Archaeological Sites

9.1. Introduction

On the basis of the results of our analysis of geographical and ethnographical texts about Adiabene, we are now able to determine the territory whose archaeological data will be of interest to us for gaining insight into the material culture of Adiabene in the Hellenistic and Parthian periods (see pl. II). Thus, we are interested not only in the territory between the Great and Little Zab, but also in the territory to the northwest of Adiabene proper. The material culture of Nineveh, Nimrud and Assur is highly relevant to our understanding of Adiabene's cultural profile in the period from at least the 1st c. CE until the 4th c. CE.

9.2. Arbela

Arbela as the capital of Adiabene proper is naturally our first choice for an analysis. Arbela has a very long record of continuous settlements dating back to at least the Chalcolithic cultures (ca. 5000–3200 BCE)[1079]. As a result, the present city is built on a mound of successive settlements (the tell), and on top of it, there is the citadel (known locally as *qal'a*) measuring some 25-32 meters above the surrounding plains[1080]. Both the tell and citadel have been densely populated, and consequently Erbil of nowadays is not a convenient place for large-scale excavations[1081]. Consequently, only isolated finds, especially from the Neo-Assyrian period have been made so far, particularly during the building of the new south gate on the citadel in 1979[1082].

Nevertheless, recently, some initial changes can be observed in that respect[1083]. Due to the decreasing state of the citadel architecture, the Kurdish regional government decided to undertake preparations for the restoration of the whole complex. This was preceded by archaeological investigation which started in 2006 as a joint Czech and Iraqi project. The Czech team was headed by Karel Nováček from the University of West Bohemia in Plzeň. So far, the project included two working seasons in 2006 and 2007, and was conducted mainly with the help of non-destructive methods. While the 2007 season focused on analyzing features of the Ottoman architecture of the citadel buildings, and as such is of no relevance to us, the 2006 season consisted not only of geodetic and geophysical measurements of the citadel mound, but also included some small-scale digs that are of direct importance to us. Namely, the 2006 exploration included a surface survey on the western side of the citadel slope, two small-scale excavations on its eastern slope, and one small excavation on top of the citadel mound. Finds include mainly ceramic and stonework artifacts. As far as the historical periods under our interest are concerned, there is some record of Seleucid ceramic, dated only approximately to "the end of the 4th or the the course of the 3rd-1st centuries"[1084] BCE, but post-Seleucid ceramic is poorly represented, and

[1079] Nováček/Chabr/Filipský/Janiček/Pavelka/Šída/Trefný/Vařeka 2008: 260.
[1080] Nováček/Chabr/Filipský/Janiček/Pavelka/Šída/Trefný/Vařeka 2008: 262.
[1081] See Al-Haik 1971: 38, whose bibliography lists only one heading for excavations in Erbil, but it concerns a medieval mosque.
[1082] Unger 1932a: 141-142.
[1083] See Nováček/Chabr/Filipský/Janiček/Pavelka/Šída/Trefný/Vařeka 2008: 259-260.
[1084] Nováček/Chabr/Filipský/Janiček/Pavelka/Šída/Trefný/Vařeka 2008: 280-281.

due to its fragmentary nature, there are virtually no items that can be with certainty identified as Parthian (or Sassanid)[1085].

The Seleucid ceramic consists of two classes: "black slips" and "red slips". Both groups are very similar, they include fine, thin-walled, hard or medium fired pottery with minimal inclusions in the ceramic mass; its color varies from ochre to grey[1086]. The difference between both classes is entirely due to the color of the slip, "black slips" are in fact dark brownish-grey with varying intensity, and the color of "red slips" is dark red[1087]. In terms of their origin, no direct imports have been identified and the Erbil pottery is likely a local product or a product from Mesopotamia in general[1088]. The technique of partial vessel slip is distinctively Mesopotamian (as opposed to the eastern Mediterranean Hellenistic pottery)[1089]. In summary, for the time being, our evidence of the material culture of the Seleucid Erbil is very limited and restricted entirely to ceramics. Nevertheless, as far as this evidence is concerned, the material culture of Seleucid Erbil appears to have distinctive features of Mesopotamian-Hellenistic culture in general and of Northern Mesopotamia in particular.

9.3. Kilizu

Another important site in the territory between the Great and Little Zab is the mound of ancient Kilizu, called Qaṣr Šemāmok today. It is located 28 km some west of Erbil and halfway between the cities of Erbil and Al Quwayr on the Great Zab[1090]. The site was first explored by Layard in 1853[1091], and then a modern excavation took place only in 1933 under the Italian expedition led by Furlani on behalf of the University of Florence[1092]. It consisted, however, of only one working season and was not continued later.

The Parthian layers were located on the NW corner of the mound, and a large necropolis from the Assyrian and Parthian periods was located on its western side. Furthermore, several graves contained grave goods such as pottery, glass vessels and personal ornaments. Of special importance are two Parthian blue-green glazed terra-cotta coffins[1093]. Their shape is rectangular with rounded ends, and they were apparently baked as one piece. Interestingly, the long sides have relief decorations depicting grapes alternating with a nude female figure in an arched niche. This image is very interesting and evoked at least three slightly different interpretations. First, Furlani interpreted a female figure as the goddess Ishtar[1094]. Secondly, Tubach pointed out that the relief of grapes is a Dionysian motif and has many parallels in the art of Hatra[1095]. In turn, Invernizzi briefly suggested that the relief presents "symbols of fertility that allude to the continuation of life after death"[1096].

[1085] Nováček/Chabr/Filipský/Janiček/Pavelka/Šída/Trefný/Vařeka 2008: 281.
[1086] Nováček/Chabr/Filipský/Janiček/Pavelka/Šída/Trefný/Vařeka 2008: 279-281, 274.
[1087] Nováček/Chabr/Filipský/Janiček/Pavelka/Šída/Trefný/Vařeka 2008: 279-281, 274.
[1088] Nováček/Chabr/Filipský/Janiček/Pavelka/Šída/Trefný/Vařeka 2008: 279-280.
[1089] Nováček/Chabr/Filipský/Janiček/Pavelka/Šída/Trefný/Vařeka 2008: 279-281.
[1090] Postgate 1976-1980: 591; Invernizzi 2009.
[1091] Layard 1853: 223-225.
[1092] Furlani 1934a; Furlani 1934b; Furlani 1934c. See also a catalogue of findings stored in Florence by Anastazio 2008.
[1093] Furlani 1934b: 40-44.
[1094] Furlani 1934b: 40.
[1095] Tubach 1986: 321, nn. 321-323, esp. n. 323.
[1096] Invernizzi 2009.

