The assembled palace of Samosata: object vibrancy in 1st C. BCE Commagene

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Chapter 1. Research history and archaeology of Samosata and Commagene.

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction to the research history and archaeology of Samosata and Commagene. I start with a introduction to the geographical setting of Samosata (section 1.2), followed by a brief research history of the site (paragraph 1.3), narrating the history of archaeological activity in and around Samosata up until the 1970s. In the following paragraph (1.4), I discuss in more detail the background and character of the excavations by Nimet Özgüç in the 1980s, which also serves as the 'meta-data' for the legacy data presented in chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 of this dissertation. This is followed by a brief chronological overview of the archaeological findings of the Özgüç campaigns, thus painting - with a broad brush - the four millennium spanning history of this city (paragraph 1.5). In the last paragraph (1.6), I provide an equally concise overview of the history and archaeology of the kingdom of Commagene, focusing on the 2nd c. BCE-1st c. CE, meant to familiarize the reader with the contemporary local context of the palace of Samosata and its cultural dynamics. Especially the latter paragraph serves as a stepping stone to the state of research presented in chapter 2, which explores in a more critical way the scholarship on Commagene's 1st c. BCE cultural dynamics, formulating the main analytical issues at stake in this dissertation.

1.2 Geographical Setting

1.2.1 Geology and climate

Fig. 1.1. CORONA satellite imagery from 01-08-1969 (1107-2138A061/2). Source: Center for Advanced Spatial Technologies, University of Arkansas/U.S. Geological Survey.

Before its flooding, the site of Samosata was located on the west bank of the Euphrates River (Turkish: Fırat Nehri) in the Lower Karababa Basin, approximately 30 kilometers south-east of the modern town of Adıyaman and around 50 kilometers north-west of modern Şanlıurfa (ancient Edessa). The closest tributary river of the Euphrates were the Kâhta Çay in the northeast and the Ziyaret Çay in the southwest. The Euphrates emerges from the Anatolian highlands, making a sudden turn to the west, cutting through the Taurus mountains east of Malatya in an approximately southerly direction and emerges from the mountains into a series of large floodplains, including the Karababa Basin, the location of Samosata.[20] The Karababa Basin is located between the anti-Taurus foothills in the north, and the upland pastures of the Urfa-Gaziantep plateau in the south.[21] It starts approximately 10 kilometers upstream from Samosata, at the sites of Gritille and Lidar Höyük, and, along its approximately 70 kilometer length, widens considerably from there, reaching a maximum width of 10 kilometers. At the stretch near Samosata, the basin was circa 8 kilometers wide, and the river at this point ran in a south-west

[20] Wilkinson 1990, 5.
[21] Stein 1988, 27.

orientation with a relatively wide and shallow course, with large flat islands at several points that allowed people and animals to cross easily (see fig. 1.1 for CORONA satellite imagery from 1969[22]). The river at this point is deeply incised into the plateau, something that changes further south, where it sits above the level of the Mesopotamian plain. Further downstream, the river continued in a south-west-west direction through the Karababa Basin, passing the Urfa-Gaziantep plateau, subsequently leading through the steppe of the north-Syrian Jazirah, and ultimately arriving at the Mesopotamian basin.

Fig. 1.2. Land use sub-regions within the Urfa-Adıyaman area in the 20th c. Samsat/Samosata is indicated with land use type 2b, the Plio-Pleistocene terrace of the north bank of the Euphrates. Source: Wilkinson 1990, 49, fig. 2.5.

Within the Karababa Basin, Samosata was located on the north bank river terrace (indicated with '2b' in fig. 1.2), which formed an outcrop of the Plio-Pleistocene terraces and scarplands further

[22] See Krüger and Blömer 2011 for an exploration of the potential of such CORONA imagery for the retrieval of the submerged and still little known tell landscape of the Karababa Basin.

north in the area of modern Adıyaman.[23] Its soils are classified as reddish-brown or chestnut soils.[24] The Plio-Pleistocene terraces around Adıyaman (indicated with '2a' in fig. 1.2) formed part of the limestone 'badlands', gently folding edges of the Karababa Basin that were heavily eroded by tributaries of the river and transitioned into the foothills of the Anti-Taurus Mountains (indicated with '1' in fig. 1.2).[25] This massive north-east running chain was located circa 40 kilometers north from Samosata and consist mainly of limestone.[26] Like the enormous Taurus Mountain range it belonged to, the Anti-Taurus Mountains are the result of a collision between the Arabian plate, moving towards the north and slightly west, and the Eurasian plate.[27] The Urfa-Gaziantep plateau, starting approximately 20 kilometers south of Samosata at the southern and eastern side of the Euphrates, is the extension of the southern Jazirah and, as such, of the Arabian platform, which consists of limestones, marls, clays, sandstones and conglomerates.[28]

Fig. 1.3. Mean monthly rainfall in Samosata. Source: Wilkinson 1990, 12, 1.3 (adapted by the author).

The climate of the Karababa Basin has been classified as dry sub-humid mesothermal, according to Thornthwaite's classification, or, alternatively, as a semi-continental variant of the Mediterranean climate.[29] Autumn rains start in October (see fig, 1.3), and are followed by wet, cool but mild winters, that often comprise of snow that can remain on the surface during 10-30 days per year.[30] The wet season ends in May, and the exceptionally warm and dry summer months that follow make June the usual harvest time for cereals, which notably conflicts with the milking season.[31] The rainfall has a high degree of variety in the region, however, with almost double the

[23] Wilkinson 1990, 49.
[24] Beaumont et al. 1988.
[25] Stein 1988, 27.
[26] Dewdney 1971.
[27] Beaumont et al. 1988.
[28] Tolun and Pamir 1975, 81. See Wilkinson 1990, 7, fig. 1.2 for a geological map.
[29] For both, see Dewdney 1971, 34. The mean monthly temperatures in July are circa 30° C in Adıyaman but they can reach up to 50 ° C.
[30] Dewdney 1971. The average monthly temperature in January is circa 4-5° C in Adiyaman, and (light) frosts happen commonly (circa 30 times per year).
[31] Wilkinson 1990, 51.

rainfall in the northern part of the region (anti-Taurus mountains and foothills), compared to that in the area near Harran.[32] The mean annual rainfall in Samosata is 470 mm per year and thus is considerably dryer already than for instance in nearby Adıyaman to the north-west.

1.2.2 Land use

This north-south variation has had strong consequences for land use up until the 20th century, with, for instance, tobacco not being produced south of the Euphrates, where the climate is too dry.[33] Despite its semi-arid character, the entire flood plain of the Karababa Basin generally provided a large area of arable land, which in most years will allow for cereal production without irrigation. Wilkinson notes, however, that especially the southern area is located close to the limit of dry-land farming (ca. 240 mm mean annual rainfall[34]) which, combined with the highly variable mean annual rainfall, could also result in years with very low crop yields.[35] In the 20th century, farming was the major economic activity with the major crops in the area being grapes, wheat, barley, lentils, cotton and tobacco. Rice and vegetables were grown in the lower parts of the valleys of the Euphrates' tributaries. Samosata seems to be located on an important transition zone between north and south, with grapes having prominence over wheat and barley, a ratio that was reversed towards the south, where wheat especially becomes the major crop, for instance in the district of Bozova, a mere 20 kilometers to the south of Samosata.[36] In general, the crop yields drop significantly towards the south, with, for instance, an average barley production of 2000 kg per ha in Samosata decreasing to circa 750 kg per ha in Bozova.[37] The north-south contrast is also meaningful with regards to pastoralism, with Adıyaman showing more than double the amount of sheep, goats, and cows per ha of cultivated land compared to the province of Şanlıurfa; the uplands and highlands to the north were most likely used to pasture these animals[38] but also the lowest

