Atusia (Head, Wissowa) or Natunia (especially starting with Milik, and nowadays followed by most scholars). There is, however, another option briefly put forward by Le Rider, who recognized that all specimens stored in Paris could also allow another reconstruction – *Natounisarokerta* (a construct grammatically similar to Tigranokerta).[42]

Epigraphic and Literary Evidence

In this context, it is important to ask whether there is any parallel epigraphic or literary evidence which could help us understand our coin legends. It was J.T. Milik who first pointed to non-Greek names of Adiabene as possible parallels.[43] Indeed, our coins can be associated with Adiabene on geographical grounds – the legend of the London specimen contains the river name Kapros, widely identified as the Little Zab,[44] and the core of ancient Adiabene indeed occupied the river basin of the Zabs.[45] Therefore, Milik's idea seems to be a step in the right direction. In fact, there are three groups of sources relevant to our inquiry to which we now turn our attention – the trilingual inscription of Shapur I on the walls of the so-called Kaʿba-ye Zardosht near Naqsh-e Rostam, inscriptions from Hatra (esp. no. 21, but also nos. 113 and 114), and toponyms used for Adiabene in Armenian chronicles.

[41] Autopsy, June 26, 2012.

[42] Similarly tentatively Le Rider 1959–60, 31 and Cohen 2013, 101 (who speaks of "Natounia or Natounisarokerta"). Yet Le Rider 1959–60 also suggested that CAP (Nisibis 7) and EΛP (the Paris item) could be read as dates: 136 and 135 respectively. For this option, see Le Rider 1959–60, 31–32 and Butcher 1991, 4.

[43] Notice that these coins were previously attributed to Palmyra or Hatra on exclusively stylistic grounds. See Seyrig 1955, 107–108.

[44] Weissbach 1919, 1921; Hansman 1987, 277; Kessler 1999, 265; Bosworth 2002, 366.

[45] See Marciak 2011.

Adiabene is listed in the inscription of the Sasanian king, Shapur I, as part of his kingdom. Thanks to the trilingual nature of the inscription we can see how the Greek toponym, Ἀδιαβηνή, was rendered into the Parthian and Middle-Persian languages – these forms are *ntwšrkn* and *nwthštrkn* respectively[46]. There is no etymological connection between the Greek Adiabene on the one hand (which most likely goes back to the Aramaic Ḥadyaḇ) and the Iranian renderings on the other. At the same time, the Iranian renderings are clearly akin to each other. Therefore, Iranian writers chose another, linguistically nonrelated, form to express the Greek name (or, leaving aside the Greco-centered point of view, vice versa).

There have been several attempts to understand the meaning of the Iranian forms.[47] Milik sought to understand the Iranian forms in the light of his interpretation of the above-mentioned coin legends – he saw the toponym *Natunia*, the Iranian word *-sar* (meaning *country*, *people*), and the Iranian suffix *-ag-ān* in the disputed terms.[48] He consequently suggested the following translation: * *Ntû(n)-šar-* "peuple (et pays) des Natouniens."[49] However, the problem is that the toponym Natounia is otherwise unattested, its meaning is unknown, and Milik's interpretation is based mainly on one coin legend (out of four available at that time).

Next, J. Markwart and W.B. Henning saw a connection between the disputed terms and a personal name, Ardašir (belonging either to Ardašir I or to an otherwise unattested king of Adiabene bearing this name).[50] In their opinion, the disputed names contained an abbreviated form of this personal name (**nwtrthštrkn*).[51] The assumption that an abbreviation could have been used in an official and monumental inscription of Shapur I sounds very unlikely; one would instead expect the full form.[52]

Finally, some scholars specializing in Armenian studies suggested a connection between the Iranian renderings and the Armenian toponym, *Norširakan* (also attested as *Nor-Širakan* or *Noširakan*).[53] Yet the interpretation of the Armenian toponym *Norširakan*, especially its origin and territorial extent, should not be seen as clear-cut, due to the variety of its forms and the presence of other phonetically similar toponyms in Armenian sources,[54] Namely, the Armenian toponym,