The type of sarcophagus found in Kilizu is in general considered to belong to a distinctive type of Northern Mesopotamian sarcophagi that differed a little from another distinctive type used in Babylonia[1097]. The sarcophagi used in Northern Mesopotamia were covered troughs or 'bath-tube'-shapes, while in Babylonia slipper-shaped coffins were in fashion[1098]. The ornamentation on the sarcophagi in Kilizu has a very close parallel in Assur too[1099]. Both coffins feature nude female figures that have been identified as Ishtar, the Assyrian and Babylonian goddess associated with sexuality and war[1100]. Three major cult centers of Ishtar were Nineveh, Assur and Arbela[1101]. The image of a naked female figure in this particular region is indeed likely to be that of Ishtar. This identification can be enhanced by the motif of grapes. Grapes function as a symbol of vegetation and fertility in many cultures, and so it does not have to be necessarily a Dionysian motif per se, since Ishtar as a goddess of sexuality and fertility has been named "Mother/Goddess Vine-Stalk" ever since her Sumerian predecessor, Geshtinanna[1102]. Remarkable is, of course, the fact that the images of Ishtar have been placed on a sarcophagus, thus juxtaposing the sphere of death and sorrow with the sphere of life in its most epicurean expression[1103]. However, as ancient gods often had different spheres of activity, so too did Ishtar who, among others, was paired with the dying god Tammuz[1104]. In this way, symbols of vegetation can be understood as symbols of rebirth and resurrection, or, as Invernizzi aptly put it, "continuation of life after death"[1105]. To summarize, the discovery of Parthian sarcophagi in Kilizu may reveal two things. First, they could suggest some distinctiveness of local culture in the region of Arbela that is akin to other places in Northern Mesopotamia (in this case Assur in particular), and secondly, it is likely that the discovery reveals a continuation of the old Assyrian cult of Ishtar in Parthian Adiabene.

9.4. Abu Sheetha

A brief sounding was made at the Tell of Abu Sheetha on the occasion of the British excavations in Nimrud in the 1955 season. The site lies at a ford of the Great Zab (on its eastern side) on the route between Nineveh and the Kirkuk area[1106]. The survey encountered a Muslim cemetery and as a result could not be continued. However, before archaeologists had to give up their work, they managed to unearth a few objects of interest to us[1107]. First, in a gully on the west side of the mound, several courses of mud brick were found, they appeared to be of the same type as those used in Hellenistic buildings in Nimrud. This suggests that Abu Sheetha was inhabited in the Seleucid period at least. Secondly, two grain silos were located in that gulf; they revealed a number of sherds of Hellenistic bowls. The pottery of Abu Sheetha and that of Nimrud share the same distinctive features[1108]. Especially interesting is one inscribed piece of

[1097] Colledge 1977: 110.
[1098] Colledge 1977: 110.
[1099] Andrae/Lenzen 1933: 91-96.
[1100] Lambert 2004: 35-39; Nevling Porter 2004: 41-44.
[1101] Lambert 2004: 35-39; Nevling Porter 2004: 41-44.
[1102] Langdon 1914: 43.
[1103] For the 'many faces' of the goddess Ishtar, see Harris 1991: 261-278; Bahrani 2001: 148-150.
[1104] Langdon 1914: 50-54; Abusch 1992: 453-455.
[1105] Invernizzi 2009.
[1106] Postgate 1976-1980: 591-592.
[1107] D.Oates/J.Oates 1958: 134.
[1108] D.Oates/J.Oates 1958: 134 and particularly D. Oates 1968: 65-66, 122-144.

pottery from Abu Sheetha. It is an open ring-based bowl and it bears the potter's mark XP roughly incised on its base[1109]. The same type of bowl was also found in Nineveh and bears traces of such a mark[1110]. It is the only specimen of the Greek language from Abu Sheetha, but even more than showing the language profile of Nimrud (the bowl was apparently produced in Nineveh) it may suggest regional connections between Abu Sheetha (on the eastern side of the Tigris and within the Zabs) and Nineveh (on the eastern side of the Tigris and outside the area limited by the two Zabs).

9.5. Assur

Finally, we have three great Assyrian cities, Assur, Nineveh, and Nimrud which, when we consider the testimony of written sources, belonged to the territory of Adiabene (from at least the 1st c. CE until the 4th c. CE). All three cities have been subject to archaeological excavations. There is, however, one problem in this regard. Excavators have been mostly interested in unearthing the Assyrian layers, and have had less interest in post-Assyrian material culture. Therefore, evidence for Seleucid and Parthian strata is not always well documented, and, above all, is often very scattered. This is especially true for Nineveh and for Nimrud to a great extent. Only in Assur were Post-Assyrian layers treated as seriously as other Assyrian periods. Nevertheless, even in Nineveh whose Post-Assyrian layers have been mostly neglected, we still possess quite a number of artifacts and inscriptions that enable us to get valuable insight into the Seleucid and Parthian material culture of that city.

The post-Assyrian record in Assur is in fact well documented due to a very systematic German exploration begun by F. Delitzsch in 1900, and later continued in 1903-1913 by the German Oriental Society, first under R. Koldewey and then under W. Andrae[1111]. Generally speaking, after its destruction in 612 BCE, the old Assyrian metropolis witnessed a very modest reconstruction in the Babylonian period[1112]. As far as the Persian and Seleucid periods are concerned, there are no traces of building activities whatsoever[1113]. It is only in the Parthian period when the city started to prosper again. The Parthian metropolis included a number of buildings: the temple of Assur, a sanctuary dedicated to Herakles, the festival house and three other structures located in close proximity to each other: the so called *Freitreppenbau*, the *peripteros*, and the *ziggurat*[1114]. The main excavator of Assur, Andrae, distinguished three main phases of building activities in Assur marked by two destructions wrought by wars – under Trajan in 116 CE and under Septimius Severus in 198[1115].

[1109] D.Oates/J.Oates 1958: 134; D. Oates 1968: 125.
[1110] Thompson Campbell/Hamilton 1932: pl. LII, no. 16; pl. LXIII, no. 7; D. Oates/J. Oates 1958: 134; D. Oates 1968: 125 and n. 4.
[1111] On the history of excavations, see Andrae 1977: 273-281. On later German excavations in 1988-89 and in 1990, see Hrouda 1991: 169-182 and Dittmann 1990: 157-171.
[1112] Andrae 1977: 237-248.
[1113] Andrae 1977: 248; Downey 1988: 147; D. Oates 1968: 61-62.
[1114] Our primary sources on the Parthian material culture in Assur are excavators' reports, especially those of Andrae et al.: Andrae 1904; Andrae/Jensen 1920; Andrae/Lenzen 1933; Andrae/Haller 1955; Andrae 1977 (1st edition in 1933). However, crucial are also later contributions, especially that of Downey 1988, as well as a collection of inscriptions by Beyer 1998. For a concise overview of Assur's material culture in the Parthian period, see Haider 2008: 193-201.
[1115] Andrae/Lentzen 1933: 2-3.