[32] *Idem*, 13: '*The variation in moisture regime results from orographic cooling of westerly depressions which are funneled to the south of the Anatolian high plateau by the high pressure air masses which prevail during the winter months*'. See also Walter and Lieth 1967.
[33] Wilkinson 1990, 39ff. Wilkinson discussed in great detail the land use of the Karababa Basin in the 20th century (up until the advent of the Atatürk Dam), which, although of course altered through modern mechanization and a different economical system, still would partially reflect long-term environmental conditions and constraints and their related cropping patterns.
[34] Wallén 1967.
[35] Wilkinson 1990, 13.
[36] *Idem*, 50: '*Although only a generalized assessment, the land use map* [see fig. 1.3] *does clearly show the transition from broad basins dominated by cereal cultivation in the south (areas 5 and 6) through smaller lowlands characterized by cereal and lentil cultivation and viticulture in the vicinity of the Euphrates, to mixed farming with a greater reliance on pastoralism and tree crops in the Anti-Tauros mountains and foothills in the north.*'
[37] *Idem*, 47, fig. 2.4c. The graph shows that the same drop in crop yields towards the south of Samosata can be observed for wheat and lentils. The crop yields of Samosata and Adıyaman (further north) are more or less the same, suggesting that Samosata was located at the 'advantageous side' of the north-south transition.
[38] *Idem*, 47-48.

floodplains adjacent to the river would have been used for grazing and watering during the dry summer months.[39] The Plio-Pleistocene terrace at the north bank of the Euphrates where Samosata was located was used for cereal farming (mostly wheat) with viticulture and contained a small component of lentil cultivation.[40] Nuts, apricots and other winter and summer fruits grew wild in the mountains around Samosata.[41]

1.2.3 Urban connections and routes

In the direct environment of the river valley of Samosata lay several smaller mounds of archaeological importance. Approximately 10 kilometers upstream, on the north-western river bank, was the elongated, 24-meter high mound of Gritille, where excavations in 1981-1984 unearthed a Medieval fortification.[42] At the opposite, south-eastern river bank of Gritille was Lidar Höyük, where excavations between 1979-1987 yielded an important Bronze Age center and occupation phases of the late Iron Age and Hellenistic period, continuing into the Medieval period.[43] Around 4-5 kilometer downstream from Samsat were two mounds at the south-eastern river bank, Şaşkan Büyük Tepe and Şaşkan Küçük Tepe.[44] Approximately 3-4 kilometers further downstream lay Kurban Höÿuk, which was located on the northwest river bank, and contained many remains from the Chalcolithic and Bronze Age.[45]

[39] Redford 1986.
[40] Wilkinson 1990, 49-50 with fig. 2.5. Samosata is indicated as cultivated area 2b on fig. 2.5.
[41] Al-Idrīsī, a geographer writing in the 1150s mentions an abundance of such fruit in relation to Samosata. See Al-Idrīsī 1970–1984.
[42] The mound must have been inhabited already since the Neolithic however. See Redford1986; Redford et al. 1998.
[43] Cf. Hauptmann 1986/1988, 33-37; Müller 1999, 123-131.
[44] Cf. Özdoğan 1977, 178–180; Kennedy 1998b, 558–559.
[45] Cf. Wilkinson 1990; Algaze 1990.

Fig. 1.4 Map of Commagene in the period 60 BCE-20 BCE during its largest territorial expansion (in light green), with several of its nearest urban centers indicated. Source: Brijder 2014, 39, fig. 15.

During the Hellenistic and Roman periods, Samosata belonged to a broader network of North-Syrian urban centers, of which the most directly relevant were Edessa (modern Urfa) in the southeast[46], the capital of the kingdom of Osroehne; Seleukeia on the Euphrates/Zeugma, circa 130 km. downstream towards the southwest[47], holding an important crossing over the Euphrates; Doliche (modern Dülük, near Gaziantep) towards the west-south-west[48]; Germanikeia/Caesarea Germanica (modern Kahramanmaraş) circa 120 km. towards the west[49]; Perrhe (near modern Adıyaman) towards the northwest[50]; and Melitene (modern Malatya) towards the north.[51] Samosata was relatively well connected towards the south, although the fragmented character of the landscape forced its communications through narrow corridors (as opposed to the easier passage in the flat plains of the Harran Basin). There are several important and well-attested

[46] Cf. Blömer 2019 with further literature.
[47] Cf. Görkay 2021.
[48] Cf. Blömer, Çobanoğlu and Winter 2019, 103–186; Blömer and Winter 2011, 248-285, 361-364 with further literature.
[49] Şahin 1991.
[50] Dörner and Naumann 1939, 66-69; Eraslan and Winter 2008; Blömer and Winter 2011, 128-137, 356-357; Eraslan 2016.
[51] For a good introduction to North-Syrian cities, see Blömer 2020, with bibliography. The 'four cities of Commagene' (*quattor civitates Commagenorum*), mentioned as the financiers of the Severan-period Cendere bridge over the Chabinas river in the north of Commagene likely were Samosata, Perrhe, Doliche and Germanikeia. See Blömer and Winter 2011, 91-95; Wagner 1987, 48-55.

routes towards the south and west.[52] The first led directly across the Euphrates, running south-east to Urfa (ancient Edessa). Although often mentioned as containing a bridge, it seems more likely that the river at Samosata was crossed by means of boats or simply by crossing at its most shallow locations.[53] Urfa was located at the Balikh River and the start of the Harran Plain, and thus allowed for easy passage to Raqqa (Nikephorion/Kallinikos in the Hellenistic-Roman period) and further into Mesopotamia. The second route, towards the southwest (b on fig. 1.4), linked the city to Doliche, and subsequently passed Aleppo (ancient Beroea) and the 'Amuq plain, thus ultimately arriving at the Mediterranean coast. Long stretches of the Roman phases of this route have been attested between Samosata and Doliche, passing by a Severan fortress at Eski Hisar, several Roman funerary monuments (at Hasanolu, Elif and Eski Hisar) and several Roman bridges (over the Göksu and the Karasu and near Yarımca).[54] A third route followed the course of the Euphrates and thus led from Samosata to Zeugma.[55] Another, more direct route from Samosata to Zeugma, running east of the Euphrates, is attested by a Roman watchtower at Uzunburç.[56] Finally, a road existed that linked Samosata with Germanikeia to the west, passing the bridge at Karasu.[57]

Connections towards the north were more problematic, with the Anti-Tauros Mountains forming a natural barrier that reaches heights of approximately 2560 above sea-level. The highlands begin approximately 35 kilometers north of Samosata, and, quickly, the landscape becomes difficult to trespass and less attractive for cultivation. There must have been a road running through the mountains from Samosata to Malatya (ancient Melitene), running past Perrhe towards the north, but its exact course has not yet been established.[58] Another road probably led from Samosata to the Cendere Bridge, and from there, further north-east into the mountains; again, the exact course is unclear. Traffic along the Euphrates was possible by boat, but land routes following the Euphrates valley in both the north-east and the south-west direction from Samosata were difficult due to the narrow and deep gorges of the river.[59] The above considerations concerning the

[52] For the roads and communication systems in Commagene, focusing on Roman Zeugma, see Comfort et al. 2000 (east-west connections); Comfort and Ergeç 2001 (north-south connections).
[53] Strabo 16.2.3 is often referred to as evidence for a bridge at Samosata, but it is likely he in fact referred to Zeugma, cf. Syme 1995, 95-110. Josephus in fact mentions that the river is easily crossed without a bridge, cf. Joseph. *BJ* 7.224. Krüger and Blömer 2011, 351 furthermore add: '*Ein Blick auf die natürlichen Gegebenheiten des Flusstals im Stereomodell unterstützt diese Vermutung. Die zu überspannende Breite des Flussbettes wäre enorm und böte sich für die Errichtung einer festen Brücke nicht an.'*. The presence of a ponton bridge can however not be ruled out.
[54] Cf. Blömer and Winter 2011, 163-167; Wagner 1983.
[55] Comfort and Ergeç 2001, 20-27.
[56] Wagner 1983; Comfort and Ergeç 2001, 41.
[57] Comfort et al. 2000, 117.
[58] It has been suggested that the road passed the Cendere Bridge that runs across the Chabinas river, but this would not have been part of the main route as it lies too far towards the east, cf. Blömer and Winter 2011, 95.
[59] For a good overview of the evidence, see Comfort and Ergeç 2001, 20-27. Al-Idrīsī, writing in the 1150s, mentions that the Euphrates was navigable in this period from Baghdad up until Samsat, cf. Al-Idrīsī 1970–

available communications should make it clear that, throughout its history, Samosata was linked to northern-Syria much more than to highland Anatolia.

