Part 3

Material and Political Environment of Adiabene from the 3rd Century BCE to the 3rd Century CE

Introduction

Recent archaeological news arouses a great deal of interest in the country of origin of the royal converts in academia as well as in a wider audience, and this lead us to pose a few basic questions – what do we know about Adiabene in the Seleucid and Parthian periods? More specifically - what does the name Adiabene actually mean, where was this country located, what were its environments and customs like?

To answer these questions is to satisfy a natural need for knowledge in the first place[886] but also to straighten-out some misunderstandings stemming from the lack of research on this area. E.g. D. Ben-Ami is reported to say that Helena was "a wealthy Babylonian aristocrat"[887]. Was Adiabene, then, located in Babylonia? As we shall see, Adiabene is located in northern and not in southern Mesopotamia, and its material culture is definitely distinctive from that in Babylonia. What is more, by collecting available data on the material culture of Adiabene we may gain a broader perspective on ancient traditions on the 1st c. CE Adiabene royalty, and consequently better understand sources discussed in parts 1 and 2.

Therefore, our current investigations will procced as follows. For a start, we will survey ancient texts in search of geographical and ethnographical information on Adiabene (chapter 8). This will enable us to gain an initial insight into the material and political environment of Adiabene, but also to determine the territory whose archaeological sites will be of interest to us in chapter 9, where we will present the archaeological data. Numismatic, epigrahic and onomastic evidence will be given special attention in chapters 10 and 11. Based on our analysies from previous chapters (where we have collected and interpreted literary and archaeological sources), we will sketch a basic chronology of the Adiabene royalty in the Hellenistic and Parthian period in chapter 12. Lastly, we will sketch the political situation of Adiabene and Judea in the context of the relations between Rome and Parthia in chapter 13. Here, taken Tacitus as an example, we will first present the Roman perspective on Parthia and Adiabene (13.1). Second, we will discuss all evidence concerning the presence of Jews in Adiabene (13.2). Third, we will go on to Judea at the time of the upring against Rome (66-73 CE) and examine both the role of the Adiabeneans during this war (chapter 13.3) and the broader political context of the Jewish uprising in the context of relations between Rome and Parthia (chapter 13.4).

8. Geographical and Ethnographical Texts on Adiabene

8.1. Introduction

In this part, we set out to look for geographical and ethnographical information on Adiabene in ancient Greek and Roman writings (see plates I-III)[888]. Our attention will therefore

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[886] See Grabbe 2000: 46 and his well-put metaphor about sitting on the fence: "I cannot just sit on the fence and discuss Josephus's aims and narrative construction. I have to take the sources and try to make sense of them – all of them, not just Josephus".

[887] See the Jerusalem Post news http://www.jpost.com/LandedPages/PrintArticle.aspx?id=84392

[888] See Marciak 2011b: 179-208.

be devoted to ancient ethnographies, that is, literature focused on "the land, the history, the marvels and the customs of a people"[889]. However, since the Parthians were not fortunate enough to have their own Herodotus to write (and have these writings survive!) extensive descriptions of their own country and its marvels[890], the less so Adiabene being a small part of the Parthian world for most of the historical period under our interest. Consequently, in addition to ancient geographies and ethnographies in the strict sense[891], we will also refer to primarily historiographical accounts that contain geographical excurses or some ethnographic elements[892].

8.2. Strabo

Strabo (64 or 63 BCE – ca. 24 CE)[893] is the earliest author whose work, *Geographica,* contributes to our knowledge on Adiabene. His work contains five brief references to Adiabene (Str., *Geog*. 11.4.8, 11.14.12, 16.1.1, 16.1.8, 16.1.18), as well as two passages where he refers to the region of Arbela (16.1.3-4) and to the territory of Adiabene (16.1.19) in a more direct way.

The above-mentioned category of brief references list Adiabene among many other countries and peoples in very general descriptions of large geographical areas and their inhabitants (like Armenia - Str., *Geog*. 11.4.8 and 11.14.12 and 15; the country of the Assyrians - 16.1.1; that of the Babylonians – 16.1.8, and the country of the Cossaeans – 16.1.18)[894]. All these references can help us locate Adiabene only approximately and in relation to other geographical or ethnographical entities. Thus, first, Adiabene is mentioned as located on the frontier of Armenia together with Kalachene (Str., *Geog*. 11.4.8 and 11.14.12). Next, Adiabene is coupled with Dolomene, Kalachene, and Chazene as countries surrounding Nineveh in Str., *Geog*. 16.1.1 (literally as "plains around Nineveh": τὰ περὶ τὴν Νίνον πεδία), and in looking west from Babylonia with Mesopotamia and Gordyene (Strabo 16.1.8). Not all of these geographical and ethnographical terms can be identified; especially Dolomene and Chazene are otherwise unknown. Kalachene is mostly understood as the country around Nimrud (since it corresponds to the Assyrian *Kalaḫ* or *Kalḫu*)[895], while Gordyene is the country approximately situated east of the Tigris between Sophene, Armenia, and Adiabene[896]. Most striking, however, is Adiabene's relation to Armenia in Strabo 11.4.8 and 11.14.12. The first account delivers the following story[897]:

It is said that Jason, together with Armenos the Thessalian, on his voyage to the country of the Kolchians, pressed on from there as far as the Kaspian Sea, and visited, not only Iberia and Albania, but also many parts of Armenia and Media, as both the Jasonia and several other memorials testify. And it is said that Armenos was a native of Armenion, one of the cities on Lake Boibeïs between Pherae and Larisa, and that his followers took up their abode in Akilisene and

[889] Sterling 1992: 53.
[890] Lerouge 2007: 39.
[891] On the term of ancient ethnographies, see Sterling 1992: 20-102 and Murphy 2004: 77-128 (esp. 77-87).
[892] Murphy 2004: 79-80; Lerouge 2007: 39.
[893] Romm 1997: 359-362.
[894] On this type of location-giving in Strabo, see Olbrycht 2001: 434-435 and the literature cited in Olbrycht 2001: 434, n. 62 and 435, n. 63.
[895] Weissbach 1919a: 1530; Kessler 1999a: 146.
[896] On the location of Gordyene, see Baumgartner 1912: 1594-1595; Kahrstaedt 1950: 58-70; Wiesehöfer 1998: 1149.
[897] Strabo's texts used here are those of H.L. Jones 1928 and H.L. Jones 1930.

Syspiritis, occuping the country as far as Kalachene and Adiabene; and indeed that he left Armenia named after himself.

In turn, in Str. *Geog.* 11.14.12 we have the following account:

There is an ancient story of the Armenian race to this effect: that Armenos of Armenion, a Thessalian city, which lies between Pherae and Larisa on Lake Boibeïs, as I have already said, accompanied Jason into Armenia; and Kyrsilos the Pharsalian and Medios the Larisaean, who accompanied Alexander, say that Armenia was named after him, and that, of the followers of Armenos, some took up their abode in Akilisene, which in earlier times was subject to the Sopheni, whereas others took up their abode in Syspiritis, as far as Kalachene and Adiabene, outside the Armenian mountains. They also say that the clothing of the Armenians is Thessalian…

U. Kahrstedt suggested that both accounts contain *Siedlungslegende* for Adiabene[898]. In fact, *Siedlungslegende* is indeed presented in both accounts, but it refers directly only to Armenia. The origin of Adiabene is not directly the subject of Strabo's attention in 11.4.8 and 11.14.12, Adiabene crops up only as an aside to the Armenia topic, and, what is more, Adiabene's *Siedlungslegende* per se is presented by Strabo in 16.1.4 (where he recalls Arbelos, the son of Athmonon). On the other hand, the texts in Strabo 11.4.8 and 11.14.12 refer to Adiabene and partly include this country in their portrayal of Armenia's early history. In this manner, Adiabene is presented as part of the pan-Armenian heritage[899]. The tradition present in Strabo 11.4.8 and 11.14.12 and 15 clearly comes from sources written from the Armenian point of view[900].

Strabo 16.1.3-4 and 16.1.19 are of special importance because they take on Adiabene as a distinctive subject of interest; in Str. 16.1.3-4 we have the following account:

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 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

[898] Kahrstedt 1950: 59, n. 7.
[899] Likewise Sellwood 1985: 457 (though he means traditions underlying Pliny's texts).
[900] For the historical quest for Armenia's borders (and Adiabene in this context), see Hewsen 1983: 123-143 (esp. 138-139); Hewsen 1984: 347-365 (esp. 354-355); Hewsen 1985: 55-84 (esp. 68-70); Hewsen 1988-89: 271-319 (esp. 302-306).