Especially Assur's cultic buildings give us interesting insight into the cultural standing of its population[1116]. During the Babylonian period, only two small temples within the old cult center were built, both following a typically Babylonian plan. The structures were named by excavators temple N and A respectively, and both were located at the forecourt of what used to be the Assyrian sanctuary of the god Assur[1117]. Only temple A survived into the Parthian period when it was completely rebuilt into a new temple[1118]. The new structure followed the old Babylonian plan (an antecella followed by a cella, both being of the same width); at the same time, the temple was equipped with architectural decorations featuring new elements – Ionicizing capitals of half-columns and of pilasters, as well as stuccos of Parthian character[1119]. The cult room contained a stele with a relief showing a naked Herakles standing frontally with his right hand resting on a club, and holding the lion's skin over his left arm[1120]. This discovery suggests that the temple was dedicated to this Greco-Roman god[1121], perhaps in its local form as Herakles-Gad or, more likely, Herakles-Nergal[1122].

Another temple was erected in the north-eastern corner of the old temple compound of Assur[1123]. This structure consisted of three adjoining iwans set back from a walled courtyard (two built in 1st c. BCE and one in 2nd c. CE)[1124]. The walls were equipped with benches inside that served worshippers, some of whom happened to scratch their own names and the names of worshiped deities on the floor and on the benches[1125]. These inscriptions give us very interesting insight into the cultural and religious life of Assur's inhabitants at the time. Many deities appear in the inscriptions, but Assur and Seru are recalled by far more frequently than others which suggests that the temple was dedicated to these traditional patron deities of Assyria, Assur and his consort Seru[1126]. Furthermore, most personal names of worshippers are derived from names of Babylonian-Assyrian divinities[1127]. Lastly, some inscriptions contain dates; this fact is revealing in two ways. First, it helps date a time setting for the second phase of construction of that temple (the third iwan)[1128]. Since the dates range from 511 to 539, it gives a period between 199/200 and 227/228 CE provided that the Seleucid era is intended[1129]. Secondly, the fact that the month name Nissan is used most frequently can point to the celebration of the New Year's

[1116] See Haider 2008: 193-201.
[1117] Andrae 1904: 38-42; Andrae/Lenzen 1933: 71-72; Andrae/Haller 1955: 81; Andrae 1977: 237-239, fig. 239.
[1118] Andrae/Lenzen 1933: 71-72; Andrae/Haller 1955: 81; Andrae 1977: 237-239, fig. 239; Downey 1988: 149-150; Haider 2008: 195.
[1119] Andrae/Lenzen 1933: 71-72; Andrae/Haller 1955: 81; Andrae 1977: 237-239, fig. 239; Downey 1988: 149-150; Haider 2008: 195.
[1120] Dated by Downey 1969: 11 and 95 to the 1st c. CE, but by Mathiesen 1992: 57, 194 to the 3rd c. CE.
[1121] Andrae/Lenzen 1933: 72; Andrae/Haller 1955: 81; Andrae 1977: 252; Downey 1988: 150.
[1122] Herakles was identified as Gad in Palmyra and Hatra (Kaizer 2000: 230-231), but also with Nergal (Aggoula 1985: 9-10 and Gawlikowski 2000: 155-159). However, the inscriptions from Assur do not explicitly recall Gad at all, as they do Nergal – see Beyer 1998: 12-13 (A 10 and A 14.4) and Haider 2008: 195-196. Andrae/Lenzen 1933: 72 and Andrae 1977: 252 suggested Herakles-Melqart.
[1123] Andrae/Lenzen 1933: 73-88, fig. 41-42, pl. 28-29a; Andrae 1977: 250-252, fig. 228; Downey 1988: 156, fig. 72-73.
[1124] Andrae/Lenzen 1933: 73-86, fig. 41-42, pl. 29b, 37-39; Andrae 1977: 250-252, fig. 228; Downey 1988: 156, fig. 72-73.
[1125] Andrae/Jensen 1920: 1-47; Beier 1998: 12-24.
[1126] Haider 2008: 197-198.
[1127] Haider 2008: 197-198.
[1128] Haider 2008: 197.
[1129] Andrae/Jensen 1920: 22-23; Beyer 1998: 12, 15-24; Downey 1988: 156; Haider 2008: 197.

Festival in Parthian Assur[1130]. This suggestion is enhanced by the fact that the Assyrian building of the *bit akitu* (the great festival house) was also rebuilt in the Parthian period[1131]. Remarkably, the old Assyrian plan is essentially continued with the addition of a few Hellenistic architectural details (rectangular pillars with engaged columns)[1132].

Two other Parthian buildings are located close to the *ziggurat* and so can be regarded as belonging to the same *temenos*: the *peripteros* and the *Freitreppenbau*. The *peripteros* is a good example of the combination of different styles[1133]. It is a rectangular building, divided longitudinally into three rooms and surrounded by a colonnade on three sides[1134]. The colonnade is of a Greek character; its columns have capitals of Ionicizing type[1135]. Two inner rooms represent an antecella and cella of a Babylonian "broad-room" type, and are preceded by an iwan-like room[1136]. Five altars were found in the ruins of this building confirming its identification as a temple[1137]. Again, another building located in front of the eastern side of the *ziggurat* was called by excavators the *Freitreppenbau*[1138]. The building is named after the fact that the central entrance could be only approached by eight stairs[1139]. The structure could consist of three rooms in a row, however, only the remains of the central room were well preserved[1140]. Andrae considered the *Freitreppenbau* to be a triple-iwan structure[1141]. This reconstruction was rejected by Ghirshman and Downey on the grounds that there is little evidence for the two other rooms, and, what is more, there could be no connection between the central room and the remains of two other side rooms[1142]. The structure was identified as a tribunal or a *bouleuterion* by the excavators[1143] or as a temple by others due to the presence of three altars found on the stairs leading to the central room[1144]. The least known structure at the site is the *ziggurat*. There are no remains that could help us identify the character of its use in the Parthian period. Therefore, its role is suggested by scholars on the basis of what we know about the role of the *ziggurats* in other Mesopotamian cities in those days[1145]. Andrae suggested that the *ziggurat* in Assur was used as a citadel (in parallel to the *ziggurat* in Uruk which served as a watchtower)[1146]. However, some scholars have suggested that the *ziggurats* in Uruk, as well as in Borsippa and Nippur retained their religious functions[1147], and consequently the *ziggurat* in Assur could also function as a religious center[1148].