1.2.4 Site topography

Fig. 1.5 Map showing the topography of Samosata. Source: Goell 1974, 86-87, fig. 2.

For the site topography of Samsat/Samosata, the best available map from before the site's submergence in the Atatürk Lake is the one that resulted from the extensive urban surveys done by Sabri Güneç, Theresa Goell, Carl Anthony and Ergun Uytun in the 1960s (see fig. 1.5). This map shows the circumference of the ancient city by means of the 1st c. CE city fortification wall, which,

1984. It remains questionable whether these upper stretches were ever navigated by more than local traffic though.

by the 1970s and 1980s, in some parts was still preserved up to 9,0 m. high (see paragraph 7.5.3 of this dissertation). The wall contained the well-documented 'Urfa Gate' in the south-east, which must have been one of several city gates.[60] The eye-catching *höyük*, the ca. 50 meter high, largely artificial mound on which the Hellenistic palace was located, stood against the eastern long edge of the ancient town, directly bordering the floodplains of the Euphrates in the east. The oval-shaped *höyük* measured ca. 250 x 150 m. at its flattened top and had particularly steep edges at the west and east sides, sloping somewhat more gently at the shorter northern and southern ends. Remains of a Late-Antique fortification wall (assigned as 'Late Byzantine' in fig. 1.5), at the time greatly diminishing the extent of the city, was still visible in several locations running from the northern edge of the *höyük* towards the southwest. At the time of documentation, the most important entryway to Eski Samsat lay to the west, with the main road coming from Adıyaman.[61] The modern village of Eski Samsat was located in the southern fringes of the oval-shaped fortified part of the ancient city, with most modern houses located close to the fortification wall and the Urfa Gate (see figs. 1.1 and 1.5). In the foothills towards the northwest and southeast of the town, evidence for 2nd-3rd c. CE Roman tombs was found, pointing to the ancient city's *necropoleis*. Towards the north-east, along the banks of the Euphrates, ran the remains of a Roman aqueduct, which was provided with water from an unknown source in the valley of the Kâhta Çay.[62] Unfortunately, investigations of the Lower Town and the town's environment before the flooding remained very limited, leaving us largely in the dark concerning its further urban topography. The background and results of scholarly work on Samosata – mostly focused on its *höyük* - will be discussed in the next paragraph.

[60] For these archaeological investigations, see section 1.3.
[61] A second, smaller road ran along along the Euphrates river and passed through Samsat, connecting it to the village of Kovanolut in the north-east and Balcılar in the southwest.
[62] Cf. Dörner and Naumann 1939, 54-61; Özdoğan 1977, 106-136.

Fig. 1.6. The team of Osman Hamdi Bey and Osgan Efendi crosses the Euphrates between Havliyan and Kantara, south-west of Samosata. Picture taken on 2 June 1883, the day of the encounter with Karl Humann and Otto Puchstein. Source: Eldem 2010, 132 fig. 55 (nr. 11229).

A research history of Samosata cannot but start with that unlikely encounter at the banks of the Euphrates near Samsat on the 2nd of June 1883 (see fig. 1.6). That day, a team of Ottoman archaeologists, led by Osman Hamdi Bey and Osgan Efendi, had visited Samsat and crossed the Euphrates between Havliyan and Kantara, southwest of Samsat, planning to continue their travels to Urfa.[63] At Kantara, a German team of archaeologists, led by Karl Humann and Otto Puchstein, had been planning to cross the river in the opposite direction, travelling to Nemrut. This resulted in an unexpected meeting of the two teams.[64] Although there must have been at least some degree of nationalistic competition between the two archaeological 'équipes', the accidental encounter was met with sheer joy from both sides, resulting in a copious dinner and '*toutes sortes de*

[63] For this expedition, see Eldem 2010. The results were published in Hamdi Bey and Efendi 1883 (*Le Tumulus de Nemroud Dagh*). The famous scholar, artist and intellectual Osman Hamdi Bey was appointed director of Müze-i-Hümayun (Museum of the Ottoman Empire) in 1881, and Osgan Efendi was a sculptor at the Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi (School of Fine Arts).
[64] For which, see especially Radt 2003.

liqueurs'.[65] In retrospect, the synchronous appearance of research teams in and around Samsat was perhaps not entirely accidental; both expeditions were a direct consequence of the recent (re)discovery of Nemrut Dağı in 1881 by the road construction engineer Karl Sester and the subsequent detailed archaeological report by Otto Puchstein, who had undertaken a reconnaissance campaign to Nemrut in 1882 together with Sester.[66]

[65] In his '*Voyage a Nemrut Dağı',* Hamdi Bey reported on the 2nd of June 1883: '*Au moment où nous remontions à cheval pour continuer notre voyage, nous entendîmes derrière nous des personnes qui nous appelaient, nous reconnûmes avec une surprise aussi grande qu'agréable le comité allemand de Nemroud Dagh. C'étaient nos amis les Drs Humann, Puchstein et von Luschan. Nous résolûmes de nous arrêter sur la Mésopotamie pour célébrer cette heureuse rencontre. Nous fîmes donc retourner nos bagages qui étaient déjà partis et nous dressâmes nos tentes tout au bord de l'Euphrate; notre joie redoubla quand nous y reçûmes les lettres de nos familles. Ce ne fut que rire et gaîté. Nous prîmes toutes sortes de liqueurs, c'était une vraie fête. Nous nous photographiâmes tous ensemble pour avoir un souvenir de cet heureux jour. Nous photographiâmes aussi des chameaux. Le soir nous fîmes un dîner copieux et nous passâmes le reste de la soirée à développer nos clichés*.' Taken from Eldem 2010, 71. Humann writes the following about the encounter: '*Sobald das Fahrzeug bei uns anlegte, stellte es sich heraus, dass es Hamdy-Bey und Osgan-Effendi waren, die vom Nemrut-dagh schon zurückkehrten. Da gab es viel zu erzählen; wir schlugen darum am hohen Ufer unsere Zelte auf und blieben bis zum nächsten Morgen beisammen*.' (Humann and Puchstein 1890, 181-182). For a thorough analysis of the Ottoman expedition, and its sometimes competitive relation to the German endeavours, see Eldem 2010. Eldem 2010, 20: '*Il va sans dire que, du point de vue des archéologues allemands, Osman Hamdi Bey tombait comme un cheveu dans la soupe'.*

[66] Humann and Puchstein 1890, 99-104; Dörner 1987, 11-39. Sester worked for the Osman authorities of the Vilayet Diyâr-ı Bekr and was directed to Nemrut by a Kurdish man named Bakô. Soon after, the *Akademia der Wissenschaften* ordered Otto Puchstein, an archaeologist and bursary of the German Archaeological Institute, to travel to Nemrut Dağı together with Karl Sester in 1882. They described the monument and made the first transcription of its so-called 'Great Cult Inscription'. The results of this campaign were published in the '*Sitzungsberichte der königlich preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*' (Puchstein 1883). In the spring of 1883, the royal Academy of Science of Prussia organized an expedition under the direction of Karl Humann, Felix von Luschan and Otto Puchstein. Humann was a well-established archaeologists who was most known for his discovery of the Pergamon altar. The results of his expeditions in Turkey and North-Syria, during which he also recorded archaeological sites and finds at Sesönk, Karakuş, Selik, and Gerger, were published in the book *Reisen in Kleinasien und Nordsyrien* (Humann and Puchstein 1890).