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's geographical description in 16.1.3-4 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[901]. 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[902]. 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 Arrapḫa[903]. There can be no doubt that the Arrapḫa region was located south of the Little Zab in Assyrian texts[904] (on the identification of all hydronyms and toponyms mentioned here see below pp. 140-142 and 152-154). 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)[905]. 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 Arrapḫa region south of the Kapros. At the same time, approximately the same region (including the territory south of the Little Zab) 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 Arrapḫa region with Demetrias as its main city. Likewise, Strabo's sentence on Adiabene's relation to Babylonia in 16.1.3 is textually controversial[906]. It should probably be read that the region of Arbela is a province (ὑπαρχία) of Babylonia, and not that it lies opposite Babylonia. This interpretation can be enhanced by Strabo 16.1.19, where Adiabene is explicitly called a part of Babylonia, though with its own ruler (ἄρχων).

What can be said about the many Greek toponyms, hydronyms and ethnonyms that occur in Strabo's geographical and ethnographical texts on Adiabene? Mt. Nikatorion is mentioned only in Strabo 16.1.4. According to Sturm, it corresponds to one of the peaks of Ǧebel Maqlūb, reaching 493 m[907]. Other possible suggestions are Qaračoq or Demir Dāgh[908]. In the case of the city of Demetrias, it is mentioned again by Stephanus Byzantinus (*Ethnica* D, 62), but this reference may go back to Strabo himself[909]. Hoffman points to the present Baba Gurgur, close to

[901] Fränkel 1894: 360; Sellwood 1985: 456; Oelsner 1996: 112; Radt 2009: 256 and 273.
[902] '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.
[903] Herzfeld 1968: 226.
[904] Schrader 1878: 164; Fränkel 1896: 1225; Unger 1932b: 154; Herzfeld 1968: 229.
[905] Herzfeld 1968: 226.
[906] A classic reading according to Meineke 1877: 1027–1029, Kramer 1853: 284, Coray 1814: 159, n. 2, and H.L. Jones 1930: 194: τὰ μὲν οὖν Ἄρβηλα τῆς Βαβυλωνίας ὑπάρχει ἃ κατ' αὐτήν ἐστιν. The underlined part gets different corrections. Biffi 2002, 135 reads: ὑπάρχει ἀλλὰ 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 Babyloniens". 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.
[907] Sturm 1936b: 283.
[908] Herzfeld 1907: 128. See also Reade 2001: 87.
[909] Radt 2009: 256, n. 8.

Kirkuk, as Strabo's Demetrias[910]. This identification is likely since Strabo locates Demetrias close to the notable naphtha springs which in turn could be those near Kirkuk[911]. The Kirkuk naphtha springs have always been the largest in the Kurdistan area[912], and have the oldest attestation in ancient sources[913]. If this identification is correct, it additionally enhances Herzfeld's emendations of Str., *Geog*. 16.1.4. Demetrias must have been founded by a ruler who gave his name to it, and there were four rulers bearing the name Demetrios who were in possession of this area: Demetrios Poliorcetes[914] (around the 310 BCE campaign against Seleukos I) and three Seleucid kings including Demetrios I Soter (162-150 BCE), Demetrios II Nicator (145-141 and 129-125 BCE)[915] and Demetrios III Philopator (96-88 BCE)[916]. However, the option of Demetrios Poliorcetes can easily be ruled out since he did not hold this area for very long, and his rival, Seleukos would not have tolerated a city-name of his rival to persist in his kingdom, instead he could easily have renamed the foundation. Likewise, the foundation of Demetrios III is not possible since at his time the Seleucids lost control of this area due to Parthian territorial gains in the East[917]. Thus, only the first two Seleucid rulers can be taken into account, and consequently the foundation of Demetrias in Adiabene can be dated to the 2nd c. BCE.

Interestingly, in saying that the city was founded by Arbelos, the son of Athmonon, Strabo conveys a Greek *Siedlungslegende* for Arbela, and so indirectly for the whole region. If we use a basic definition of *interpretation graeca* meaning that Greek names for local places are given in the first place by the Greeks coming into Eastern countries[918], then the legend on Arbelos indicates the presence of Greek settlers in the region of Arbela. What is more, the name Athmonon seems to be a hint at the Attic Demos Athmonon[919]. Thus, according to this tradition (which is not Strabo's own invention since he remarks - ὥς φασιν), Arbela is linked with Athens, the cultural capital of Hellada, and so the city is claimed to have one of the most prestigious Hellenic origins. This is of course very significant in itself. Only the intellectual elite of a city of a considerably high cultural profile could come up with a construction of such a prestigious pedigree. In summary, Strabo's texts bring a number of precious details about the Hellenistic environment of the Adiabene region, and testify to a great deal of the Greek cultural presence in Seleucid Adiabene.

Further toponyms mentioned in Strabo's account are equally interesting from the point of view of their cultural background. The name *Sadrakai* is either interpreted as a designation of an unknown place[920] or as the name of Dareios' palace[921], or as an Iranian version of a specific

[910] Hoffman 1880: 273.
[911] Galletti 2005: 23-24.
[912] Poli/Scaroni 2005: 525-526.
[913] Strikingly similar naphtha spring are recalled by Plutarch, *Alexander* 35, and it is very likely that he too meant the Kirkuk naphtha springs since the naphtha springs he recalls also had a unique feature of continuous fire exposure (which is a rare phenomenon in this area) and were also located along the Royal Route leading from Arbela to Babylon. See Herzfeld 1968: 229; Galletti 2005: 23-24; Poli/Scaroni 2005: 525-526.
[914] So de Jong 1997: 274.
[915] Sullivan 1990: 98; S.M. Sherwin-White/Kuhrt 1993: 230; Wolski 1999: 121-123.
[916] Bellinger 1949: 54.
[917] For the context of the fall of the Seleucid Empire, see Bellinger 1949: 51-102 and Wolski 1999: 102-120.
[918] Tcherikover 1959: 20-36, esp. 24; Hengel 1973: 23-27 and 464-486; Hengel 1976: 73-93.
[919] Radt 2009: 255, n. 31.
[920] H.L. Jones 1930: 196-197; Biffi 2002: 136.
[921] Wikander 1946: 77, n. 5; de Jong 1997: 274; Radt 2005: 278-279.

toponym (*Altynköprü*)[922]. The second interpretation is clearly correct, since Dareios' dwelling place immediately follows the reference to Sadrakai in the text, and the etymology of Sadrakai can be traced back to the old-Persian and simply means *palace*[923]. In turn, *Kyparisson* probably denotes a certain plantation of cypress trees[924]. The reference to *the fountain of naphtha* and *the fires* is puzzling[925]. The presence of oil resources in the Mesopotamian area indeed attracted attention of Greek travelers and corresponds well with the reality of present day Kurdistan. *The fires* could be, then, a natural phenomenon connected with naphtha[926]. On the other hand, it may also correspond to some fire rituals typical of Iranian cults[927]. This option is quite probable[928], and is additionally enhanced by Strabo's mention of the plantation of cypress trees. As Wikander notes, according to some Zoroastrian traditions cypress were planted at fire temples[929]. This leads us finally to Strabo's most profound reference to the Iranian cultural background of Adiabene - he recalls the temple of Aneas (τὸ τῆς ᾽Ανέας ἱερὸν). Such a divine name is not attested elsewhere and consequently its name is emendated in two ways, either as ᾽Αναίτιδιος or as Ναναίας[930]. Each reading could result in a different identification[931]. The reading ᾽Αναίτιδιος can be referred to two other places in Strabo, namely 11.8.4 and 15.3.15, wherein he recalls a goddess named ᾽Αναίτις. This would correspond to a well-known Iranian goddess Anāhitā[932]. The second possible reading can be enhanced by a parallel in Polybius 10.27 and Macc 1:13-15 which recall the goddess Αἴνη whose temple in Ekbatana Antiochos IV attempted to loot. This interpretation suggests a different identification of a female goddess in Strabo 16.1.4 – Nanaia[933] whose origin is not of Iranian character; she originated as a Babylonian and Elamite goddess but was later integrated into the Zoroastrian pantheon, and worshiped throughout the Iranian-speaking world, as well as in many places in the Middle East[934]. This option is to be recommended since it entails fewer difficulties in emendating the text[935]. In summary, Strabo 16.1.3-4 is very informative about the cultural background of Adiabene and clearly testifies to the presence of two cultural traditions in Adiabene – Greek and Iranian.