[1130] Andrae/Jensen 1920: 43-45; Downey 1988: 156-159; Haider 2008: 197-198. By contrast, see also Heinrich 1982: 276.
[1131] Andrae/Lenzen 1933: 89-90; Andrae/Haller 1955: 79-80; Downey 1988: 156 and 158; Haider 2008: 198.
[1132] Downey 1988: 158; Haider 2008: 197-198.
[1133] Andrae/Lenzen 1933: 64-67, fig. 36-37; Andrae 1977: 258-279, fig. 237; Downey 1988: 151-152, fig. 69.
[1134] Downey 1988: 151-152; Haider 2008: 198.
[1135] Downey 1988: 151-152; Haider 2008: 198.
[1136] Downey 1988: 152; Haider 2008: 198.
[1137] Andrae/Lenzen 1933: 64; Haider 2008: 198.
[1138] Andrae/Lenzen 1933: 67-70, fig. 37; Andrae 1977: 255-258; Downey 1988: 152-156, fig. 70.
[1139] Haider 2008: 199.
[1140] Andrae/Lenzen 1933: 67; Downey 1988: 152.
[1141] Andrae/Lenzen 1933: 67; Andrae 1977: 255-258.
[1142] Ghirshman 1976: 217-218; Downey 1988: 152-153.
[1143] Andrae/Lenzen 1933: 67; Andrae 1977: 258.
[1144] Ghirshman 1976: 217-218; Downey 1988: 153-155; Haider 2008: 199-200.
[1145] Haider 2008: 194.
[1146] Andrae/Lenzen 1933: 6-7; Andrae 1977: 255. Likewise Bergamini 1987: 205.
[1147] Downey 1988: 15-20, 33-35, 155-156.
[1148] Downey 1988: 155-156 and Haider 2008: 197-198. If so, then the *ziggurat* would serve as the higher temple, and the *Freitreppenbau* as the lower temple. One of inscriptions (Beyer 1998: 12, no. 7) refers to Bel's cult place as to

Finally, there is another item of great importance that reveals the cultural standing of the population of Parthian Assur. It is a large *pithos* with scratched drawings on it, accompanied by Aramaic inscriptions[1149]. The scene presents a deity on the throne and a second female goddess lying on a couch, as well as a sacrificing worshipper; the deities and the worshippers wear typically Parthian clothes[1150]. The inscription identifies both divinities as Bel and his daughter Nanaia[1151]. Thus, we have to do here with another example of cultural mixture – traditional elements (national gods) are expressed in both a local (the Aramaic language) and a Parthian fashion (the attires)[1152].

In conclusion, Parthian Assur represents a very interesting study case of continuity and change in Parthian Mesopotamia[1153]. First, we have buildings that closely follow Assyrian (the bit akitu) or Babylonian (a Herakles sanctuary) plans. Secondly, we have a good number of Greek (columns and the statue of Herakles) and Parthian (iwans, stuccos, attires on the pithos) elements. However, no Greek inscriptions are preserved; instead we have an abundance of Aramaic inscriptions. Thus, the population of Parthian Assur wrote Aramaic, and wore Parthian clothes. Though they had no objections to worshipping Greek deities (perhaps identified with local deities), the striking majority of the divine pantheon consisted of traditional Assyrio-Babylonian deities. Thus, basically, we witness a great deal of local continuity, plus a certain degree of assimilation of new trends.

9.6. Nineveh

In the case of Nineveh[1154], there were lots of Post-Assyrian structural remains unearthed by excavators, especially on Kuyunjik, but it is not always clear to which specific periods they should be related[1155]. Consequently, there is in fact little data that can be very safely identified as Seleucid or Parthian, e.g.: a mud-brick platform of the late Parthian period[1156], baked brick pavements and stone pavements of the 1st half or middle Parthian period[1157], some stone floors, foundations and walls[1158], single pieces of remains of architraves and columns, undoubtedly Hellenistic in style[1159], and a large building interpreted as "probably a Parthian Temple"[1160]. Nevertheless, these rare structural remains observed in excavations, as well as a considerable amount of artifacts unearthed (including pottery, coins and figurines) clearly show that Nineveh was again inhabited and prosperous throughout the Seleucid and Parthian periods.

"the temple on the cult height". Such a description can be interpreted as a reference to the *ziggurat*. However, the idea of Haider 2008:199-200 that since the *ziggurat* was dedicated to Bel, then the *peripteros* should be related to Nannai, his daughter is not based on direct evidence, unlike the identifications of the sanctuaries of Assur and Herakles.

[1149] Andrea/Lenzen 1933: 109-111, fig. 46; Andrae 1977: 259-260, fig. 239.

[1150] Haider 2008: 198-199.

[1151] Beyer 1998: 14 (no. 15b).

[1152] Haider 2008: 198-199.

[1153] Downey 1988: 158-159; Haider 2008: 193-201, esp. 201.

[1154] The publications of Reade 1998, 1999, 1998-2001, 2001 were the starting point for my research on Nineveh.

[1155] Reade 1998: 66-67. See also the text in Reade 2001: 191 to see how much one has to struggle with statements of early excavators in order to categorize them in accordance with the current terminology.

[1156] Stronach 1990: 107.

[1157] Stronach 1990: 107-108.

[1158] Madhlom 1968: 50 pl. 14.

[1159] Reade 1998: 75-76, fig. 12-13.

[1160] King 1904. See also Reade 1998: 67-68 and Reade 2001: 191.

First of all, Nineveh had a Greek civic organization. This fact is attested through two inscriptions. The first inscription, found in the ruins of the Temple of Nabu[1161], records a dedication of a certain Apollophanes, son of Asklepiades, to θεοὶ ἐπήκοοι ("attentive gods")[1162]. The dedication is made on behalf of Apollonios who is named strategos and epistates of the city (στρατηγὸς καὶ ἐπιστάτης τῆς πόλεως)[1163]. Both titles are also attested as Greek magistrate titles in Dura Europos, Babylon and Susa, of which at least Susa is widely recognized as a Greek polis[1164]. The inscription is placed on a column and is written over another erased Greek text[1165]. The inscription still holds a date, although its letters are slightly damaged[1166]. Rostovtzeff suggested the reading απσ' instead of editors' "α τ(?)σα" (sic) which would give the number 281 and consequently the year 32/31 BCE if the Seleucid era is used[1167], or 32/33 CE if we count in accordance with the Parthian era[1168]. In turn, Merkelbach and Stauber found the reading of only the first and third letter of this date to be clearly written enough to attempt the reconstruction – α[ ]τ', and consequently suggest a date between 311 and 391, that is between 1 BCE and 89 CE if the Seleucid era is used or between 63 and 153 CE if the Arsacid era is employed[1169]. Whatever date is accepted, it provides only *a terminus ante quem* for the introduction of the Greek civic arrangement in Nineveh. Another inscription engraved on a reused Assyrian altar of Sibbiti, found south of Kuyunjik, is explicitly dedicated to the city (πόλει) by a certain Apollonios, son of Demetrios, who bears the title of ἄρχων[1170]. The same title of a city magistrate is attested in Palmyra[1171], whose civic organization also had many Greek elements[1172]. To sum up, the existence of a Greek civic organization in Nineveh is beyond question[1173], although a precise date of its foundation[1174], as well as its later fate, are unknown.