[46] Huyse 1999a, 115; Huyse 1999b, 20.
[47] See Huyse 1999b, 20.
[48] Milik 1962, 57.
[49] Milik 1962, 57.
[50] Markwart 1931, 81–82; Henning 1954, 49.
[51] Henning 1954, 49.
[52] Maricq 1958, 304, n. 4; Huyse 1999b, 20.
[53] Hewsen 1992, 229; Garsoian 1989, 483–484
[54] For the sake of clarity, let us stress (in contrast to Hewsen 1992, 229 and Garsoian 1989, 483–484) that the term *Nor-Širakan* does not literally appear in the inscription of Shapur I. In the inscription we have Greek and Iranian forms and the latter are believed by some scholars to correspond to the Armenian toponym. Yet this link is an assumption that is yet to be proven.

especially in the form *Nor-Širakan* or *Norširakan*, is believed to literally mean *New Širakan*[55] and to have been coined after the district of *Širakan* located west of Lake Urmia (or, less likely, in connection to the northwestern Armenian district of *Širak*).[56] Thus, the suffix *Nor-* was added in order to distinguish two districts – *Nor-Širakan*,[57] and *Širakan*, west of Lake Urmia (both divided by the Zagros range).[58] The term *Širakan* itself (and *Širak* too) is in turn thought to be related to an ethnonym known from Greek and Latin sources: Σίρακες, and consequently to reflect the Scythian origin of this region.[59] How could Adiabene be named after the district *Širakan*? According to Hewsen, Adiabene (or part of it) could have been acquired by Armenia (under Artaxias I or Tigranes the Great) immediately after the conquest of *Širakan*, and consequently took its name from the chronologically previous acquisition.[60]

The above-mentioned 'classic' explanation of the connection between the Greek *Adiabene* and the Armenian toponym *Nor-Širakan* raises certain doubts. First of all, it is hardly understandable why a country like Adiabene which had its own rulers for centuries and (memories of) statehood traditions going back to ancient Assyria (see the connection between Assyria and Adiabene in Greek and Latin sources) could have been named after a small province like *Širakan*. Secondly, Adiabene is divided from *Širakan* by a massive physical barrier – the Zagros Mountains. Thirdly, there is no evidence that Adiabene and *Širakan* ever formed together one political entity or administrative district. Fourthly, nothing tangible can be said about the Scythian origin of Adiabene.[61]

Lastly, there is another piece of evidence in our search for understanding of the coin legends – inscriptions from Hatra.[62] The ruins of the temple of Baal

[55] Hewsen 1992, 229.

[56] Hewsen 1992, 229–230.

[57] Generally speaking, at some point in its Armenian history *Nor-Širakan* (*New-Širakan*) is believed to have been one of the Armenian *vitaxates*, that is "the Armenian border province" facing a non-Armenian country called *Nor-Širakan* itself. Thus, the very concept of the *vitaxas* implies that we in fact have two geopolitical entities bearing the same name – the Armenian border province (*Nor-Širakan*) and a country located outside Armenia's borders (*Nor-Širakan*). The former could occasionally include territories wrested from the latter. Armenian *Nor-Širakan* was the easternmost of the three border provinces of southern Armenia, and is mostly understood as facing part of Adiabene (or less frequently as facing Media). See Hübschmann 1904, 319–320; Adontz, Garsoian 1970, 175–178; Garsoian 1989, 483–484; Hewsen 1988–89, 271–319 (esp. 299–306).

[58] Toumanoff 1963, 163–166; Hewsen 1992, 229–230.

[59] Messina 1937, 234–244; Maricq 1958, 304–305, n. 4; Hewsen 1992, 230. For Σίρακες, see Olbrycht 1998, 133–136, 193–194 and Olbrycht 2001.

[60] Hewsen 1992, 230.

[61] This is the idea put forward by Herzfeld 1932, 41–42.

[62] See Beyer 1998.

Shaamin revealed many statues of worshipers completed with inscriptions, and one of them (no. 21) is most relevant to our inquiry[63]:

ʾtlw mlkʾ ntwnʾšryʾ

The word ʾtlw is clearly a personal name (according to Beyer, it should be reconstructed as ʾAṭīlū[64]) of a person entitled as a king (mlkʾ). Ntwnʾšryʾ is in turn a further designation of the person's background. This term was read as ntynʾ šryʾ by Caquot and Altheim/Stiehl,[65] but as ntwnʾšryʾ by Milik, Vattioni and Beyer, which seems to be a more likely option.[66] The same term appears twice more in Hatra inscriptions (nos. 113 and 114) with regard to two other donators: ʾAlkūd (or ʾAlkūr) and ʾUstānaq, who are also characterized as of ntwnʾšryʾ.[67] It is evident that this term functions as a geographical and/or ethnic characterization.