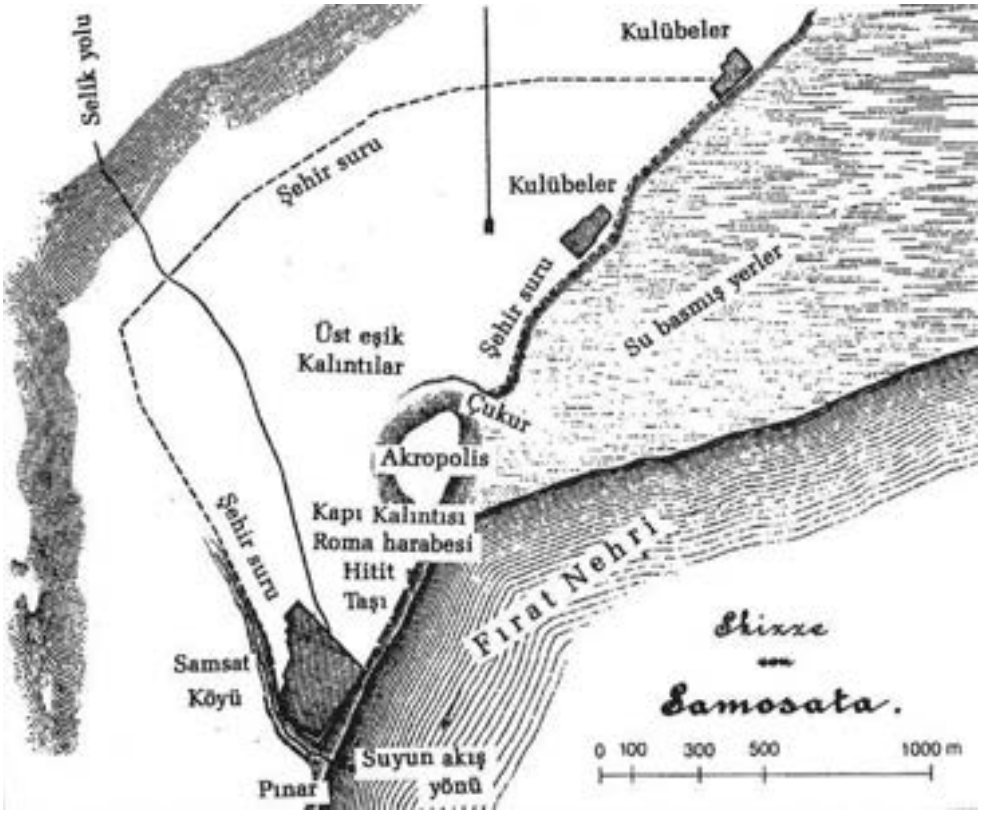

Fig. 1.7. Map of Samosata by Karl Humann and Otto Puchstein. Source: Humann and Puchstein 1890, fig. 28.

As excited as the scholars were about the newly discovered tomb-sanctuary of Nemrut, as underwhelmed the scholars clearly were by Samsat. This disappointment was partially fuelled by high expectations of ancient Samosata as the birthplace of the famous satirist Lucian of Samosata (ca. 120 – ca. 200 CE).[67] On the 1st of June, Hamdi Bey notes in his travel diary: '*A l'approche de Samsat nous vîmes au bout de la plateforme qui domine Samsat et l'Euphrate, quelques tumulus de petite dimension. A onze heures et demie nous arrivâmes à Samsat. Nous fûmes fortement saisis au cœur en voyant ces quelques malheureuses huttes qui composent la ville moderne. Où trouver ce Samsat, la superbe capitale de la Commagène, cette ville qui vit naître Lucien? Il n'en reste pas le moindre vestige. On voit seulement à quelque distance de la misérable ville moderne une élévation sur le bord du fleuve sur laquelle se trouve une immense plateforme. Ce devait être l'acropole, elle est d'une forme rectangulaire et à l'extrémité sud-ouest se trouvent les restes d'une fortification rectangulaire d'une époque postérieure d'aucune importance. Voilà tout ce qui reste de l'ancienne*

[67] For a good recent introduction to Lucian of Samosata, both in a literary and a historical sense, see Mestre and Gómez 2010.

ville'.[68] On the 2nd of June, Hamdi Bey adds*: 'Ce matin nous allâmes visiter les environs de Samsat et comme nous avons déjà dit dans notre rapport d'hier, il n'y a absolument rien à voir*.'[69] After ascending the *höyük*, and making some photographs, the Ottoman team soon travelled on. Humann and Puchstein visit Samsat the day after their encounter with the Ottoman team and conduct more detailed documentation, making the first 'map' of the city (see fig. 1.7), showing the course of the fortification walls, and describing the *höyük* in more detail; soon after, they travel on to Nemrut.[70]

The Ottoman and German teams were not the first to describe Samsat nor the first foreigners to visit it. In the 17th century, the Dutch geographer and historian Olfert Dapper (1636-1689) appears to be the first to identify the modern village of Samsat with the ancient city of Samosata.[71] A travel report by Prussian general Helmuth Karl Bernhard von Molte (1800-1891) from 1838 furthermore provides an early description of '*der berühmten Stadt Samosata*', one that is strikingly less pessimistic than that of Hamdi Bey half a century later, curiously suggesting that the valley of the Euphrates at Samsat looks similar to '*der Oder nahe oberhalb Frankfurt'*, and praising the *höyük* for its '*riesenhafter Arbeit*' and its '*schöne Ruinen eines viereckigen Gebäudes'*.[72] Von Moltke stumbled on a marble frieze decorated with foliage, birds and bulls *'von so schöner Arbeit, wie ich nie gesehen'.*[73] A year later, in 1839, the English traveller, surgeon and geologist William Francis Ainsworth (1807-1896) travelled through Commagene and visits Samsat, which however again disappoints: *'All that remains of this once celebrated city [Samosata], the seat of Commagene, the birth-place of Lucian, and an episcopate in the middle-ages, is a partly artificial mound, with*

[68] Taken from Eldem 2010, 70.
[69] *Idem*, 71.
[70] Humann and Puchstein 1890.
[71] Dapper 1677/78. The subtitle of Dapper's book mentions that the descriptions are '*excerpted from several ancient and recent authors, and reported by eyewitness investigators.'* He writes: '*the Euphrates, starting at the city of Erzerum, flows to Commagene, passes the city of Malatya, and finally reaches Samosatum where it takes its course to the south-east. (…) The capital of Commagene was called either Samosatum [singular] by the ancient authors, like Strabo, Pliny and others, or Samosata [plural], but afterwards Sumeisata or Sumeisat by the Arabs. It is situated on the west bank of river Euphrates, at the utmost northern end of Syria, there where the Euphrates starts to bend to the south-east, twenty-two thousand steps northwards from Edessa, in the direction of Melitene and two thousand and thirty steps eastward from Caesarea in Cappadocia. Some make Aleppo the capital of Commagene. Strabo mentions Samosatum as a city fortified by nature. Samosatum was a Christian Episcopal city under the archbishopric of Edessa. Nowadays the city is completely destroyed*'. Taken from Brijder 2014, 50 n.28. Brijder adds that '*Dapper never travelled outside The Netherlands, but wrote his 'Description' sitting on his armchair in his well-equipped library in Amsterdam.*'
[72] Citations from Von Moltke 1893, 236-237. Von Moltke documented his explorations in Commagene, where he investigated the possibilities of communication routes in the Taurus and Antitaurus mountains (between Malatya and Birecik) for the Ottoman army during the war between the Ottoman empire and Egypt (first phase 1831-1833; second phase 1839-1841), which mainly dealt with obtaining power over Syrian and Palestine territory. During his travels, he (re)discovered several archaeological sites and finds that had previously been largely unknown, most notably the Great Cult inscription of Gerger. For Von Moltke's role as a captain and general, see Mombauer 2001. Von Moltke approached Samsat by boat from Gerger in the north and hence also described the remainders of the Roman aqueduct.
[73] Von Moltke 1893, 237.