A civic Greek organization went hand in hand with clear elements of the Hellenistic culture. The names of the individuals involved in the votive inscription contain theophoric elements of Apollo and Asklepios. Apollo, god of inspiration and wisdom, whose cult belonged to the most popular cults in the Hellenistic period, was frequently identified with Nabu, son of

[1161] Thompson Campbell/Hutchinson 1929: 140-142; Rostovtzeff 1935: 57, n. 5; Le Rider 1967: 15, n. 2; D. Oates 1968: 61; Reade 1998: 69, fig. 3; Reade 2001: 193-195; de Rossi 2004: 40-41; Thommen 2010: 459–460.
[1162] Thompson Campbell/Hutchinson 1929: 140-142; Robert/Tod/Ziebarth 1934: 11, no. 37.
[1163] Thompson Campbell/Hutchinson 1929: 140-142; Robert/Tod/Ziebarth 1934: 11, no. 37.
[1164] Tarn 1938: 25; Teixidor 1987: 187-193, esp. 190-191; Thommen 2010: 460.
[1165] Thompson Campbell/Hutchinson 1929: 140-142; Reade 1998: 69.
[1166] Thompson Campbell/Hutchinson 1929: 140-142; Reade 1998: 69.
[1167] Reade 1998: 69.
[1168] Rostovtzeff 1935: 57, n. 5. See also Bellinger/Welles 1935: 129, n. 33; Le Rider 1967: 15, n 2.
[1169] De Rossi 2004: 41; Thommen 2010: 460. On the Arsacid era, see Bickerman 1944: 73-83, esp. 80.
[1170] Postage 1970: 133-136.
[1171] Starcky 1963: 51.
[1172] Sommer 2005: 170-183.
[1173] Tarn 1938: 25; le Rider 1967: 15-16; D. Oates 1968: 61; Reade 1998: 68; Reade 1998-2001: 428; Haider 2008: 204. Another issue is whether or not Nineveh has later acquired the status of a Roman colonia (so still Haider 2008: 202). Yet, some coin legends catalogued already in the 19th c. and apparently derived from Layard's explorations that were to support this identification have been reinterpreted at least as long ago as Ramsay 1894: 164-167 who rightly points out that the legends should be read "Ninica" and not "Niniva" and consequently attributed to Ninica Claudiopolis in Cilica. See Hill 1922: CXX; Le Rider 1967: 14, n. 2 and Reade 1998: 68-69. Therefore, there is no evidence for Niniveh as a Roman colonia.
[1174] Although one may add that it must have occurred in the Seleucid period in general, because the Arsacids would only maintain an already exisiting Greek civic organization, but would not intitate it on their own account. For this problem, see Frye 1984: 244-245; Dąbrowa 2006-2007: 13-20.

Marduk/Bel[1175]. In turn, although there were many gods of healing in the ancient world, the cult Asklepios was by far the most widely practiced healing cult[1176]. The phrase θεοὶ ἐπήκοοι, in both the plural and singular form, could be used for quite a number of deities, including Aphrodite, Apollo, Artemis, Asklepios, Zeus and Hera[1177].

There is a good number of excavated items that give us insight into the religious life of Greco-Parthian Nineveh. Let us present a few examples. First of all, a small shrine was uncovered in the plain between the Kuyunjik and Nebi Yunus mounds[1178]. Remarkably, its plan features many similarities to Assyrian temple plans[1179]. This suggests a great deal of local continuity, especially that the building is dated to the 2nd or early 3rd c. CE[1180]. A statue of Hermes was found in the temple area and consequently the temple was named after him in the secondary literature[1181]. The statue itself is artistically an example of distinctive local production[1182]. In particular, Hermes' posture with his hands hidden behind his cloak finds some striking parallels in Parthian art, especially in Palmyra[1183]. Further, a small statue of Herakles Epitrapezios in the Lyssipos style was unearthed on Kuyunjik[1184]. The signature is that of Diodoros, the dedication bears the name of Sarapiodoros son of Artemidoros, both are in the same script, and the dedication is made in fulfillment of a vow[1185]. This piece is of high artistic value, and, at the same time, is said to abound in "eastern stylistic features"[1186]. Consequently, a local manufacture of the 1st or 2nd c. CE is suggested[1187]. Names of the donator point to a Greek background, the name is coined after the Hellenistic god Serapis, and the patronymic refers to Artemis[1188]. Both cults were very popular in the Hellenistic East. Artemis, goddess of hunting and fertility was frequently identified, among others, with Nanaia, but also with Anāhitā[1189]. In turn, Serapis was already a Greco-Egyptian cult invented in Egypt in the 3rd c. CE and later spread into the Hellenistic East. Interestingly, one of coin images from the Nineveh hoard is suggested to be that of Isis (no. 597)[1190], who was often connected with Serapis as his wife[1191], and considerably surpassed his husband in popularity. Isis was so popular that in fact she could be identified with any female goddess[1192]. The cult of Isis, being the matron of life and magic, flourished especially within the realm of Hellenistic mystery cults[1193]. Next, the Nineveh

[1175] Millard 1999: 609.
[1176] Temkin 1991: 181-189.
[1177] Thompson Campbell/Hutchinson 1929: 142.
[1178] The discovery was made by Muhammad Ali Mustafa and first reported in Muhammad 1954: 280-283 (Arabic section). See Scott/Macginnis 1990: 69-71.
[1179] D. Oates 1968: 61.
[1180] D. Oates 1968: 61.
[1181] D. Oates 1968: 61; Colledge 1977: 84; Scott/Macginnis 1990: 69-71; Reade 1998: 72.
[1182] Colledge 1979: 232; Mathiesen 1992a: 51; Mathiesen 1992b: 187-188.
[1183] See Colledge 1976: pl. 20, 26; Drijvers 1976: pl. V, XI; Haider 2008: 203: describes Hermes' gesture as "a common religious custom of the Iranian natives".
[1184] Reade 1998: 68.
[1185] Invernizzi 1989: 623-636; Bartman 1992: 181.
[1186] Bartman 1992: 181.
[1187] See Bartman 1992: 181 and Invernizzi 1989: 623-636 respectively. See also Reade 1998: 69-70.
[1188] Reade 1998: 70.
[1189] Mussies 1994: 91-97, esp. 93.
[1190] Le Rider 1967: 11.
[1191] Le Rider 1967: 11.
[1192] Assman 1999: 457.
[1193] Assman 1999: 457.