Milik's interpretation of the term *ntwnʾšryʾ* is clearly indebted to his reading of the coin legends discussed above: ʾtlw, king of the people (country) of Natounia. The problem with this reconstruction, to be emphasized again, is that such a toponym is not attested elsewhere and its meaning is unknown. Unlike Milik, several scholars – H.J.W. Drijvers, E. Lipinski and K. Beyer – understood *ntwn* not as a proper name but as a participle, and only ʾšr as a proper name.[68] Let us first give voice to Beyer, who is the author of the latest corpus of inscriptions from Hatra. His translation is as follows[69]:

"König aus/von (der Stadt) Natūnʾeššār (=Adiabene=DER-(GÖTTIN)-IS(S)AR ÜBERGEBENER^{KANAAN}. (oder: aus der Sippe des N.)."

Unlike Milik's interpretation, that of Beyer explains the meaning of the proper name. The only thing that may be problematic is that the reconstructed participle is suggested to be a Cananean type. This is controversial for obvious historical and geographical reasons – it suggests a West-Semitic form in the area always dominated by East-Semitic languages. Perhaps this proposal results from the popular opinion that the participle *qattūl* is absent in Aramaic. However, upon closer examination neither the participle *qattūl* nor the verb *ntn* is completely alien to archaic forms of Aramaic. The verb root *ntn*, though perhaps not so widespread as *yhb*, is

[63] Beyer 1998, 33.

[64] Beyer 1998, 33. But according to Altheim, Stiehl 1965, 227, n. 2 and Altheim, Stiehl 1967, 267 – Āṭal.

[65] Caquot 1952, 101; Altheim, Stiehl 1967, 264, who actually regard both readings as equally possible.

[66] Milik 1962, 52; Vattioni 1981, 31; Beyer 1998, 33.

[67] Beyer 1998, 54.

[68] H.J.W. Drijvers 1977: 824; Lipinski 1982, 119–120; Beyer 1998, 33.

[69] Beyer 1998, 33.

still attested in Old and Official Aramaic.[70] Above all, the participles *qattūl* and *qatūl* (both hard to distinguish from each other, as the second radical was not always doubled in cuneiform text and Greek inscriptions[71]) are well attested in the Aramaic onomasticon from Babylonia.[72] The form *qatūl* is less frequent than *qatīl*, but is still present: for instance, in first-millennium Mesopotamia the name Za-bi-ni was borne by 24 individuals, while the name Za-bu-nu was used by 12 individuals, and it is a typically Aramaic name.[73] In turn, *qattūl* is common in the Aramaic onomasticon from Babylonia, even to some extent replacing *qattīl*.[74] Thus, Milik's **Ntû(n)-šar*- "peuple (et pays) des Natouniens"[75] turns out to be *Nattūn-Iššar*, meaning "donné par Ištar."[76] This interpretation fits well with what we otherwise know about the great popularity of the cult of Ištar in both Assyria and Hellenistic-Parthian Adiabene.[77] Thus, the phrase in question should be understood as follows: nattūn is in fact an archaic-Aramaic participle, ʾšr is a proper name of the goddess Ištar,[78] and finally yʾ functions as a yud-gentilic.[79]

This solution works for the coin legends too. Namely, the suffix -κερτ is a typically Iranian element meaning "made, built," the omīcron functions as a common Greek conjugate and the term νατουνισ(σ)αρ is parallel to the Hatra inscription. In this manner, we can understand *Natounisarokerta* as a construct parallel to *Tigranokerta*.[80] Something that is highly interesting, but in a region that has for centuries featured multilingualism not unusual, is that the coins use the Greek script to express an Iranized version of a primarily Semitic name.[81]

[70] Hoftijzer, Jongeling 1995, 767; Koehler, Baumgartner 2001, 1935–1936.

[71] Zadok 1977, 127; Lipiński 1982, 119, n. 20.