The region of Arbela, according to Strabo, has clearly defined borders marked by two rivers. Λύκος is a Greek name given to many rivers and to humans in ancient times[936], and means *wolf*, while Κάπρος translates *boar*[937]. It was customary to give names of wild animals to rivers

[922] Sarre/Herzfeld 1920: 327-328.
[923] Wikander 1946: 77, n. 5; Radt 2005: 278-279.
[924] Wikander 1946: 78.
[925] Both have determined articles, although they appear for the first time in the narrative. Radt 2009: 256, n. 2 ascribes this irregularity to the sloppiness of the authors of the excerpts.
[926] So de Jong 1997: 274 and 274, n. 95.
[927] So Wikander 1946: 78. On this aspect of Zoroastrianism, see Boyce 1975: 454-465; de Jong 1997: 343-350.
[928] See de Jong 1997: 274-275 who opts for a natural phenomenon, but also remarks that "the presence of natural fires in this region would probably also have attracted the attention of Zoroastrians".
[929] Wikander 1946: 78.
[930] H.L. Jones 1930: 196; Radt 2005: 278–279 and Radt 2009: 256, n. 2 read ᾽Αναία; Kramer 1853: 285 has τῆς ᾽Αναίας ἱερὸν; Coray 1814: 338 opts for the reading ᾽Αναίτιδιος; in turn, Müller/Dübner 1853: 628 reads τῆς ᾽Ανέας ἱερὸν.
[931] Some commentators do not distinguish between these two goddesses. See Biffi 2002: 136; Radt 2009: 256.
[932] Biffi 2002: 136; Radt 2009: 256, n. 2.
[933] Hoffman 1880: 273; de Jong 1997: 274-275.
[934] De Jong 1997: 273-275. On Nanaia (and Anāhitā), see Hoffman 1880: 134-161; de Jong 1997: 268-284; Briant 2002: 253-254; Weber 2010: 156, 160-161.
[935] De Jong 1997: 274-275.
[936] See on "Lykos" in *RE* 13.2: 2389-2417.
[937] Weissbach 1919b: 1921; Swoboda 1919: 1921-1922; Liddell/Scott/Jones 1968: 876.

in order to express the unbridled and dangerous nature of their stream[938]. Indeed, the impetuous course of both rivers made such a strong impression on Arab geographers that they used to call them "demonically possessed"[939]. In addition to Strabo, the Lykos River as a tributary of the Tigris is also recalled in Polybius 5.51.3 and Ptolemy 6.1.7 (in both cases coupled with the Kapros)[940]. What is more, the Lykos River is also mentioned in sources describing the retreat of the Persian army after the battle near Gaugamela. They recall a bridge built upon the Lykos River that accounted for the only retreat route of Dareios and the Persians (Curtius Rufus 4.9.9; 4.16.8; 4.16.16 and Arrian, *Anabasis* 3.15.4). In turn, Κάπρος is a Greek name given both to rivers and to humans[941]. It is used for one of the main rivers in Laodikea, often coupled with another Laodikean river, the Lykos[942]. The Kapros River as a Tigris tributary is mentioned in Str., *Geog*.16.1.4, Pol. 5.51.3, and Ptol., *Geog*. 6.1.7, always paired with the Lykos.

Both the Lykos and Kapros are widely identified with the Great and Little Zab[943]. *Zabu elu* (*the upper Zab*) and *Zabu shupalu* (*the lower Zab*) appear in Assyrian texts from the times of Tiglatpilesar I (ca. 1100 BCE) to the reigns of Ashurnasipal II (883 to 859 BCE) and Shalmaneser III (859-824 BCE)[944]. Ζάβας or Ζαβᾶς, sometimes with 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[945]. Further, *Zaba* and *Zav* function in the Syriac and Later Armenian to describe the rivers around the region of Arbela[946]. Likewise, two Hellenistic sources make use of names in Greek that might closely echo indigenous names of the Lykos and Kapros rivers. This would not be unusual for the region that has always featured multilingualism. The first candidate is the Zerbis River recalled by Pliny in *Nat*. 6.30.118 as a tributary of the Tigris in northern Mesopotamia. According to Weissbach, the Zerbis is identical with the Kapros[947]. This is, however, unlikely, since in the next sentence Pliny uses the Greek name Lykos for a river rising in the mountains of Armenia. It would be a matter of inconsistency if Pliny had used once a Greek name and once a local non-Greek name to refer to two twin rivers within two consecutive sentences. Furthermore, Pliny's Zerbis is said to flow through the country of the Azoni who in turn is 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[948]. Thus, geographically we have two different rivers; Pliny's Lykos can be relatively easily identified with the river bearing the same name in other sources (Polybius 5.51.3; Ptolemy, *Geog*. 6.1.7; Curt. Rufus 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 identified as the Botan

[938] Bosworth 2002: 366.
[939] Bosworth 2002: 366.
[940] Besides this, another Lykos is mentioned by Pliny in *Nat.* 5.20.84, but it cannot be identified with that of Strabo (so Biffi 2002: 135), but it is rather a tributary of the upper Euphrates in Armenia (so Weissbach 1927: 2391). Our Lykos is apparently mentioned in Josephus, Ant. 13:251 but without the reference to either the Tigris or the Kapros.
[941] Weissbach 1919b: 1921; Swoboda 1919: 1921-1922.
[942] Ruge 1919: 1921.
[943] Weissbach 1919b: 1921; Hansman 1987: 277; Kessler 1999b: 265; Kessler 1999c: 575; Bosworth 2002: 366.
[944] Weissbach 1919b: 1921; Bosworth 2002: 366.
[945] Weissbach 1927: 2391-2392; Bosworth 2002: 366.
[946] Weissbach 1927: 2391-2392.
[947] Weissbach 1919b: 1921.
[948] As Kahrstedt 1950: 65 puts it, these peoples, as well as the Azoni mentioned above, are "obscure Stämme" or "Räuberkantone zwischen den politischen Einheiten".

River[949]. 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[950]. This Greek word is linguistically close to the Semitic original; and so this identification is likely[951]. To summarize, the identification of the Lykos and Kapros rivers as the Zabs is mainly based 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 Tigris is mostly referred to the vicinity of Gaugamela. Furthermore, Marquart has advanced a philological hypothesis aiming to back up this geographical identification. Namely, according to Marquart, there is a link between the etymology of Zab, through the old Aramaic and Syriac *deba* and the old Armenian *gail*, both meaning *wolf*[952], and that of Lycos also meaning *wolf*[953].

Another important passage devoted to Adiabene by Strabo can be found in *Geog*. 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 very differently organized than Strabo's 16.1.3-4. Strabo starts with Adiabene, but the mention of Babylonia and Armenia leads him to a lengthy digression on "great kingdoms of the past" and he returns to Adiabene only at the end of the passage. As a result, Strabo 16.1.19 ends up only delivering two, though still very significant, details on Adiabene. First, Adiabene's relation to Babylonia in 16.1.19 sheds additional light on 16.1.3–4 – Adiabene, being geographically a distinctive region south of the Lykos, is presented as a district politically dependent on Babylonia, though with a certain amount of independence (since it has its own ἄρχων). Secondly, the name *Sakkopodes* (Σακκόποδες) used here for the Adiabeneans is otherwise unknown[954]. It literally means *sack feet*[955]; its uniqueness leads Kramer to call it "suspicious"[956] and Meineke to eject it from the text[957]. 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 c. 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

[949] So Marquart 1930: 340. By contrast, see Minorsky 1944: 244-245.
[950] Kessler 1999c: 575; Biffi 2002: 135.
[951] Kessler 1999b: 265; Kessler 1999c: 575.
[952] Marquart 1930: 429-430.
[953] Liddell/Scott/Jones 1968: 1064-1065.
[954] Kramer 1853: 293; Meineke 1877: 1039; H.L. Jones 1930: 224–225, n. 2; Radt 2009: 274; Biffi 2002: 160. Groskurd 1834: 398 instead suggests reading Saulopodes meaning "delicate walkers".
[955] H.L. Jones 1930: 224–225, n. 2.
[956] Kramer 1853: 293.
[957] Meineke 1877: 1039.

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[958]. Yet, as we shall see below (pp. 152-154), 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.

Geographica is a work that Strabo probably created during the last decades of his life which ended shortly after 24 CE[959]. Strabo's work is not, however, based on his own travels, but mainly on written sources[960]. In fact, Strabo is known for using many sources, both older and more recent ones[961]. One of the most important vehicles of information for Strabo is said to come from the traditions on Alexander's expedition to Persia[962]. This source tradition may go back to Eratosthenes, and consequently his sources to "the Alexander historians"[963]. 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[964].

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 for transmitting older traditions, particularly with regard to Alexander, and not always attempting to bring them up to date with the conditions of his own time[965]. This is the case with the Babylonian region, among others[966]. 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"[967]. Especially the foundation of the new political centers of the Seleucid kingdom, Seleukeia-on-the-Tigris and Antiochia-on-the-Orontes, contributed to this change[968]. Thus, the picture of Adiabene as a province (ὑπαρχία or τόπος)[969] of the satrapy of Babylonia is reliant on the early-Seleucid perspective[970]. 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 (see below chapter 9 on its material culture as revealed through the archaeological record).