excavations revealed an alabaster base on which three statues once stood[1194] (still traces of their human feet, one probably female, can be seen[1195]). The base has an inscription on its front side reading ἐυτυχει[1196]. Reade suggests the following reading: ἐυτυχεῖ and the translation: "for the lucky (god)" or "the god who brings good luck"[1197]. The reading of ἐυτυχεῖ in the dative case (with the circumflex on the last syllable) is grammatically possible[1198] (see Aeschylus, *Persae* 709: ἐυτυχεῖ πότμῳ[1199]); however, the imperative is much more likely– ἐυτύχει (with the acutus accent on the upsilon)[1200]. This phrase (ἐυτύχει in the singular and ἐυτυχεῖτε in the plural) is frequently used in the closing formulas of letters[1201], as well as in many inscriptions[1202]. For instance, ἐυτύχει is used by Plato as a conventional formula expressing a farewell and a wish of well-being to the addressee of his letters (Plato, *Epistulae*, 4.321C, 5.322C, 11.359C)[1203]. As for inscriptions, ἐυτύχει appears in both long and short epitaphs[1204], as well as in letters inscribed on steles or tablets[1205]; what is more, it is inscribed on many various small objects such as tabula ansatas[1206], stamps[1207], vessels[1208], mortars[1209], gems[1210], rings[1211], bracelets[1212], bones[1213], bells[1214], and glass[1215]. Such small objects are the closest parallels to Nineveh's alabaster base[1216] – the alabaster was a gift and the inscription expressed a wish of well-being for the receiver ("may you be lucky"). Naturally, the wish of good luck should be seen in the broader context of the Tyche cult, especially since Herakles from the alabaster could be identified with the local god Gad, bringer of good luck[1217]. Indeed, the cult of Tyche in its many forms became one of the most popular cults in the Hellenistic and Roman world so that "nearly all large Greek cities" had

[1194] Reade 1998: 70-71 seems to be the first to publish this item preserved in the British Museum.
[1195] Reade 1998: 70-7 (followed by Haider 2008: 202-203) thinks that another statue could be that of Herakles, but this identification is not clear-cut, since there are very few traces of the second figurine left on the alabaster.
[1196] Reade 1998: 70-71.
[1197] Reade 1998: 70. This interpretation is substantially followed by Haider 2008: 203.
[1198] Liddell/Scott/Jones 1968: 736.
[1199] The text is given according to Sommerstein 2008: 90-91; see also the commentaries of Broadhead 1960: 178-180 and Garvie 2009: 283-284.
[1200] Pleket/Stroud/Chaniotis/Strubbe 2001: 601 (no. 1838, B1).
[1201] White 1986: 193-213.
[1202] Masson 1997: 59-62.
[1203] The text and commentary according to Novotný 1930: 11, 12, 44 (the text); 118, 124 (the commentary).
[1204] Chaniotis/Stroud/Strubbe 2003: 547 (no. 1620); Pleket/Stroud/Chaniotis/Strubbe 2002: 147-148 (nos. 435-438); Chaniotis/Corsten/Stroud/Tybout 2005: 568-569 (no. 1837).
[1205] Chaniotis/Corsten/Stroud/Tybout 2008: 346-347 (no. 983, 7).
[1206] Pleket/Stroud 1994: 431 (no. 1263); Chaniotis/Corsten/Stroud/Tybout 2005: 185 (no. 615).
[1207] Chaniotis/Corsten/Stroud/Tybout 2010: 682 (no. 2063, 1).
[1208] Pleket/Stroud 1994: 522 (no. 1565); Pleket/Stroud/Strubbe 1996: 299 (no. 841).
[1209] Pleket/Stroud/Chaniotis/Strubbe 1998: 557-558 (no. 1914); Chaniotis /Stroud/Strubbe 1997: 262 (no. 853).
[1210] Chaniotis/Corsten/Stroud/Tybout 2010: 679 (no. 2055, 3); Pleket/Stroud/Chaniotis/Strubbe 2002: 561 (no. 1795); Chaniotis /Stroud/Strubbe 1997: 557 (no. 1704).
[1211] Chaniotis/Corsten/Stroud/Tybout 2010: 678 (no. 2054, 7); Chaniotis /Stroud/Strubbe 1997: 182 (no. 646).
[1212] Pleket/Stroud/Chaniotis/Strubbe 2000: 666 (no. 2219).
[1213] Pleket/Stroud 1994: 557 (no. 1914).
[1214] Pleket/Stroud/Chaniotis/Strubbe 1999: 652 (no. 2245); Chaniotis/Corsten/Stroud/Tybout 2007: 311 (no. 1288).
[1215] Chaniotis/Corsten/Stroud/Tybout 2007: 630-631 (no. 2125, esp. 2125.1.14/15).
[1216] The closest parallels (in terms of the size of an object and its clearly religious context) are perhaps two light brown pendants (4th c. CE) that contain an inscription ἐυτύχι among the portraits of Herakles (fighting the Nemean lion) and Victory (Spaer 2001: 179 (nos. 357a-b), pl. 29; Chaniotis/Corsten/Stroud/Tybout 2007: 631 (no. 2125.14/15).
[1217] Kaizer 2000: 230-231; Haider 2008: 203.

temples devoted to Tyche, and over time, her cult found its way even into many small towns in the Roman Empire[1218]. Interestingly, Tyche could also be identified with Isis[1219]. Further, another finding that testifies to religious attitudes of the inhabitans of Nineveh is a small sherd inscribed EPA, this reading can be identified as the goddess Hera[1220]. All these personal names, alongside Apollo and Asklepios from 'the polis inscription', clearly show a Hellenistic dimension of the cultural profile of the inhabitants of Nineveh. Regardless of their ethnicity, at least the elites of Nineveh bore Greek names, used the Greek language and worshiped some Hellenistic deities.

In this context, it may be worth recalling a story mentioned by Philostratos 1.19. Philostratos (ca. 170 CE - after 215 CE[1221]) writes that Apollonios of Tyana bought a slave named Damis at Nineveh, and remarks that Damis' Greek was fully operative for the everyday recording of events, but otherwise unsophisticated in itself due to Damis' provincial background[1222]. Regardless of historicity of the Apollonios story, it is clear that Philostratos, being himself a man of the highest Greek culture, regards Damis as a typical case of the Greek used in Nineveh at the time[1223]. To Philostratos, inhabitants of Nineveh could write and speak Greek, though not that of the highest standard[1224]. This is also confirmed by a number of small Greek inscriptions found in Nineveh[1225]. Although the first language of the population living in Mesopotamia was Aramaic in various dialects[1226], Nineveh's case study clearly shows a wide dissemination of the Greek language and culture in an urban environment[1227].

On the other hand, we also have a considerable number of unearthed items that are specifically Parthian in style. First, there is a part of a base of a large limestone statue that has survived, and still contains one foot wearing a sandal[1228]. The item is clearly of Parthian style (2nd or early 3rd c. CE), and very close to similar sculptures found in Hatra[1229]. Further, a well-decorated bone handle, dated to the 1st or 2nd c. BCE, was found on Kuyunjik above the Nabu Temple[1230]. An engraved and colored pattern of a rosette with a running meander can be found at one end; what is more, a Parthian inscription is incised on its side that reads "Tiridat (son) of Bay"[1231]. Another inscribed object is a broken scapula with its edge and flat surface[1232]. Its date is not clear, probably between the 1st and 3rd c. CE[1233]. Three lines on the surface are more illegible than the others and seem to represent the Parthian script[1234]. An attempt to read it by

[1218] Martin 1999: 877.
[1219] Martin 1999: 878.
[1220] Reade 2001: 187.
[1221] Bowie 2000.
[1222] Reade 1998: 71.
[1223] Likewise Reade 1998: 71.
[1224] Likewise Reade 1998: 71.
[1225] For a short list of Greek inscriptions from Nineveh (discussed primarily by Reade 1998 and 2001), see Pleket/Stroud/Chaniotis /Strubbe 2001: 600-601 (no. 1838) and Chaniotis/Corsten/Stroud/Tybout 2005: 592 (no. 1913).
[1226] Millar 2006: 378-405.
[1227] See Reade 1998-2001: 428.
[1228] Reade 1998: 75, fig. 14.
[1229] Reade 1998: 76.
[1230] Thompson Campbell/Hutchinson 1929: 343, pl. LVII.
[1231] Reade 1998: 76.
[1232] Fuller/Bivar 1996: 30-31.
[1233] Reade 1998: 77 referring to a letter of A.D.H. Bivar suggests the 1st c. BCE or CE. However, later in his own publication Bivar discusses this item with other objects dated tentatively to the 2nd or 3rd c. CE due to its "approximately similar date" – see Fuller/Bivan 1996: 30.
[1234] Fuller/Bivar 1996: 30-31.