[72] Zadok 1977, 127–130, 135–136.

[73] Zadok 1977, 127–128.

[74] Zadok 1977, 135–136.

[75] Milik 1962, 57.

[76] Lipinski 1982, 119.

[77] For Ištar in Assyria, see Lambert 2004: 35–39; Nevling Porter 2004: 41–44. For the Parthian sarcophagus from Kilizu likely bearing the image of Ištar, see Furlani 1934, 40; Tubach 1986, 321, nn. 321–323, esp. n. 323; Invernizzi 2009.

[78] H.J.W. Drijvers 1977: 824 had a similar idea – ntwn as a participle and ʾšr as a proper name of Assur. It should be noted, however, that the Hatrene consonant used in Hatra inscription no. 21 is equivalent to the Aramaic šin, and the name of Assur is spelled in Hatra with the Hatrene equivalent of the Aramaic śin. See Beyer 1998: 128 (Assur) and 145, 152 (Ištar).

[79] Marciak 2012, 176.

[80] According to *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (online edition), toponyms ending with the suffix –kerta are very rare in Greek texts: besides Tigranokerta, only a few examples can be quoted: Ἀρκσίκερτα, Δαδόκερτα, Καρκαθιόκερτα (*Vologasocerta* known from Pliny should also be quoted in this context). And yet, examples for toponyms based on ατουσια or ατουνια do not occur at all in *TLG*.

[81] The same phenomenon can be observed in Charakene, where the Semitic (e.g. Abinerglos) and Iranian names (e.g. Hyspaosines) of its kings were inscribed on the coinage in Greek letters. See Schuol 2000.

Things seem to be a little more complicated with the Iranian renderings used in Shapur I's inscription. However, the lack of an *n* in the Parthian *ntwšrkn* could perhaps be explained by the assimilation of the *n* into a double *š*.[82] If this is correct, then the Parthian and Middle-Persian names used in Shapur I's inscription are directly connected to the Hatrene *ntwnʾšr*. It is less clear whether the Armenian forms (*Nor-Širakan*, *Norširakan* and *Noširakan*) are connected with the Hatrene *ntwnʾšr* and the Iranian *ntwšrkn* and *nwthštrkn*. The presence of *r* instead of *t* in *Norširakan* could perhaps be understood as a phonetic change: t > r, as in Bagarat for Bagadat.[83] Another problem is that the Armenian *nor-* means "new." Possibly it should not be understood as an originally independent lexeme (*nor*), but as an integral part of the fuller name (*noršir*). This would mean that Armenian chroniclers in fact used a malformation of the original name which they no longer understood in its original context. It may be the case that similar names known to Armenian speakers, such as *Širakan* (which sounded similar), could have contributed to this malformation.[84] What we have here may perhaps be a result of *Volksetymologie*. Though these suggestions are purely speculative, it still seems more likely to assume that the malformed name of *ntwnʾšr* > *nwthštrkn* > *norštrkn* became *norširakan* through 'a phonetic collision' with a similar Armenian name than due to geopolitical changes like Tigranes the Great's conquest of Širakan and Adiabene.[85]

To summarize, it appears that most items of the coinage under examination allow us to identify the toponym in the legends as *Natunisarokerta* (and not as *Natounia*). What is more, the meaning of this toponym is to be understood in the light of the Hatra inscription no. 21: built (*ker*) by [in the sense: on behalf of the kingdom of] Adiabene (Adiabene = *natunissar*, "given by Ishtar," being another Semitic name for Adiabene). The toponym Natounisarokerta itself proclaims the origin and consequently the political affiliation of the city to [the country] of *Natounisar* (Adiabene). Furthermore, the legends contain "a distinguishing epithet"[86]: on the Kapros, which, in this case, specifies the geographical location of the mint city. Therefore, there could be little doubt that this coinage was struck within the range of political authority of the kingdom of Adiabene. At the same

[82] Personal communication, Ran Zadok, 20.01.2012.

[83] Personal communication, Ran Zadok, 11.02.2012.