At the same time, Strabo explicitly names in his opus some more recent sources, particularly Apollodoros of Artemita (who flourished between 130 and 87 BCE or even into the second part of the 1st c. BCE) and Poseidonios of Apamea (ca. 135 BCE - ca. 51 BCE)[971]. The contribution

[958] Salmasius 1689: 662–663.
[959] J.W. Drijvers 1998: 279.
[960] Romm 1997: 360–361.
[961] J.W. Drijvers 1998: 281–282.
[962] 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.
[963] Pearson 1983.
[964] Aly 1957: 158–159.
[965] Clarke 2002: 301; Lerouge 2007: 224–226.
[966] Clarke 2002: 301; Lerouge 2007: 225.
[967] Boiy 2004: 137–166. By contrast, see Hauser 1999: 207-239 who shows that after a period of decline the life in Babylon started to thrive again. Yet, this does not mean that Babylon has ever regained the same status as it had before the Greek conquest.
[968] Boiy 2004: 193.
[969] Bickerman 1983: 8; Boiy 2004: 193.
[970] Jacobs 1994: 65 and 147–152 (esp. 150: "spätachämenidische Verhältnisse").
[971] Lasserre 1975: 13–15; Chaumont 1987: 160-161; Nikonorov 1998: 107–122; J.W. Drijvers 1998: 281–282.

of Apollodoros must have been especially important to Strabo's knowledge of Adiabene, since Artemita was located on the Diyala river, close to Adiabene, and consequently Apollodoros must have been personally 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 attributed to "the Alexander historians" but to more recent writers like Apollodoros or Poseidonios.

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 hand, the digression 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 Pompey's expedition in the East[972]. 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 c. BCE tradition with its roots in the Roman campaigns in Armenia[973]. The latter tradition is apparently the source of those passages in Strabo (11.4.8 and 11.14.12) which convey the idea of an Armenian Adiabene, that is, a country that belonged to Armenia at the time of Armenia's foundation and as such will always remain within the sphere of Armenia's territorial rights.

8.3. Plutarch and Tacitus

In two historiographical works written in the 2nd c. CE, Plutarch's *Vitae Parallelae* and Tacitus' *Annales,* we can find brief references to the territory of Adiabene, made on the margin, but still of some importance. Plutarch's references to Adiabene are made in the context of the third Mithridatic War (74 or 73-63 BCE)[974]. In *Lucullus* 26-29 (esp. 26.1, 26.4, 27.6, 29.2) Plutarch describes the battle at Tigranokerta (69 BCE) and on this occasion we hear of an anonymous king of Adiabene (and his subjects). The theater of war was centered on the city of Tigranokerta and, besides the two great players, Rome and Parthia, there were other participating regional powers including Pontos, Armenia, Sophene, Gordyene, and Adiabene. The king of Adiabene was an ally of the Parthians, as was the Armenian king Tiridates the Great, against the Romans. But his role on the political scene was a little less important than that played by the rulers of Gordyene (whose ruler Zarbienos switched sides and allied himself with the Romans) and Sophene, not to mention Pontos or Armenia. The third Mithridatic War was a stunning success for the Romans and their allies and in *Pompey 36* we can see how the war comes to an end. Namely, Pompey is reported to send forces under Afranius against the Parthian king, plundering Gordyene, and the Roman general managed to drive the Parthians as far away as

[972] Aly 1957: 162–163.
[973] Aly 1957: 159–160.
[974] For the Third Mithridatic War, see Holmes 1923: 192-200, 204-212; Magie 1950: 321-365, 1203-1231; Ziegler 1964: 24-36; Burney/Lang 1971: 196-200; A.N. Sherwin-White 1984: 159-195, 218-234; Olbrycht 2009: 168-175 (as well as nn. 63 and 66 on p. 183); Olbrycht 2011: 276.

Arbelitis (μέχρι τῆς Ἀρβηλίτιδος)[975]. This shows that while the Romans perceived Gordyene as lying within their sphere of interest, and could undertake a military action to defend their interests there, their interests did not extend into Adiabene which, from the Roman perspective, was part of the remote Parthian world[976].

Plutarch's sources for the Parthian wars of Lucullus and Pompey are believed to be mainly based on personal contributions, now lost, by Archias and Theophanes of Mytilene respectively, who both personally accompanied their mentors on the Mithridatic campaigns[977]. Thus, Plutarch's accounts, though written in the 2nd c. CE, can be useful in highlighting political and territorial developments around 73-63 BCE in the region around Armenia and Adiabene. First, Adiabene was still a relatively small country based mainly on the river basin of the Lykos and Kapros. Secondly, it was seen as part of the Parthian world; and thirdly, other countries, Armenia in the first place, but also Gordyene and Sophene played more important roles in the Upper Tigris and Euphrates region[978].

In turn, in his *Annales* 12.13 Tacitus describes the purpose of the march of a faction of the Parthian forces (supported politically by Rome) against Parthia in 49 CE as to install Meherdates on the Parthian throne instead of Gotarzes[979]. The coalition (some Parthian magnates, Acbarus, ruler of Edessa) is said to camp at Edessa, and then to march through Armenia[980]:

At last, when, outworn by snows and mountains, they were nearing the plains, they effected a junction with the forces of Carenes, and, crossing the Tigris, struck through the country of the Adiabeni, whose king, Izates, had in public leagued himself with Meherdates, whilst in private, and with more sincerity, he inclined to Gotarzes. In passing, however, they captured Nineveh, the time-honoured capital of Assyria, together with a fortress[981]*, known to fame as the site on which the Persian Empire fell in the last battle between Dareios and Alexander. Meanwhile, Gotarzes, at a mountain by the name of Sanbulos, was offering vows to the local deities; the chief cult being that of Hercules, who at fixed intervals warns his priests by dream to place beside his temple a number of horses equipped for hunting. These, after being furnished with quivers full of arrows, run loose in the forest glades, and only at night return, panting hard, and with quivers emptied. In a second nightly vision, the god points out the course he held through the forest, and all along it wild beasts are discovered strewing the ground. Gotarzes, whose army had not as yet reached adequate strength, made use of the river Corma as a natural barrier, and, in spite of derisive messages challenging him to battle, continued to*

[975] Perrin 1917: 211.
[976] Likewise Kahrstaedt 1950: 60 and Wolski 1993: 126.
[977] Scardigli 1979: 121-122.
[978] Kahrstaedt 1950: 60-65.
[979] For the political context of this campaign, see Dąbrowa 1983: 121-124.
[980] The translation used here is that of Jackson 1937a: 333-334.
[981] This phrase in Tacitus is highly problematic. Most commentators have inserted a conjunction, "et" to separate "the capital of Assyria" ("sedes Assyriae") from "a fortress" ("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 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", Gutschmid 1892: 88-89, n. 72 and Bivar 1983: 77 and n. 3 follow this reading. By contrast, Furneaux 1907: 76 and Koestermann 1967: 130 deem it as a 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.

interpose delays, to change his quarters, and, by despatching bribery-agents, to bid for the defection of his enemies. First Izates and the contingents of Adiabene, then Acbarus with those of the Arabs, took their departure, in accordance with the levity of their race and with the fact, proved by experience, that barbarians are more inclined to seek their kings from Rome than to keep them. .... With all hope lost, Meherdates now listened to the promises of his father's vassal Parraces, and, by an act of perfidy on his part, was thrown into chains and surrendered to the victor.

In Tacitus, besides the Romans and the Parthian sovereign, we have two other kings who play lesser, but still significant, roles, those are Acbarus and Izates, rulers of Edessa and Adiabene respectively. Remarkably, there is not a word about Gordyene. Apparently, we can witness another political and territorial development in the region. Remarkably, Gordyene is no longer a political entity in the region and the space left by Gordyene has been filled by both Edessa and Adiabene[982]. In terms of geography, the theater of war was located in Adiabene, and Tacitus' Adiabene is clearly a larger geographical entity than only the region between the Lykos and Kapros Rivers (Strabo's and Plutarch's Adiabene), since the Roman forces did not reach it yet, as Tacitus already recalls the name of Adiabene. The name Adiabene is clearly used by Tacitus to refer to the territory on the eastern bank of the Tigris (only upon crossing the Tigris on the route from Edessa did the coalition enter Adiabene), but also northwest of Nineveh, which belonged to the first stronghold the coalition came across while already in Adiabene[983]. It is curious that Nineveh had to be captured by the coalition forces, since the coalition forces were accompanied by its king, Izates II. However, the solution apparently lies in the phrase *capta in transitu*, that is, Nineveh was taken over by the Romans without conducting siege operations (that are not mentioned here unlike e.g. in *Ann*. 15.4). Thus, in Annales 12:3, Adiabene serves as a name for the northern part of Assyria east of the Tigris and northwest of its tributary Lykos[984], and Nineveh also is part of that region. The identification of two other toponyms that appear in Tacitus' account, the Corma River and the Sanbulos, is problematic.