Fuller/Bivar succeeded in coming up with the translation for only the third-line: … [l-y]d pḥt' …, meaning "into the hand of the governor"[1235]. Thus, the whole inscription can be tentatively suggested to be a delivery of goods to the governor[1236]. Finally, the 1852 excavations unveiled a Parthian cemetery, and three previously unlooted tombs that contained rich burial *gold* goods, among others: face masks, mouth-pieces, earrings, beads, various rings and small plaques, an *aureus* of Tiberius (dated to 16-21 CE), gold-leaf impressions of a bronze coin of Trajan (dated to 115 CE)[1237]. The deposit is dated to the first half of the 2nd c. CE[1238].

In addition to the above-mentioned findings, two hoards[1239] of coins were unearthed during the 1929-1930 excavations: a hoard of bronze issues containing around 597 coins[1240] and a mixed Parthian-Roman hoard of 387 silver issues[1241]. The bronze hoard includes three different types distinguished in accordance with dominant coin portraits: a horse, a horsehead, and the goddess Victory[1242]. Some coins show portraits of Parthian kings, but only Mithridates II (ca. 124-90 BC) can be determined with certainty, if a few other Parthian kings are portrayed, then those are likely the rulers reigning immediately before or after Mithridates II[1243]. A large hoard of bronze issues like the Nineveh hoard is naturally believed to be of local provenance[1244]. Another hoard uncovered in the 1929-30 excavation is a mixed hoard of Parthian and Roman silver coins[1245]. It includes 92 Parthian drachms and the rest is Roman coinage: 121 of Philipp Philadelphus from Antioch, 29 tetradrachms struck at Antioch and Tyre (Nero to Geta), 3 silver didrachms of Trajan from Caesarea, 139 denarii (Galba to Plautilla)[1246].

All in all, there is a strong presence of Greek culture in Nineveh, alongside Iranian elements. Certainly, with time and especially due to the Parthian takeover of this territory, the Iranian element must have increased in Nineveh's material culture, but the presence of Greek elements was still very clear well into the 3rd c. CE. In the Seleucid and Parthian period, Nineveh was a typically Hellenistic city, where different traditions (though predominance of the Greek elements has to be stressed) came together and influenced each other.

9.7. Nimrud

Nimrud has been the object of archaeological surveys and excavations many times[1247]. The first excavation was undertaken by A.H. Layard from 1845 to 1851[1248]. His work was still

[1235] Fuller/Bivar 1996: 30-31.
[1236] Reade 1998: 76-77.
[1237] Curtis 1976: 53-54.
[1238] Cutris 1976: 54 and 61.
[1239] Layard also reports the discovery of two Roman coins (Trajan and Maximus), and one bronze coin (nowadays the so called Natounia coin no. 1). However, the two Roman coins interpreted by Layard as struck in Nineveh as a Roman colonia (see Layard 1853: 590-591; Layard 1859: 501-503; W.S.W. Vaux 1856/1857: 1-7) have been reinterpreted as referring to Ninica Claudiopolis in Cilicia (see Hill 1922: CXX). For the Nisibis hoards, see also Raschke 1978: 828, n. 759.
[1240] Hill 1931: 160-170.
[1241] Le Rider 1967: 4-20.
[1242] Le Rider 1967: 4-20.
[1243] Le Rider 1967: 4-20; Reade 1998: 68.
[1244] Le Rider 1967: 16; Reade 1998: 68.
[1245] Hill 1931: 160-170.
[1246] Hill 1931: 160-170.
[1247] On the history of archaeological campaigns in Nimrud, see J. Oates/D. Oates 2001: 1-11.
[1248] J. Oates/D. Oates 2001: 3-6.

continued in the 19th c. by H. Rassam, W.K. Loftus and G. Smith, though not on such a scale as that of Layard[1249]. Archaeological work at Nimrud was resumed only in 1949 by the British School of Archaeology in Iraq, first under M. Mallowan, then D. Oates and finally under J. Orchard until 1963[1250]. From the 1950s, the Iraqi Directorate of Antiquities became increasingly involved in the excavations (starting in 1956, and followed by the 1959-60, 1969-78 and 1982-92 seasons); in 1974-76 and 1987-1989 the Polish (J. Muszyński) and Italian (P. Fiorina) expeditions respectively had their share in work at Nimrud[1251].

However, the focus of most excavators was on Assyrian layers, and though some later finds were revealed on occasion too, it was only D. Oates who systematically turned enough attention to post-Assyrian strata. D. Oates unearthed a Hellenistic settlement in Nimrud that consists of a small village on the south-east corner of the citadel mound. Six building levels were found spanning a period of over one hundred years from about the middle of the 3rd c. BCE until the second half of the 2nd c. BCE. The relevant layers are as follows: the earliest level 6 (beginning perhaps 250-240 BCE), level 5 (starting ca. 220-210 BCE), level 4 (beginning ca. 180-170 BCE), level 3 (after 130 BCE), level 2 started around 145 BCE which ended in violent destruction, and finally level 1 starting after 140 BC and not of long duration[1252]. The houses were irregular agglomerations of two up to four rooms arranged around simple courtyards where bread ovens and bricked-covered drainage pits, apparently used as water basins, can be found[1253]. The findings include, among other things, ceramics, coinage, and twenty-five graves, most of which are located outside the village. The material equipment of inhabitants is, in general, believed to be simple[1254]. However, the earliest two levels (3rd c. BCE) are more well-to-do than others, including the hoard of six tetradrachms and two collections of jewelry[1255]. This probably reflects the long and successful reign of Antiochos III, while the destruction of level 2 and the slightly different character of findings in level 1 may be attributed to a gradual Parthian takeover of Northern Mesopotamia after 146 BCE[1256].