[84] See a similar situation between two Armenian lands bearing similar names – *Klariet'i* or *Kłarjk'*, bordering on the Caucasus Mts., and Xorjēn, located on the frontier of Sophene and Great Armenia. The former land is known to Greek sources as Χορζηνή and Χολαρζηνή, and the latter as Χορζανή and Χορζιανηνή. The near homonymy may be a sheer coincidence, but it is also possible that the forms influenced each other in Greek authors or their copyists. See Toumanoff 1963, 442, n. 22.

[85] Like in Hewsen 1992, 230.

[86] Hill 1922: CXVIII.

time, the fact that there is no other political symbolism (like portraits of rulers) suggests that we have to make do here with local city coinage, sometimes labeled as "autonomous bronze" [87] coinage (in contrast to the coins bearing the images of rulers of Adiabene). Because at least two items come from the Nisibis hoard (whose closure date is 32/31 BCE[88]), we can also understand its immediate historical context: the coins belong to the 1st half of the 1st BCE and the beginning of the second half of 1st BCE.[89]

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[87] Head 1911, 817.

[88] Seyrig 1955, 100–104; Raschke 1978, 828.The date for the deposing of the Nisibis hoard (32/31 BCE) corresponds well with the internal crisis of the Parthian Empire (to which Adiabene certainly belonged): after 36 BCE a number of Parthian nobles, with the Media Atropatene nobility in the forefront, rebelled against Phraates IV. The interregnum in Edessa in ca. 35/34 BCE and perhaps also the exile of the Adiabene king, Artaxares (known to us from *Res Gestae* 32 (*Monumentum Ancyranum* 17.32), belong to this context. See Olbrycht 2013, 16.

[89] According to Hoover 2009, 163, its production may be understood in the context of the 3rd Mithridatic War (that is between 74 or 73 and 63 BCE), when **Adiabene was occupied** first by Parthian forces and then by Roman troops sent to expel the Parthians. What is more, the production of large numbers of bronze coins was intended for facilitating local trade, especially with the purpose of making change for Roman denarii and Parthian drachms. However, this is not a very accurate picture (see Plutarch, *Pompey* 36). First, Parthian forces occupied Gordyene and only this action provoked the Roman response. The Romans are said to have expelled the Parthians from Gordyene (and not from Adiabene!) as far as Arbelitis (μέρχι τῆς Ἀρβηλίτιδος), which, taken literally, means that the Romans did not enter Adiabene (likewise Kahrstaedt 1950, 60 and Wolski 1993, 126). Furthermore, generally speaking, Adiabene was within the sphere of Parthian power starting from the reign of Mithradates II (122–91 BCE), and this fact makes it problematic to see the presence of Parthian troops in Adiabene as an act of occupation per se. Lastly, the use of Roman denarii is not documented in this area at all in the first century BCE.

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Abstract

This paper examines local bronze coinage attributed to Adiabene (frequently and *wrongly* labeled as "Natounia coins"). It provides the first ever analysis of another item stored in the British Museum (including photographs). The paper rejects Milik's identification of the ethnonym *Natunia* in coin legends, and instead suggests the following toponym: *Natunisarokerta* (as tentatively suggested by Le Rider). The meaning of this toponym is to be understood in the light of the Hatra inscription no. 21: built (*ker*) by [in the sense: on behalf of the kingdom of] Adiabene (Adiabene = *natunissar*, "given by Ishtar", being another Semitic name for Adiabene).

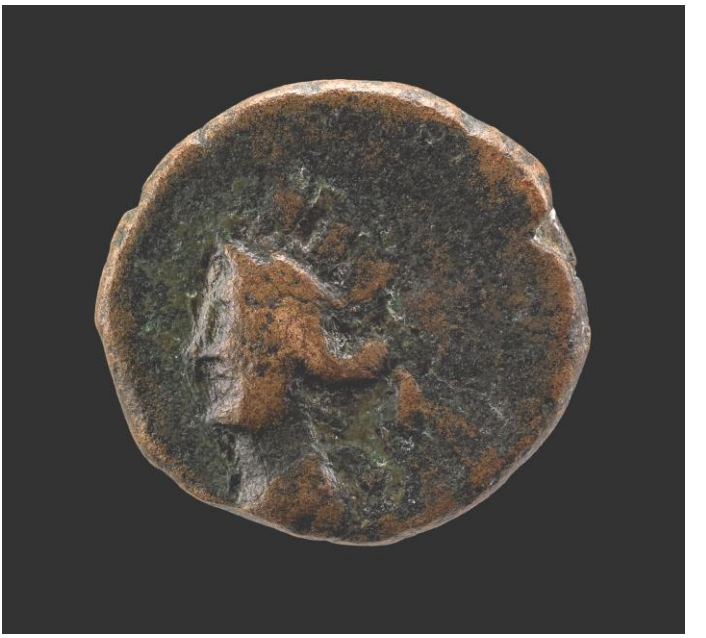

Plate 1 (obverse of coin no. 1 from the British Museum, © Trustees of the British Museum)