Weissbach suggested Strabo's Sadrakai as the Sanbulos[985], but we already know that Sadrakai means a certain palace located in the Arrapḫa region (see above pp. 139-140). In turn, Rawlinson identified the Sanbulos with the Mount Sunbulah in the Gīlān plain[986]. Again, the Sanbulos has also been identified as one of two sanctuaries of Herakles, one located at the cave-complex at Karafto (in Kordestān Province, 20 km west of Takab) and another in Behistūn; and various scholars have aimed at connecting either sacred place with Tacitus' story (see pl. III)[987]. The issue is that Tacitus' text is problematic when it comes to its geographical descriptions. First, the Corma is not attested elsewhere, and so a number of local rivers have been suggested as equivalents of this Latin name: a local tributary of the Great Zab (Lykos) in the vicinity of the Nineveh region[988] (especially the modern Khazir or Gomel/Gomer), the Little Zab (Kapros)[989], the Diyala or the Adhaim[990]. In terms of scriptural emendations, it seems that the most likely

[982] Kahrstedt 1950: 65.
[983] Likewise Furneaux 1907: 76.
[984] Furneaux 1907: 76.
[985] Weissbach 1920: 2232.
[986] Rawlinson 1839: 42.
[987] See Stein 1940: 324-346; Bernard 1980; von Gall 2010; de Jong 1997: 303-304.
[988] Implicitly Reade 1998: 65-66.
[989] Sturm 1937: 1794; Stein 1940: 341, n. 6; von Gall 2010.
[990] Debevoise 1938: 173, n. 94; Tomaschek 1901: 1246.

option is to see the Corma as a corruption of the Greek Τορνᾶς (the Latin *Torna,* which also corresponds to the Akkadian *Turnat*) known from Theophanes the Confessor, 8-9th c. CE (*Chronographia Tripertita* 320.19-22, 321.8)[991] that in turn is identified as either the Diyala or the Adhaim[992]. This emendation could better fit the identification of Sanbulos with Herakles' sanctuaries in Karafto or Behistūn. Yet, the second problem with Tacitus' text is that the identification of Corma as the Τορνᾶς requires moving Tacitus' theater of war from the Nineveh region far away to the south[993]. This can only be accepted if one follows the reading of the *Agricola* manuscript that contains the phrase "Ninos … et Arbela castellum" and not just "Ninos … castellum"[994]. Otherwise, if we closely follow Tacitus' topography in an unemendated version, the military activities took place between Nineveh and the Great Zab (Lykos)[995], and so only a local tributary of the Great Zab (Khazir or Gomel) comes into play as a candidate for the Corma.

What is more, Tacitus' description of Gotarzes' divination is remarkable[996]. Tacitus uses a Latin name (*Hercules*) for a well-known Greek deity (*Herakles*), and, at the same time, his description of this religious ceremony has distinctively Iranian features. Namely, white horses were held sacred in Iranian and Elamite traditions[997]; Zoroastrian mythology also used the motif of the hunt[998]. Further, scenes depicting hunting deities are known from the rock-reliefs at Gündük north-east of Nineveh[999]. Even more, the Greek Herakles was frequently identified in the Zoroastrian traditions with Verethraghna[1000], and Verethraghna's main attribute (as the god of victory) is perfectly in keeping with the context of Tacitus' presentation of Gotarzes who is badly in need of a victory[1001]. Thus, Herakles' cult in Adiabene, as depicted by Tacitus in *Ann*. 12.13, provides a very interesting case of fusion of cultural phenomena, the deity who bears a Greco-Roman appellation is worshiped in a distinctively Iranian manner.

8.4. Pliny the Elder

The geopolitical development that took place between Plutarch's and Tacitus' writings is echoed in Pliny's the Elder (23 BCE-79 CE)[1002] *Naturalis historia* where we find four references to the geography of Adiabene[1003]. In all four cases, Pliny sketches a map of the Mesopotamian region and in doing so, mentions Adiabene in relation to the other countries and peoples, especially to Armenia. More 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

[991] I owe this idea to Dr. J. Reade.
[992] Sturm 1937: 1794. However, the parallel (suggested by Tomaschek 1901: 1246) between Corma and churmâ (the Adhaim) is phonetically very close, but the latter appears only in the modern Persian.
[993] Debevoise 1938: 173; von Gall 2010.
[994] Gutschmid 1892: 88-89, n. 72 and Bivar 1983: 77 and n. 3.
[995] Likewise Weissbach 1920: 2232.
[996] See also Reade 1998: 72.
[997] Boyce 1982: 36; Boyce 2001: 82 and 89.
[998] De Jong 1997: 304.
[999] Reade 1998: 72.
[1000] Boyce 2001: 40-42, 272, 305.
[1001] De Jong 1997: 304.
[1002] Keyser 1999: 235-242.
[1003] The text and translation used here is that of Rackham 1942.

Mountains" and Sophene[1004], 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 called Assyria in the past ("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.

What can be said about the many toponyms and ethnonyms that occur in Pliny's references to Adiabene? Pliny's *Cepheni* are acknowledged as inhabitants of *Sophene*, the country located east of the upper Euphrates between Commagene and Armenia[1005]. In the case of Media Atropatene, generally speaking, the Zagros Mountains constituted its western border towards Adiabene in the Hellenistic and Parthian periods[1006]. The reference to Nisibis could be a bit problematic, since two cities in Mesopotamia bore this name[1007]. However, in this case, since the description is made in northern Mesopotamia, it is clearly the most celebrated Nisibis located on the Mygdonios River, a tributary of the Khabur River, while another Nisibis near Neherdea was located in Babylonia[1008]. In sum, Pliny sketches a broad portrayal of the surroundings of Adiabene as a country located east of Armenia and neighbored by Sophene and Media. In particular, Adiabene is bordered by the Tigris to the west and a mountain range to the east. Further, a link between the region of Nisibis and Adiabene known also to other sources is remarkable (Ant. 20:68, partly Dio 68: 26, 1-4). This shows that Pliny's Adiabene is a very different area from Strabo's Adiabene. Strabo's Adiabene was a small district between the Zabs plus perhaps some territory south of the Little Zab and this description is in line with Plutarch's references to Adiabene. By contrast, Pliny's Adiabene has expanded westwards, alongside the western bank of the Tigris to include the Nisibis area. Likewise, Adiabene has also expanded northwest along the eastern bank of the Tigris and borders directly on Sophene (and there is no word about Gordyene in that area), and this is in accordance with Tacitus' picture. Lastly, Adiabene is clearly associated with Assyria, as its previous proper name and as the most advanced frontier of Assyria in geographical terms. Consequently, Nineveh and Gaugamela are mentioned as an integral part of Adiabene.

[1004] On Sophene, see Syme 1995: 51–57 and Kessler 2001: 721–722.
[1005] Weissbach 1927: 1015-1019; Kessler 2001: 721-722.
[1006] Schottky 1989: 11-12.
[1007] 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.
[1008] Oppenheimer 1983: 327-328, 333-334; Oppenheimer 1993: 317-320.

8.5. Ptolemy

Another important text that informs us on the geography of Adiabene is Ptolemy's (90-168 CE) *Geographia* 6.1.1-7[1009] which is devoted to the description of Assyria (understood as a whole area between Armenia to the north, Mesopotamia to the west, Susiane to the south, and Media to the east – 6.1.1). The description proceeds through a long enumeration of territorial names. In 6.1.2 Adiabene (Ἀδιαβηνή) is situated between the Arrapachitis (Ἀρραπαχῖτις) and the Garamaioi (Γαραμαῖοι). Further, Καλακηνή, is said to lie above Adiabene, and the Arbelitis region (ἡ Ἀρβηλίτις χώρα) – above the Garamaioi. Ninos (6.1.3), Gaugamela (6.1.5) and Arbela (6.1.6) (Νῖνος, Γαυγάμηλα, Ἄρβηλα) are mentioned among many Assyrian towns and villages (πόλεις καὶ κῶμαι). Lastly, Ptolemy mentions three rivers in Assyria joining the Tigris. The first and the second are the Lykos (Λύκος) and Kapros (Κάπρος) rivers (ποταμοί), the third one – the Gorgos (Γόργος).

How can we identify Adiabene's neighbors in Ptolemy, and consequently the location of Adiabene itself? The toponym Arrapachitis is a little problematic, since this Greek form appears only in Ptolemy 6.1.2[1010]. However, the Greek form has a linguistically close parallel in Assyrian sources: *Arrapḫa* (a region around modern Kirkuk)[1011]. 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[1012]. The Garamaioi of Ptolemy 6.1.2 may be identical to the Assyrian *Gurumu* attested since Tiglatpileser I (745-727 BCE)[1013]. According to Streck, the Syriac name of the medieval Bēth-Garamai is also akin to *Garamaioi*[1014]. *Bēth-Garamai* was undoubtedly located south of the Little Zab[1015]. Next, Kalachene is also attested in Strabo 11.4.8, 11.14.12 and 15.1.1, and seems to be identical with the Assyrian *Kalaḫ* or *Kalḫu* and so denotes the city of Nimrud and its surroundings[1016]. Lastly, Streck identifies the Gorgos River as the modern Dijala on exclusively geographical grounds[1017].