The excavation unearthed some pottery (around 171 items). A few distinctive types can be discerned: black and red-varnished wares (very few), red-painted wares, unpainted plain wares, stamped and incised wares, glazed pottery, coarse-cooking ware, grey ware, *unguentaria*, lamps[1257]. Pottery in fact represents the largest body of evidence on Nimrud's material culture in the Hellenistic period and shows its distinctive nature[1258]. Namely, on the one hand, there emerge new forms of pottery, particularly new ware shapes and decorative motifs that were previously unknown in northern Mesopotamia and clearly derive from the Hellenistic pottery widespread in Syria and Anatolia[1259]. Here especially red-painted wares (in imitation of the Attic pottery) have to be mentioned[1260]. Thus, even simple villagers took on new trends in pottery. On the other hand, alongside new shapes and decorations, we may still find pottery of recognizable Assyrian

[1249] J. Oates/D. Oates 2001: 6-9.
[1250] J. Oates/D. Oates 2001: 9-10.
[1251] J. Oates/D. Oates 2001: 10-11.
[1252] D. Oates/J. Oates 1958: 115-118; D. Oates 1968: 64.
[1253] D. Oates/J. Oates 1958: 133; D. Oates 1968: 64.
[1254] D. Oates/J. Oates, J. 1958: 133; D. Oates 1968: 64.
[1255] D. Oates/J. Oates, J. 1958: 133-134; D. Oates 1968: 65-66.
[1256] D. Oates 1968: 66.
[1257] D. Oates/J. Oates, J. 1958: 124-153; D. Oates 1968: 121-144.
[1258] D. Oates/J. Oates, J. 1958: 124-153; D. Oates 1968: 121-144.
[1259] D. Oates/J. Oates, J. 1958: 124-125, 133; D. Oates 1968: 64-65.
[1260] D. Oates/J. Oates, J. 1958: 126-127; D. Oates 1968: 123-124.

character (particularly impressed stamp decorations and so called pipe lamps)[1261]. After all, the number of actual imported items of pottery is very small, as expected of a financially modest village environment; most pottery comes from local production[1262]. All in all, pottery in Hellenistic Nimrud is an interesting case of fusion of the Hellenistic and local traditions[1263]. The result of such fusion is distinctive, since Nimrud's pottery is said to differ radically from that in the Mesopotamian south[1264].

The 1957 excavations also revealed a number of silver and bronze coins[1265]. Among others, two silvers drachms of Alexander the Great (from ca. 330-325 and ca. 325-300 BCE), four silver tetradrachms of Lysimachos (two pieces from ca. 297-281, one ca. 250, and one from ca. 250-200 BCE), one silver tetradrachm of Seleukos III (226-222 BCE), one silver tetradrachm from Pergamon (struck by Attalos I, 241-197 BCE, or by Eumenes II after 197 BCE), one silver drachm from Arados (170/169 BCE), one silver drachm of Alexander I (150-145 BCE)[1266]. As for bronze issue, we have nine items of Seleukos III (262-222 BCE struck in Antioch), two of Antiochos III (223-187 BCE, Apamea and Ekbatana), one of Seleukos IV (187-175 BCE, Antioch or Akke), two of Alexander I Balas (150-145 BCE, Antioch), and lastly one of Demetrios II (146-14 to BCE, mint uncertain)[1267]. While silver issues could be kept over a long period of time due to its valuable substance, and tend to "travel widely", bronze coins were more used in local trade[1268]. In this context, it is striking to observe that out of 15 pieces only one was struck in Eastern parts of the Seleucid kingdom, in Ekbatana, and virtually none come from Seleukeia, an important royal mint at that time; by contrast, almost all coinage comes from mints in Syria, particularly from Antioch[1269]. This may suggest closer financial and commercial ties of the Hellenistic rural landscape around Nimrud to Western parts of the Seleucid kingdom than to its Eastern parts.

Interestingly, twenty-five graves were found during the excavations, some were equipped with burial furniture. There was no well-defined cemetery space; bodies were buried outside houses, but within the limits of the village[1270]. Flexed inhumation was the norm of burial; bodies were interred either in simple cists shaped of burnt or mud bricks, covered with capstones, or wooden lids[1271]. Sometimes cists were directly filled with earth[1272]. Earthenware coffins with rounded ends (one apparently contemporary coffin has one square end) were also in use[1273]. In many burials "grave goods" can be found, among other things: animal figurines, jewelry, cylinder seals and amulets[1274]. Apparently, especially antiquarian objects like Akkadian or Persian cylinders were placed in graves with a regard for their supernatural properties[1275].

[1261] D. Oates/J. Oates, J. 1958: 128-129, 132; D. Oates 1968: 64-65, 124-127.
[1262] D. Oates/J. Oates, J. 1958: 133; D. Oates 1968: 64-65.
[1263] D. Oates/J. Oates, J. 1958: 134; D. Oates 1968: 65.
[1264] D. Oates/J. Oates, J. 1958: 134; D. Oates 1968: 65.
[1265] Jenkins 1958: 158-168; D. Oates/J. Oates, J. 1958: 116-118, 120-121, 124; D. Oates 1968: 64, n. 1.
[1266] Jenkins 1958: 158-163.
[1267] Jenkins 1958: 163-165.
[1268] Jenkins 1958: 165-166; D. Oates 1968: 64, n. 1.
[1269] Jenkins 1958: 166-168.
[1270] D. Oates/ J. Oates, J. 1958: 117, 120, 133-134; D. Oates 1968: 65.
[1271] D. Oates/ J. Oates, J. 1958: 117, 120, 133-134; D. Oates 1968: 65.
[1272] D. Oates/ J. Oates, J. 1958: 117, 120, 133-134; D. Oates 1968: 65.
[1273] D. Oates/ J. Oates, J. 1958: 117, 120, 133-134; D. Oates 1968: 65.
[1274] D. Oates/ J. Oates, J. 1958: 117, 120, 133-134; D. Oates 1968: 65.
[1275] D. Oates/ J. Oates, J. 1958: 116, n. 2; D. Oates 1968: 65.

There is little evidence concerning script in Hellenistic Nimrud, and none of local origin. All silver and bronze coins bear Greek inscriptions pertaining to authorities issuing them (names and/or royal titles in all cases but the coin from Arados) and monograms. In addition to this, one Rhodian jar handle was found with a rectangular stamp bearing a radiate head and the Greek inscription ἔτι Πρατοφάνευς[1276]. This item belongs to one of the few imports among the Nimrud pottery and is dated to a well-known series from Pergamon (between 220-180 BCE).

To sum up, our inquiry into Adiabene's material culture on the basis of archaeological data from the *Assyrian triangle* shows that there is no good reason to claim that we do not know anything about the environment of Adiabene in the Seleucid and Parthian periods, because, for instance, Arbela indeed remains largely archaeologically inaccessible. Our evidence, though limited, should be given proper attention. In this light, Adiabene appears to be a country of great cultural diversity since it includes co-existing Semitic, Greek and Iranian elements. Indeed, Adiabene can rigthly be called a country located at the crossroads of cultures between the East and West.

[1276] D. Oates/ J. Oates 1958: 118.