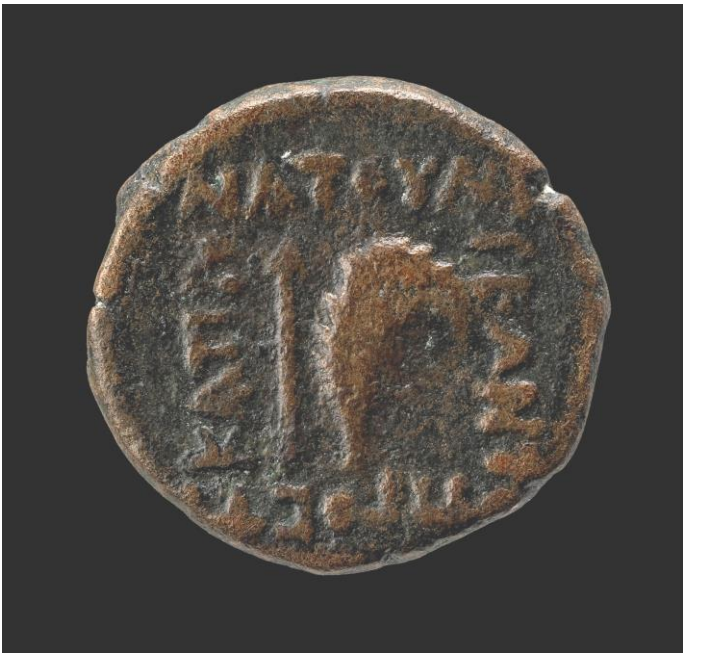

Plate 2 (reverse of coin no. 1 from the British Museum, © Trustees of the British Museum)

Plate 3 (obverse of the British Museum item no. 1929,1108.1, © Trustees of the British Museum)

Plate 4 (reverse of the British Museum item no. 1929,1108.1, © Trustees of the British Museum)

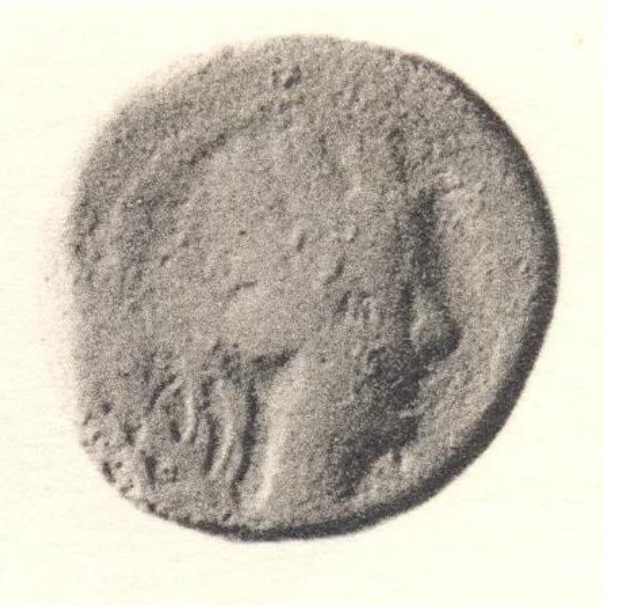

Plate 5 (obverse of the Nisibis coin no. 6, after Le Rider 1959–1960, pl. III)

Plate 6 (reverse of the Nisibis coin no. 6, after Le Rider 1959–1960, pl. III)

Plate 7 (obverse of the Nisibis coin no. 7, after Le Rider 1959–1960, pl. III)

Plate 8 (reverse of the Nisibis coin no. 7, after Le Rider 1959–1960, pl. III)