Ptolemy's descriptions are entirely of a geographical character, there is no hint whatsoever of a political meaning of terms applied to proper names. Ptolemy explicitly acknowledges his main source, that is, Marinos of Tyre whose work is believed to reflect the state of Roman knowledge on the geography of the inhabited world from the first decade of the 2nd c. CE[1018]. In Ptolemy, Adiabene is a distinctive region of the country of Assyria. If Kalachene means Nimrud, and it apparently does, then two terms in Ptolemy, Adiabene and Arbelitis, function as synonyms. Therefore, Ptolemy's Adiabene is a relatively small region between the Zabs and his geographical description of Adiabene corresponds to Strabo's Adiabene to a great extent.

[1009] The text and translation used here is that of Humbach/Ziegler 1998.
[1010] Fränkel 1896: 1225.
[1011] Fränkel 1896: 1225; Herzfeld 1968: 229.
[1012] Herzfeld 1968: 229.
[1013] Streck 1912a: 750-751.
[1014] Streck 1912a: 750-751.
[1015] Streck 1912a: 750-751.
[1016] Weissbach 1919a: 1530; Kessler 1999a: 146.
[1017] Streck 1912b: 1660.
[1018] Berggren/Jones 2000: 23-24.

8.6. Cassius Dio and Ammianus Marcellinus

Both Cassius Dio's (ca. 155/164 CE – post 229 CE)[1019] and Ammianus Marcellinus' (ca. 330 – ca. 395 CE)[1020] references to Adiabene are made in the context of the Roman military campaigns in Mesopotamia. Cassius Dio's *Historia Romana* 68.26.1–4 describes the advance of the Roman troops under the command of Emperor Trajan against Parthia in 115 CE, and Adiabene happened to lie on the route of the Roman legions[1021]:

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.

Dio's eighty-book *Historia Romana* is only partially extant. Unfortunately, his account on Trajan's war against Parthia (114-117 CE) belongs to a lost part of his work. The text on Trajan's Parthian campaign as we have it now is based on Byzantine excerpts (see also below p. 201)[1022]. The bulk of Dio's narrative from the book 61 onwards has been transmitted by Ioannes Xiphilinus of Trapezus, whose work is seen as "a rather erratic selection" from Dio's material, "substantially, but not invariably, in Dio's order and often keeping very close to Dio's wording"[1023]. As far as Dio's own sources are concerned, he rarely names them, and as a result, nothing very specific can be said about his use of them[1024]. In general, Dio is believed to have used Livy, Tacitus, Sallust, Augustus' *Res Gestae*, Plutarch and Arrian[1025].

Dio is another ancient historian who clearly sees a link between, even equating, Adiabene and Assyria. Nineveh, Gaugamela and Arbela are an integral part of Adiabene. Further, Adiabene borders on Armenia, and so Adiabene is by no means a small country between the two Zabs, but the relation between Adiabene and Nisibis is not entirely clear. However, it seems that only upon crossing the Tigris (between Nisibis, on the western bank of the Tigris and the Gordyaean Mountains) does Adiabene become accessible to invading troops, and consequently Nisibis is no longer an integral part of Adiabene, but Adiabene's extension can safely be located as reaching northwest along the eastern bank of the Tigris and at least as far as the region of Gordyene.

The next Roman contribution to our knowledge of Adiabene can be found in Ammianus' (ca. 330 - ca. 395 CE[1026]) *Res Gestae* where we find two brief references (23.3.1 and 18.7.1) and

[1019] Mathisen 1997: 101–109.
[1020] Mathisen 1999: 7–16.
[1021] The translation used here is that of Cary 1925.
[1022] Millar 1964: 1-4; Mathisen 1997: 104-105.
[1023] Millar 1962: 2.
[1024] Millar 1962: 34-38; Mathisen 1997: 105.
[1025] Millar 1962: 34-38; Mathisen 1997: 105.
[1026] Mathisen 1999: 7-16.

one distinctive account on Adiabene (23.6.20-22). All these statements can be characterized as digressions inserted into the descriptions of the Roman-Persian wars in the second part of the 4th c. CE. First, in Amm. Marc. 18.7.1 we read that the Persian expedition of Shapur II in 359 passed by Nineveh that is in turn briefly characterized as a great city of Adiabene ("Postquam reges Nineve Adiabenae ingenti civitate transmissa"). Next, in 23.3.1 we hear of Emperor Julian's stay at Carrhae in 363, from where he is said to be able to choose between two royal routes to Persia – one through Adiabene and the Tigris region ("laeva per Adiabenam et Tigridem"), and the other through Assyria and the Euphrates region ("dextra per Assyrios et Euphraten"). Finally, Ammianus' main passage on Adiabene can be found in *Res Gestae* 23.6.20-22. It belongs to Ammianus' very long geographical and ethnographical digression on Persia in book 23, inserted into the narrative at a point when the Roman forces just entered the Persian territory and Ammianus felt a need, expressed explicitly, to make his readers familiar with the Persian topography[1027]. The passage in 23.6.20-22 informs us about the name of Adiabene, its location and finally enumerates the cities in 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[1028]*. 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*[1029]*, which once possessed the rule over Persia, perpetuating the name of Ninus, once a most powerful king and the husband of Semiramis; also Ecbatana*[1030]*, Arbela, and Gaugamela, where Alexander, after various other battles, overthrew Darius in a hot contest*.

Since Ammianus himself took part in Emperor's Julian expedition against the Persians in 363, his personal experience seems to constitute the main source of his narrative, apparently alongside other not explicitly known written sources[1031]. However, it is less certain as to whether his digression on Adiabene belongs to the realm of his personal experience during that campaign, or if his account is entirely based on written sources. Adiabene did not lie on the route taken by

[1027] On the structure and context of whole Persian digression, see J.W. Drijvers 1999: 193-195.
[1028] This is a common reading. See Eyssenhardt 1871: 281; Gardthausen 1874: 325; Rolfe 1940: 360; Clark 1910: 313; and Fontaine 1977a: 103. In turn, Seyfarth 1970: 90 corrects the reading into "diabenin" in accordance with the codex Vm1 and he holds that it better reflects the Latin pronunciation of the Greek term. Seyfarth's correction is followed by den Boeft/Drijvers/den Hengst/Teitler 1998: 152, but rejected by Feraco 2004: 155.
[1029] Here Ammianus uses the name "Ninus", but in 18.7.1 he employs the name "Ninive" instead of "Ninus". For the legend of Ninos, the founder of Nineveh, see Reade 1998-2001: 428.
[1030] 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 located by Ptolemy between Gaugamela and Arbela. Alternatively, the origin of this mistake could come from that fact all three cities, Gaugamela, Arbela and Ekbatana are reported in the Alexandrian traditions as being captured one by another, thus the link between these three cities and Alexander's exploits echoed in Ammianus' enumeration in 23.6.22 – see Feraco 2004: 160.
[1031] Den Boeft/Drijvers/den Hengst/Teitler 1998: XII-XIV; Teitler 1999: 216-232.

Julian's army that moved alongside the Euphrates[1032]. Further, the text of Ammianus resembles the account of Dio Cassius to a great extent[1033], and this makes some scholars believe that it is exactly taken from Dio's report on the Roman campaign under Trajan[1034]. On the other hand, there is also a resemblance to Pliny's text[1035] which calls into question Ammianus' complete dependency on Dio[1036]. What is more, the text contains the phrase "quos ipsi transiimus"[1037] which may in fact echo Ammianus' personal experience during his other stay at Gordyene[1038].

The identification of hydronyms mentioned by Ammianus aroused a great deal of scholarly discussion. The Ona River is otherwise unknown. Fontaine suggests that *Onam* can be a corrupted form of *Aboram*, which is the river mentioned in Amm. 16.3.4, 23.5.1 and 23.5.4[1039]. According to Fontaine, the corruption was made by the removal of *ab* that has been wrongly understood as a preposition and consequently as doubling *inter*[1040]. Another change was due to a spelling error replacing *r* by *n*[1041]. This is, we must say, an elaborate explanation and the Abora can well correspond to the modern Khabour River[1042]. There are actually two rivers called Khabour in Northern Mesopotamia, if the Assyrian Khabour is to be preferred (which is geographically more likely), then these borders would correspond well to the territory occupied once by Kalachene and Adiabene taken together.