fragmentary remains of a castle on its summit. The modern town [Samsat] is a poor place, of about 400 houses, peopled by Kurds, and Turkomans.'[74]

The largely negative, disappointed judgement regarding Samsat's archaeological value might be one of the reasons that in the next decades, only scarce scholarly attention was given to the town. In 1894, Vincent W. Yorke travelled in the area of Samsat and provided some short descriptions of the site, mentioning four newly discovered Roman inscriptions connected to the Roman legion XVI Flavia Firma that was stationed at Samosata after 72/73 CE.[75] In 1935, Giulio Jacopi found another inscription ('Sy', ID689 in chapter 6 of this dissertation) on a stele located in Samsat's primary school, which helped to complete the Great Cult Inscription of Arsameia on the Nymphaios.[76] Another important visit followed in 1938, when Friedrich Karl Dörner and architect Rudolf Naumann documented the remains of the Roman aqueduct north of Samosata.[77] In 1958, H. Th. Bossert furthermore visited Samsat to investigate an Iron Age royal stele that had already been documented during the visit of Humann and Puchstein.[78]

The first actual archaeological excavations in Samsat were conducted by Theresa Goell in the 1960s, during a 'Sondage campaign' in 1964 and more proper excavations in 1967 and 1970.[79] These investigations were already conducted in light of the construction of the Atatürk Dam (for which, see the introduction of this dissertation): *'The urgency for explorations at Samosata on-the-Euphrates in 1967 was to anticipate the consequences of the Turkish Government's project to build a dam for irrigation and power generation at Halfeti on the Euphrates southwest of Samosata* (…) *Accelerated archaeological excavations are being conducted there by Turks and foreigners in order to gain a glimpse of its ancient cultures before they disappear forever under the rising waters. This*

[74] Ainsworth 1842, vol I, 284-285. In his *Travels and Researches in Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Chaldea and Armenia,* Ainsworth furthermore describes the Roman aqueducts: '*Our road lay still along the banks of the Euphrates, over a country very little cultivated. Two hours from Hoshun, and above the junction of the Kakhtah River, are some rapids, which appear to be cataracts noticed by Pliny as being above Samosata, for we saw no others from hence to that town. (…) Below, the Kakhtah River flowed into the Euphrates by three different mouths. From hence to Sameïsat [Samosata] the remains of an aqueduct, which carried the water of this river, as previously noticed, to the capital of Commagene, are every now and then visible. Its lofty arches, supported either by strong walls or piers, show that it must have been a work carefully executed (…)*'. See also Brijder 2014, 179-183.

[75] Yorke 1896, 322: *'Samsat, which preserves the name of the ancient Samosata, the capital of the Seleucid kingdom of Commagene, the birthplace of Lucian, and station of one of the legions on the Euphrates, is now a wretched Kurdish village of about one hundred houses, three of which are Armenian. Its antiquities have been well described in Humann and Puchstein's work, and the only addition which we can make to the results which they obtained on the site, is that of four inscriptions. Two of these give the name of the Legion XVI. F(lavia), F(irma), which is known from another source to have been posted here, and a third, found in the castle wall, gives part of the name of one of the Roman governors of Commagene.'*

[76] Jacopi 1936, 21ff. Dörner noted that also the backside was inscribed (SyV). See Dörner and Naumann 1939, 17-43. Facella 2006, 35-36. See paragraph 6.5 of this dissertation for the stalai associated with Samosata and paragraph 10.5.1 for a further discussion concerning the ruler cult of Antiochos I in Samosata.

[77] Dörner and Naumann 1939, 30-43, 54-61.

[78] Bossert 1959.

[79] Goell 1974.

fate awaits Samosata when the Halfeti dam is completed.'[80] Although Goell was particularly keen on finding the Commagenean phases of Samosata, the complex stratigraphy and intense Medieval habitation of the *höyük* prevented her from investigating layers older than the Seljuk period.[81] In 1964, Goell mapped the surfacing archaeological remains – the standing medieval fortification walls and a Roman foundation wall – and opened a test trench of 12,50 x 10,00 m. at the east-central periphery of the mound, facing the Euphrates. This trench yielded much Seljuk-period material, including a structure with storage rooms situated around a courtyard interpreted by Goell as *'a strategic military and administrative center controlling the military and trade routes converging there*.'[82]

During the 1967 and 1970 campaigns, Goell continued mapping the area, executing an extensive survey of the fortification walls (resulting in the map of fig. 1.5) and investigations of the *necropoleis* northwest and west of the city. On top of the *höyük*, she extended the 1964 test trench and connected it to a new east-west running trench that started at the western summit periphery and ran across the entire width of the mound (indicated on fig. 1.5). This east-west trench was lowered to the same Level I as reached in the eastern 1964 campaign, and again mostly yielded Seljuk-period structures and finds. At the western side of the trench, terraced building foundations and clay room floors were unearthed together with a number of clay ovens, hearths, large heavy ceramic basins, and a variety of 12th-13th c. ceramic vessels. In the eastern part of the extended trench, Goell also uncovered a habitation phase which she designated 'level II', dated to the 9th -10th century. A lower 'level III', broadly dated to the Byzantine period, was reached but not further explored.[83] Although Goell intended to arrive at the Commagenean phases and also appeared to have planned to reach all the way into the earliest, Chalcolithic habitation phases of the mound[84], no more fieldwork campaigns followed in the succeeding years, probably because of the dire working circumstances.[85]

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[80] Goell 1974, 83.
[81] *Idem*, 85, 96.
[82] *Idem*, 96.
[83] *Idem*, 102: '*this lower level (…) requires more extensive excavation and study*'.
[84] *Idem*, 85: '*Our 1967 season of work will concentrate on following up the architecture of the medieval storage rooms [presumably 12th or 13th century A.D.] and enlarging the area in order to reveal a more comprehensive picture, going down in depth to the levels of Antiochus' Hellenistic dynasty and its foundation. We also planned to uncover the levels to the beginning of the settlement of Samosata in at least the Chalcolithic period at the base of the mound.*'
[85] Described wonderfully in Sanders and Gill 2006, 514: '*During the summer and early fall months, Goell returned to Turkey to resume excavations at Samsat. Her season at Samsat in 1970 exemplified her entire archaeological tenure in Turkey. There were the normal long waits in Ankara for permits and various local clearances to use equipment; the season stretched again into early fall. As was usual for Goell's digs, she accompanied the fieldwork with the construction of a small camp for her staff and workers, which, down near the Euphrates River, consisted of small adobe huts (instead of the tents surrounded by high stone walls erected atop Nemrud Dağı). The region around Samsat even in the 1970s resembled the medieval period in social and political structure. Wealthy Turkish landowners tended to be in charge of poorer Kurdish workers, who were treated like serfs and property. Numerous arguments between Goell and the landowners over who owned the*