When it comes to the Diabas and Adiabas, Steck identifies them as the Dialas (according to Steck, Ammianus misunderstood Diabas for Dialas) and Adialas rivers, thus the modern Diyala and Adhaim[1043]. This idea is rejected by Dillemann, mainly for geographical reasons, who instead suggested that Ammianus' Diabas and Adiabas correspond to the modern Great and Little Zabs[1044]. This view has become widely accepted since then[1045]. However, there is one problem with this hypothesis. Namely, in 18.6.19 and 18.7.1 Ammianus uses the name Anzaba (and not Diabas) to describe the river identified as the modern Great Zab[1046]. Fontaine tries to alleviate this contradiction by treating Anzaba as a Latinized corruption of Adiabas[1047].

[1032] Den Boeft/Drijvers/den Hengst/Teitler 1998: XV-XX.
[1033] Dillemann 1962: 306-307.
[1034] Seyfarth 1970: 228: 88.
[1035] Feraco 2004: 154.
[1036] See a similar problem in looking for sources of Ammianus' narrative in Teitler 1999: 216-232.
[1037] This phrase is not entirely clear in the two most important manuscripts of Ammianus (the *Fulda Codex* abbreviated as V: quoſ ſietranſimuſ and the *Hersfelder manuscript* by Gelenius: quos et transiuimus; see Eyssenhardt 1871: 281, n. 4) and consequently it is differently emendated; "ipsi" is present only is some emendations: Eyssenhardt 1871: 281: "quos ipsi transiuimus"; Gardthausen 1874: 325 (ad XXIII.6.21) "quos ipsi transiuimus"; Clark 1910: 313: "quos transiimus"; Rolfe 1940: 360: "quos ipsi transivimus"; Fontaine 1977a: 103-104 „quos ipsi transiimus"; Seyfarth 1970: 90: "quos transiimus"; den Boeft/Drijvers/den Hengst/Teitler 1998: 152: "quos transiimus" (but "ipsi" considered "not implausible"); Feraco 2004: 88: „quos transiimus". For the transmission of Ammianus' text, see Seyfarth 1968: 43-46.
[1038] See Dillemann 1962: 306–307; Seyfarth 1970: 228; den Boeft/Drijvers/den Hengst/Teitler 1998: XV-XX, 36, 152; Teitler 1999: 216–217; Feraco 2004: 154.
[1039] Fontaine 1977b: 71, n. 159.
[1040] Fontaine 1977b: 71, n. 159.
[1041] Fontaine 1977b: 71, n. 159.
[1042] Likewise den Boeft/Drijvers/den Hengst/Teitler 1998: 152.
[1043] Streck 1905a: 300-301; Streck 1905b: 319.
[1044] Dillemann 1961: 141; Dillemann 1962: 305-308.
[1045] Weissbach 1919b: 1921; Weissbach 1927: 2391–2392; de Jonge 1980: 205; Kessler 1999b: 265; Kessler 1999c: 576; Bosworth 2002: 366.
[1046] De Jonge 1980: 204-205; den Boeft/Drijvers/den Hengst/Teitler 1998: 152.
[1047] Fontaine 1977b: 71-72, n. 160.

Accordingly, *dy* could change into *dz* (*ndz*) or even *(n)dj*[1048]. At any rate, the location of Adiabene that Ammianus himself prefers (over that passed down to him by older traditions) points to the borders marked by the two eastern tributaries of the Tigris, either the Zabs or the Diyala and the Adhaim.

Twice in 23.6.20-22 Ammianus equates Adiabene with Assyria. Once on the basis of etymology (Adiabene called Assyria – 23.6.20) and once by locating the city of Nineveh in Adiabene (23.6.22 and 18.7.1). However, Ammianus' use of the latter term is not uniform, to say the least[1049]. In general, he is said to distinguish Assyria in the narrow sense, as being a specific part of the Persian kingdom (23.6.14-15), and in the wider sense, as "all of Persian territory between the Euphrates and Tigris" (24.1.1; 23.2.6)[1050]. Apparently, Adiabene is identified with Assyria in the narrow sense in 23.6.20 (the etymology) and 23.6.20 (Nineveh), while in 23.6.23 he again switches to Assyria in the wider sense, since he recalls other "Assyrian" cities such as Babylon, Ctesiphon, Seleukeia or Apamea-Messene. The connection between Assyria and Adiabene is known not only to Ammianus but also to other sources (a geographical connection: Plin., *Nat*. 6.16.42, Ptol., *Geog*. 6.1.1-7, Cass. Dio 68.26.1-4; and the etymology: Plin., *Nat*. 5:13.6; Cass. Dio 68.26.1-4) which calls for an explanation.

Linguistically, there is not the slightest link between the Greek toponym *Adiabene* and *Assyria*, and so there is no possibility that one evolved from the other. Where, then, does the idea of Adiabene as Assyria come from? It seems, then, that Adiabene started to be associated with Assyria in a narrow sense because it laid 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 the formation of relevant traditions[1051]. 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 *Nat.* 5.13.6; Cass. Dio 68.26.1–4; Amm. Marc. 18.7.1 and 23.6.20–22)[1052]. Further, the identification of Adiabene with Assyria could additionally be clinched by the fact that Assur too lay in Parthian Adiabene[1053], and consequently Assur could pass its city name to the name of the whole kingdom.

Adiabene could be, then, called Assyria, but where does the name Adiabene itself come from? The etymology of Adiabene based on the Greek verb διαβαίνειν, as quoted by Ammianus, is a *Volksetymologie*[1054]. What other options do we have left? Basically, we have three possibilities. First, the Greek term Adiabene is widely said to be connected with the Aramaic Ḥadyaḇ that appears in Talmudic literature (in different forms such as הדייב or חדייב or

[1048] Fontaine 1977b: 71-72, n. 160.
[1049] Nöldeke 1871: 443–468 and Herzfeld 1968: 306–308.
[1050] De Jonge 1980: 263, n. „a"; den Boeft/Drijvers/den Hengst/Teitler 1998: 30-31, n. 2.7 and 148, n. 6.15.
[1051] Boettger 1879: 12; see also Kahrstaedt 1950: 58–59.
[1052] Moses Khorenatsi (*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 him to think of it in the 5th c. CE as the city of royal archives).
[1053] So already Dillemann 1962: 112 (who rightly remarks that it is natural for every country bordered by a river to have access to forts on the other side); de Jonge 1980: 222 "a"; and Zehnder 2010: 341. In fact, the core of the country of Assyrian Assur ("mât aš-šur") laid between the Tigris, the Little Zab and the mountain range in the north, and this territory constituted one geopolitical entity – see Ebeling 1932: 195-196.
[1054] Boettger 1879: 11–12; Fränkel 1894: 360; Sullivan 1990: 107; Huyse 1993: 97; Oelsner 1996: 112; Huyse 1999b: 20.

הדייף)[1055]. 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[1056]. The opposite (Ḥadyaḇ derived from Adiabene) is less likely, because in such transitions dropping the Aramaic guttural ḥet in Greek is common, while adding it in Aramaic to a Greek word starting with *alpha* would be unusual. Furthermore, the transition from Ḥadyaḇ to Adiabene 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[1057]. The second option is to look for the origin of the Greek Adiabene in Assyrian texts[1058]. 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[1059]. Thirdly, the toponym Adiabene may after all be connected with the Semitic names of the Zab Rivers (see also above pp. 140-142)[1060]. Their names are derived from wild-animal names and as such convey the idea of the unbridled and often dangerous nature of the river's current and reoccur in similar forms in many languages (e.g. the Assyrian *zību*, Arabic *dẖiʾb*, Aramaic *deʾeb*, and the Greek Λύκος all meaning *wolf* and used for the Great Zab; the Greek Κάπρος, *boar* used for the Little Zab)[1061]. Especially the Greek forms quoted by Amm. Marc. (23.6.20-22), *Diabas* and *Adiabas*, could give their names to the toponym Adiabene, and they themselves seem to be Greek adaptations of the Aramaic *deʾeb*[1062].

8.7. Conclusions

1. We have, in fact, a good number of sources at our disposal, spanning five centuries, from the 1st BCE until the 4th c. CE. Thus, we are not forced to rely on only one text when sketching the geopolitical development of Adiabene in the Seleucid and Parthian periods, which could easily lead us to unfounded conclusions[1063].

2. What kind of sources do we have at our disposal? First, only Strabo's remarks on Adiabene strictly match the definition of ethnography as a piece of literature focused not only on the geographical environment, but also on its inhabitants and culture. The second group (Pliny the Elder, Ptolemy, Cassius Dio, Ammianus Marcellinus) includes texts that can be characterized as geographical. Lastly, Plutarch and Tacitus represent historiographical writings that also contain some geographical information useful for our purposes.

3. It is not always possible to distinguish between geographical and political meanings of the proper names applied in our sources. When do they speak about Adiabene not as a country but a political entity that could temporarily expand its borders? Geographical texts are of course supposed to use geographical notions in the first place. This is especially the case with Ptolemy.