In the wake of the multiple dam constructions belonging to the Southeast Anatolia Project[86], several large scale surveys were undertaken. Tony Wilkinson surveyed the area around Kurban Höyük and Titris Höyük during his *Chicago Euphrates Archaeological Survey* from 1980-1984, covering also the Samsat Region.[87] Two other largescale archaeological surveys were organized in the Lower Euphrates Basin by the M.E.T.U. *Lower Euphrates Project* (*Aşağı Fırat Eski Esserli Kurtarma Projesi*). These surveys included the investigation of Samosata and its environs, and were published principally in Ümit Serdaroğlu's *Surveys in the Lower Euphrates Basin* and Mehmet Özdoğan's *Lower Euphrates Basin 1977 Survey*, both published in 1977.[88] These surveys resulted in a list of 210 threatened archaeological sites in Lower Euphrates Basin, which were discussed during a meeting held at Ankara in November 1977. There, a committee of Turkish and foreign archaeologists decided that, of these 210 endangered sites, Samosata held the highest preference for emergency excavations.[89]

1.4 The Özgüç campaigns (1978-1989): history, methodology and publications

The board of the M.E.T.U. Lower Euphrates Project (especially prof. dr. Ekmel Derya and prof. dr. Sevim Buluç) asked prof. dr. Nimet Özgüç (1916-2015) to start salvage excavations in Samosata.[90] She gathered a team with field archaeologists and specialists from a variety of different Turkish universities and conducted summer campaigns every year between 1978 and 1989, except for 1980 and 1988. After 1989, the Atatürk Dam was almost completed and further campaigns were impossible. Their work was mostly focused on the *höyük*, with several large-sale trenches

rights to have Kurds work for them disrupted the fieldwork. There were even local beatings of workers and the smuggling of arms, drugs, and antiquities. Goell did her best as peacemaker and intercessor, demonstrating over and over again her skill in dealing with landowners, even though she was woman. Among the constraints of excavations at Samsat was the mere two hours of electric power each night. During that time daily record keeping had to take place and the photographs taken of trench progress had to be developed, inventoried, and mounted on index cards on which Goell would describe the image.'

[86] See *infra*, n. 1.

[87] Wilkinson 1990.

[88] Serdaroğlu 1977; Özdoğan 1977. A third number of the M.E.T.U. Lower Euphrates Project Publications appeared in 1987 and deals with the findings of the surveys of 1978-1979. See also the annual contributions by Mellink in his *Reports on the Archaeology of Asia Minor* in the *American Journal of Archaeology* during the 1980's and early 1990's.

[89] Mellink 1978.

[90] Nimet Özgüç received her doctorate in 1944 with a thesis on Anatolian stamp seals. She became professor at Ankara University in 1958. By 1978, when she was assigned the task of excavating Samosata, her experience as archaeological project leader was well-established. The list of archaeological projects she participated in and was responsible for is long, and include the Dundartepe, Kavak-Kaledorugu, Tekkeköy excavations in the Samsun region, the Elbistan survey, the 1947 Karahöyük excavations, the Toprakkale and Maltepe excavations in Sivas, the Kültepe excavations, rescue excavation at Tepebağları Tumulus, and excavations at Acemhöyük (between 1962 and 1989). After her retirement in 1984, she became an honorary member of the Turkish Academy of Sciences in 1996 and was honoured with the Culture and Art Grand Prize of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 2010. Besides her monograph on Samosata, key publications include Özgüç 1965 (cylinder seals from Kültepe) and Özgüç 1979 (Early Anatolian Art from Acemhöyük).

covering large parts of the mound. Several smaller test trenches were also dug in the Lower Town, especially near the so-called Urfa Gate in the southeast part of the fortification wall. At the end of each campaign, the finds were stored at the Adıyaman Archaeological Museum, totalling 3347 inventoried objects after the last campaign in 1989.[91]

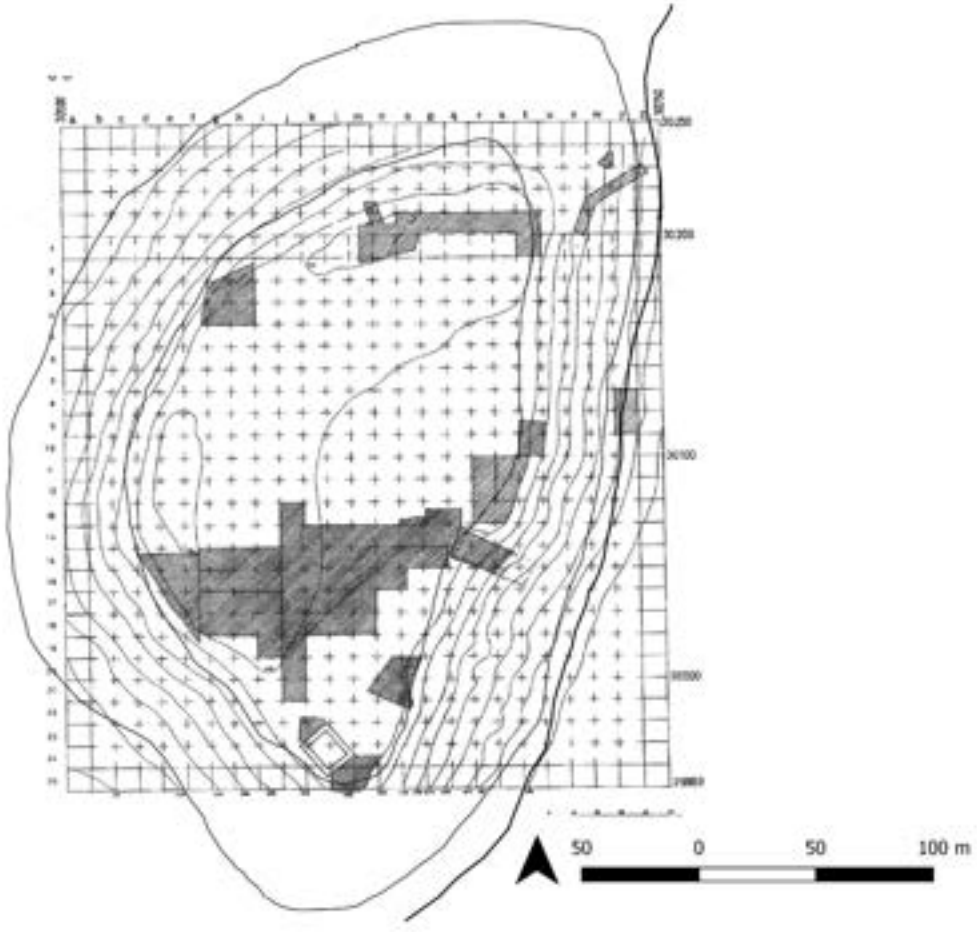

Fig. 1.8. The grid-system of the Özgüç excavations with the trenches indicated in dark grey. The palace is located in sector j-m/14-18. Map by the author, based on Özgüç 2009, 131 plan 3.