[1055] See Gottheil 1901: 191; Sokoloff 2002: 342.
[1056] Boettger 1879: 11–12; Fränkel 1894: 360; Sellwood 1985: 456; Huyse 1993: 97; Oelsner 1996: 112; Huyse 1999b: 20.
[1057] Bickerman 1983: 7–12, esp. 8; Sellwood 1985: 456; Sullivan 1990: 107.
[1058] I owe this idea to Dr. J. Reade.
[1059] See Parpola 1970: 379 and Abusch 2002: 261–262, n. 41.
[1060] Delitzsch 1887: 131-132.
[1061] Streck 1912b: 1660; Weissbach 1919b:1921; Swoboda 1919: 1921-1922; Liddell/Scott/Jones 1968: 876.
[1062] Streck 1912b: 1660.
[1063] See Oppenheimer 1983 who in his, otherwise excellent, inventory of sources on Adiabene includes only Ammianus 23.6.20-22 from the Greek and Latin literature. In this manner, Ammianus became for many scholars the best-known source of knowledge on Adiabene (except for Ant. 20:17-96). By contrast, as we have seen, it is not the only one, and as a relatively late text it is not very representative either.

On the other hand, a specifically political terminology is used in Strabo (ὑπαρχία, ἄρχων). For the rest of our data, both geographical and political dimensions can very easily overlap.

4. Adiabene captured some attention from ancient geographers and ethno-geographers. Especially Strabo, Pliny, Dio and Ammianus contain explicit geographical or ethnographical excurses on Adiabene. In most cases that Adiabene is mentioned in ancient texts, it occurs in one of four typical contexts: the eastern frontier of Armenia, the description of Assyria, the tradition of Alexander's campaign against Dareios, and the mention of western armies invading their eastern neighbor, Persia and Parthia alike.

5. The first and fourth themes are most straightforward. In the first case, Adiabene is mentioned as a country located east of Armenia, as far as the power of Armenia can extend towards the course of the Tigris (Strabo, *Geog*. 11.4.8; 11.14.12; Pliny, *Nat*. 5.13.66; 6.9.25; 6.10.28; 6.16.42; Plutarch, *Pomp.* 36:2). This description results from the typical custom of ancient geographies and ethnographies that tend to locate countries not in absolute terms, but in relation to surrounding countries. Remarkably, the reverse is never stated, namely we do not have texts that have their focus on Adiabene and at the same time refer to Armenia as an aside to the Adiabene topic. This apparently led some scholars to coin the term of "Armenian Adiabene"[1064]. Consequently, the existence of such a phenomenon could suggest another thing. Namely, speaking about Adiabene as a buffer state between Rome and Parthia[1065] implies a great deal of exaggeration, especially in comparison to Armenia. It was Armenia that both geographically and politically played the role of a buffer zone where the two greatest empires of the time, Rome and Parthia (later Persia), faced each other[1066]. The impression of Adiabene as lying in-between and consequently being of a special strategic importance may result from its appearance in ancient geographical and ethnographical texts in the fourth category suggested above. Adiabene was located en route from the West to Babylonia (Str. *Geog*. 16.1.3-4), and that is why it often gets references in connection with Greek or Roman armies taking on that route (Tac., *Ann*. 12.13; Cass. Dio 68.26.1-4; Amm. Marc. 23.3.1)[1067].

6. There is a very strong connection in the sources under examination between Nineveh and Adiabene[1068]. Remarkably, except for Strabo, every source that comes to enumerate some cities in Adiabene recalls Nineveh as part of Adiabene (Plin., *Nat*. 6:16.42; Tac. *Ann.* 12.13; Cass. Dio 86.26.1-4; Amm. Marc. 23.6.20-22). Thus, sources confirming the adherence of Nineveh to Adiabene range from the 1st c. CE through 2nd c. CE until 4th c. CE. Likewise, Adiabene's expansion to the northwest in the 1st c. CE reached as far as Nisibis[1069]. While for Strabo, Nisibis was separated from Adiabene, for Pliny (the second part of the 1 c. CE) and Josephus (the late 1st c. CE) Nisibis was part of Adiabene. At the same time, sources from later than the 1st c. CE do not explicitly mention Nisibis as part of Adiabene again and the testimony of Cass. Dio suggests that only once crossing to the eastern bank of the Tigris does one make an

[1064] Sellwood 1985: 457 (referring to Pliny's texts).
[1065] So R. Murray 1975: 8; Panaino 2004: 211.
[1066] Wolski 1976: 210-211.
[1067] 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; 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 Assur 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).
[1068] Likewise Kahrstaedt 1950: 58; Debevoise 1938: 168-169; Reade 1998-2001: 428-429.
[1069] Oppenheimer 1983: 328-329.

incursion into the Adiabene realm[1070]. The difference in sources reflects the political process rather than geographical inaccuracies.

7. Another indication of Adiabene's far-northwest expansion in the 1st c. CE can be found in a suggested emendation of an otherwise unknown Carron in Ant. 20:24. Carrhae has been suggested as the right emendation by some scholars[1071]. Yet, this interpretation is highly unlikely both geographically and historically. Carrhae is located far west of Adiabene where its political influence has never been recorded. By contrast, Bochart was the first to suggest the emendation of Josephus' Καρρῶν to Καρδῶν[1072] and this has been thoroughly contended for by Marquart[1073]. The latter emendation can be easily recognized as Gordyene. This emendation is more straightforward and additionally makes sense for a number of reasons[1074]. First, Josephus distinguishes 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 southwest of Gordyene, during the reign of Izates II.

8. The third c. CE writer Solinus[1075] (*Memorabilia* 46.1) was quite right when he remarked that the battle between Alexander the Great and Dareios made the region around Arbela famous. The Greek writers were naturally very interested in the details of Alexander's campaign, and especially in its final battle. The fame of Alexander's exploits in the East also appealed to the imagination of the Roman leaders who embarked on Eastern campaigns and in doing so, wanted to approximate the ideal of the great Alexander[1076]. Thus, if it were not for the Alexander tradition, we would have probably known much less about Adiabene. This tradition in the person of Strabo gives us the most detailed description of the region, and could be one of the main vehicles for the transmission of ancient geographies and ethnographies on Adiabene (see other very brief references to Arbela in Diod. Sic. 17.53.4; Arr., *Anab*. 3.8.7, 6.11.5).

9. The capital of Adiabene was most likely Arbela, a natural center of the region between the Zabs, the city of a considerable Hellenistic profile, and a burial place for the Adiabene royalty (Cass. Dio 79.1 and 79.26[1077]).

[1070] By contrast, Longden 1931: 11; Debevoise 1938: 225 and Sellwood 1985: 458 think that Nisibis was probably still part of Adiabene. Sturm 1936a: 735 leaves open the question as to how long Adiabene's power over Nisibis continued.

[1071] Boettger 1879: 78-79.

[1072] Bochart 1651: 22.

[1073] Marquart 1903: 289-291, n. 4. This is accepted by Debevoise 1938: 165; Kahrstedt 1950: 66; Feldman 1965: 402, n. "b"; Kahle 1959: 270, n. 4; Barish 1983: 69-70.

[1074] Barish 1983: 69-70.

[1075] In his *Memorabilia* 46.1 Solinus mentions the names Adiebene and Arbelitis: "Assyriorum initium Adiabene facit: in cuius parte Arbelitis regio est". This sentence looks like it is taken from Pliny's description of Adiabene in *Nat*. 6:16.42. In fact, Pliny is considered to be one of Solinus' main sources (see Tozer 1965: 365).

[1076] Lerouge 2007: 79-80.

[1077] Dio Cassius speaks of the tombs of the Parthians and this leads some scholars to think that it could be a burial place for the kings of Parthia (Sellwood 1985: 458). However, Adiabene is unheard of as a seat of the kings of Parthia for any period. Secondly, the label of the Parthians can be easily used for minor rulers *within the Parthian world*. Thus, royal tombs mentioned by Dio Cassius apparently belonged to the Adiabene royalty and this fact

10. All in all, the fact that our sources come from a span of five centuries and also draw on older traditions enables us to sketch the geopolitical development of Adiabene in the Seleucid and Parthian periods[1078]. 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 c. BCE and especially in the first three decades of the 1st c. CE Adiabene started to expand its territory north-west. From then on, Adiabene included Assur 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 c. CE Nisibis belonged to Adiabene. Its influence on the western bank of the Tigris is also attested for the whole 2nd c. CE. However, even at the height of Adiabene's territorial expansion in the 1st c. 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.

confirms that it was Arbela, and not Nineveh, that served as the capital of Adiabene. Likewise Chaumont 1973, 215, n. 5; Hansman 1987: 278.

[1078] Marciak 2011b: 201-202, 208.