The excavations on top of the *höyük* were documented using a grid-system that covered the entire *höyük* (see fig. 1.8) which measures ca. 50 m. in height and ca. 250 x 150 m. size.[92] This grid-system consists of grid-squares measuring 10 by 10 meters. The numbering is compiled by a north-south axis with numbers 1 to 25 counting up southwards; and a west-east axis with letters (a-z). Some

[91] Özgüç 2009, '*önsüz*'. This count does not include the ceramics and painted stucco fragments.
[92] *Idem*, 131 plan 3.

of these trenches, one on the southwest side (sector d-f/15-17) and one on the northeast side (q-r/14-15), reached down all the way to the earliest Chalcolithic layers of the mound. This enabled Özgüç to distinguish 30 different layers of settlement habitation, ranging from the Chalcolithic period up to the late Medieval Seljuk periods that had already been scrutinized by Goell (see above).[93] It must unfortunately be stressed that the layers distinguished by Özgüç are very unprecise, as they combine layers across a 10,0 x 10,0 m. grid-square, making it unavoidable that a lot of fine-grained stratigraphic differentiation was lost. A further complicating factor is the fact that the system was not always used in a consistent manner. In sector j-m/14-19 (see appendix B, map B2), for instance, the chronological sequence is made up of layer VI (Early-mid Hellenistic period), layer V (Commagenean or Late-Hellenistic period; the Commagenean palace), and layer IV (Early Roman period). However, in some grid-squares Özgüç clearly deviated from this system; in sector u/9–10 for example, the Hellenistic finds are part of layers VII and VI. Lastly, there are several examples of layers consisting of very 'mixed' material, suggesting that different archaeological layers were heaped together and/or layers were simply contaminated. We must conclude that we are dealing with very general periodic differentiation rather than genuine stratigraphic units. Despite these severe stratigraphic and contextual limitations of the legacy data, this dissertation in some cases retains the original grid-square system and the general periodic differentiation, for instance in referring to single locations of objects. In the case of the architectural and archaeological analysis of chapter 4, I have however developed a system based on archaeological features that allows for a more detailed discussion of the data.

Based on the legacy data, we can more or less reconstruct the evolvement of the excavations through the years. It seems that, in 1978 and 1979, the team was primarily focused on surface reconnaissance and standing architecture on top of the *höyük*, especially the remains of the Seljuk-period tower on the southern extreme of the mound.[94] In 1981, excavations started near the Urfa Gate in the Lower Town (see Appendix B, map B1), as well as in sector e/3, o/14-15 and in q-r/14-15, where layers I and II were removed. In 1982, excavations in o/14 continued into layer III, while p/15 was excavated up until layer II. In sector j-k/15-16, layers I-II were removed, and in some locations also parts of layers III and IV, thus already exposing parts of the Late-Hellenistic palace. In sector d-e/15-16, layers I-II were removed and in some places (d/15) layer II was reached. In 1983, work was continued in d/16 up until layer VI, while in e/15-17, layers III-VII were removed. Sector g-i/16 was removed until layer III and in the sector of the Late-Hellenistic palace, j-l/14-17 layers III and IV were now entirely removed, providing a full view of the central, northern and

[93] The 30 layers are consecutively presented by Özgüç 2009. It must be noted that most scholars follow Zoroğlu 2012, 137 who mentions only 15 layers (cf. Wagner 2003/2004, 135; Brijder 2014, 424; Canepa 2019, 109) without giving further explanations for this numbering.
[94] Özgüç 2009, 10-11.

western wing of the palace. In sector m/14-16, a start was made to excavate the sector where the eastern continuation of the palace would be expected, removing layer I. In 1984, further work was conducted in the trench containing the palace (j-l/14-17, layer IV). This trench was also extended towards the west (with g-i/15-17 layers I-IV) and east (m/14-16, layers II-IV) brought to the level of the palace. In sector k/16-17, layer V was removed, thus reaching layers older and below the Late-Hellenistic palace (see appendix B, map B2). On the east of the *höyük*, trenches were opened in sector s-t/11-13. Work continued on trenches near the Urfa Gate. In 1985, the trench of the palace was extended towards the south, by removing layers I-III of j-k/18-19, thus unearthing the southern wing of the palace. An extension was also created towards the northeast, with n-p/14-15 brought down to layer IV. Further work was conducted in k/15, layer V, below the palace. In e-f/16-17, layers IV-VI were removed, exposing the so-called 'torus-base structure'.[95] This trench was extended to the east, with g/15 brought down to layer IV, exposing the so-called 'altar structure'.[96] In sector q-r/14-15, at the east of the *höyük*, layers IV-V were removed. Further east, sector u/9-10 is excavated up to layer IV. In 1986, this trench at the eastern slope of the mound was brought down to layer VIII. The trench with the palace is extended further to the southwest (i/17-18, layers III-IV). In 1987, further work was conducted on sector l-m/17, layers III-IV. In i/15-16, immediately west of the palace, layer VI was reached. In the last campaign, in 1989, the excavators reached layers IV-V of sector f-g/15-17, west from the Late-Hellenistic palace. North of the palace, in m/14, layer 3 was reached, unearthing the so-called 'structure in *opus reticulatum*'.[97]

From 1984 to 1987, Özgüç published four brief reports containing preliminary results in the *Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı*, also dealing with the late Hellenistic palace.[98] The yearly '*Reports on the archaeology of Asia Minor*' by Mellink in the *American Journal of Archaeology* furthermore provided general updates of the yearly results.[99] An investigation of the aqueduct remains north of the city was published in 1982 by Ülkü Izmirligil.[100] In 1986, Levent Zoroğlu published a study of the Late-Hellenistic-Early Roman red-gloss table wares or 'Eastern Sigillata A' ceramics from the *höyük* and the Lower Town.[101] The fortification wall was analysed in a specialized study by Tırpan, published in the succeeding years.[102] A brief discussion of the wall painting and mosaics

[95] For which, see paragraph 7.2.1. of this dissertation.
[96] See paragraph 7.2.2. of this dissertation.
[97] See paragraph 7.5.1 of this dissertation.
[98] Özgüç 1985, 221–227; Özgüç 1986, 297–304; Özgüç 1987, 291-294 (all in Turkish).
[99] Mellink 1966;1979, 335-336; 1980, 506; 1981, 468; 1982, 562; 1983, 432; 1984, 448; 1985, 554; 1987, 8; 1988, 110; 1989, 113-114; 1990, 135; 1991, 135-136
[100] Izmirligil 1982 (Turkish).
[101] Zoroğlu 1986, 61-100 (Turkish); the conclusions of this article are presented in chapter 7 of this dissertation.
[102] Tırpan 1986, 183-201 (Turkish); 1989, 519-526.

was published in 1997 by Orhan Bingöl.[103] In the same year, Nimet Özgüç published an article on the Early Hellenistic phase of Samosata.[104] The first overview of the results of the Özgüç excavations appeared in an article (in German) by Levent Zoroğlu in Jörg Wagner's 2000 edited volume *Gottkönige am Euphrat*.[105] A synthetic overview of the findings was presented by Wagner three years later.[106] Important work on the Iron Age phases of Samsat was published by Wolfgang Messerschmidt in 2008.[107] The key publication that synthesized the results of the Özgüç excavations only appeared in 2009, with Özgüç's Turkish monograph *Samsat - Sümeysat, Samosata, Kumuha, Hahha, Hahhum*.[108] In 2013, Orhan Bingöl followed with a small but important booklet in Turkish, called *Samosata I. Theos Antiokhos Sarayı*, in which he provided a more detailed account of the Late-Hellenistic palace, specifically focusing on its wall painting and mosaics.[109] In several important publications, Michael Blömer commented on the results of the Samsat excavations.[110] Recently, the Leiden VICI project 'Innovating Objects', the context within which this dissertation also emerged, produced new research dealing with the Hellenistic material of Samosata.[111]

1.5 The history and archaeology of Samosata; a brief overview

Combined with the available written sources, the results of the Özgüç campaigns allow for a historical overview of Samosata that spans from its first Chalcolithic habitation phase to the ultimate destruction of the town in the 13th c. CE.[112] In this paragraph, I will provide a brief overview of this long-term history, in close correspondence to and reliance on the archaeological results of the Özgüç excavations. The Late-Hellenistic palace that is the central focus of this dissertation will be discussed in much more detail in the succeeding chapters (especially chapter 4), as well as the other structures dating to the Hellenistic and Early Roman period (see chapter 7).

[103] Bingöl 1997, 111–118.
[104] Özgüç 1996.
[105] Zoroğlu 2000, 74-83. Re-published in Zoroğlu 2012, 135-145 almost without revisions.
[106] Wagner 2003/2004, 131-154.
[107] Messerschmidt 2008, 1-35.
[108] Özgüç 2009.
[109] Bingöl 2013.
[110] See, most notably, Krüger and Blömer 2011 with further literature.
[111] Riedel 2018; Kruijer and Riedel 2021.
[112] It is very likely that some sort of village settlement has always continued to exist at the foot of the *höyük* through the early modern and modern period, culminating in Eski Samsat (see introduction). However, I focus here on the history of the site functioning as a town that was focused on the habitation on top of the *höyük* itself.

The earliest traces for habitation in Samosata date to the Late Chalcolithic period and as such it is one of several middle-sized settlements that seem to emerge in the area in that period.[113] The location for the site at the west bank of the Euphrates is most likely explained by its close vicinity to the river, its highly fertile river plain, and the presence of two natural water springs at the east slope of the *höyük*. It is furthermore likely that the wide running course of the river at this location caused a relatively easy crossing. Özgüç's periodic layers XX-XXX represent the Late Chalcolithic period, which Özgüç unearthed mostly in sector d-f/15-17, at the SW sloping edge of the *höyük*.[114] The early phases where also reached at q-r/14-15, at the eastern edge of the *höyük*, where a similar deep trench perpendicular to the mound's slope was excavated. The voluminous later stratigraphic layers that superimpose these Halaf and Ubaid phases made it impossible to excavate larger portions of this early period, and specifically at the centre of the *höyük* our knowledge of the early habitation is completely lacking. Nonetheless, on the basis of the sondages at the eastern and western slope, it was estimated that around 20 of the 40 meters of cultural deposit on the *höyük* belonged to the Chalcolithic age, which underlines the impression of very continuous and intense activity for this period. No architectural remains were unearthed for the Halaf and Ubaid phases (layers XXVII-XXX), however these layers are rich in artefacts, specifically the Halafian and Ubaid ceramics, as well as worked flint and obsidian.[115] The later 'Uruk Culture' phases (XX-XXVII), representing the transition from Chalcolithic to Early Bronze Age in this region, do contain architectural evidence, such as a two-roomed building with stone foundations, pebble-paved floors and fragments of architectural decoration.[116] Other finds for this period include spindle whorls, weights, stamp seals with figurative decoration and flint tools and ground stones. Infant burials in jars with grave gifts were unearthed in sector q/15, layer XXVI.[117]

Özgüç dated layers XIII-XIX to the early and middle Bronze Age habitation layers, which were equated with the old-Assyrian city of Hahhum.[118] The earliest of these layers pre-date the old-Assyrian empire however, starting already around 2600 BCE. The most important foci of investigation were again trench q-r/14-15, at the eastern slope of the *höyük*, and trench b-f/15-

[113] See Wilkinson et al. 2012, especially 154-158, for a synthesizing discussion of survey data concerning Chalcolithic and early Bronze Age settlement development in the Middle Euphrates region, including Samsat. With an estimated maximum extent of ca. 5-10 ha, late Chalcolithic Samsat belongs to a group of middle-sized sites such as Lidar, Beddayeh and Kurban Höyük, cf. Wilkinson et al. 2012, 142.
[114] Özgüç 1988, 294. Özgüç 2009, 88-105
[115] Özgüç 1988, 261.
[116] Özgüç 2009, 88-103, pl.169, 390-391; pl.171, 399.
[117] Özgüç 2009, 99, pl.173, 403; Özgüç 1988, 294.
[118] As already suggested by Falkner 1957, 10-11. *Contra* Liverani 1988, 166 who suggested that Hahhum had to be located on the eastern bank of the Euphrates, opposite Samsat, perhaps at Lidar Höyük. For the EBA-MBA transition of Samsat in its wider regional context, see Abay 2007. For the importance of Hahhum as a crossing point of the Euphrates, see Palmisano 2017, 38: '*This may suggest that Hahhum, as the most accessible pinch-point and critical linkage between Upper Mesopotamia and central Anatolia, did indeed play a pivotal role as a market town and stop on the route to Anatolia (Old Assyrian texts mention an inn in this city)*'. In general, see Barjamovic 2011.

19 (the SW slope). Layer XIX, f/15-16 contained seven graves in crouched position. Architectural remains of small rectangular rooms with stone foundations (and mudbrick superstructure) were unearthed in the eastern trench as well as the south-western trench.[119] Other architectural fragments were retrieved in layers XVI-XVII, in the eastern trench, consisting of small rectangular wall structures and pavements.[120] These layers also contained three burials (two infants, one adult), both in the eastern and the south-western trenches.[121] Layer XIV in the SW-trench contains the so-called 'Assyrian palace', consisting of a small enclosure or fortification that forms a citadel-like structure with a paved inner court and a gate at the western side, as well as two towers. Its status as a 'palace' has not been widely accepted but the monumental wall size and presence of painted wall decoration do seem to point to an exceptional structure.[122] In trench b-f/15-18, layer XIII consisted of small rectangular house structures with a paved street running through them.[123] The walls have stone foundations but had a mudbrick superstructure that had almost completely vanished.

Özgüç dated layers VII-XII to the Late Bronze Age and early Iron Age, coinciding with the neo-Hittite period of the city, when it was called Kummuh (or Kumaha) and functioned as the capital of the neo-Hittite kingdom of Kummuh (ca. 12th-8th century BCE).[124] It is likely that the town remained in use after Assyrian king Sargon II conquered Kummuh in 708 BCE.[125] Late Bronze Age and Iron age layers assigned to Neo-Hittite Kummuh were retrieved in the SW trench (d-f/15-19) the eastern trench (q-r/14-15), and the other eastern trench u/9-10, located at the eastern slope as well. Especially layer VII and VIII contained monumental structures belonging to a fortification around the *höyük*, as well as paved courts and houses inside these walls.[126] A monumental 'postern' (staircase-tunnel) was unearthed at the north-eastern side of the mound at q-s/14-15, connecting the fortification system with the lower slope of the mound, ending at a cistern. The vertical walls are constructed in masonry with clay mortar and the roof was executed in large limestone blocks. Important finds for these layers include reliefs with Luwian inscriptions, Late-Hittite stelai, sealings and ceramics.[127]

As is true for the wider North-Syrian region, the Babylonian, Persian and Seleucid periods of Samsat Höyük remain rather obscure archaeologically. It is however likely that, somewhere in the

[119] *SW trench*: Özgüç 2009, 85, lev 159, 357. *E trench*: Özgüç 2009, 145, pl.159.
[120] Özgüç 2009, 75, pls. 150, 325.
[121] *Idem*, 75, pl.150, 326 and pl.151, 327-328.
[122] *Idem*, 68, lev 144, 313; pl. 145, 314 and 315.
[123] *Idem*, 145, plan 18.
[124] For a good introduction to Iron Age Kummuh, its regional setting, historical sources and the relevant secondary literature, see Hawkins 2000, 330ff.
[125] Hawkins 1974, 79-80. The most important source for the relations between Assyria and Kummuh is the stele of Adad-Nirari III, cf. Hawkins 1974, 74f.
[126] Özgüç 2009, 142, plan 15; pls.127-138.
[127] *Idem*, 54-57.

3rd c. BCE, the city is (re-)founded by the Orontid kings of Sophene, to which Commagene belonged at that time. Like the city of Arsamosata in Sophene, it was renamed after an Orontid king called 'Samos' (or 'Sames'), which in the literature is known as Samos I to differentiate him from Samos II, the late 2nd c. BCE Commagenean king.[128] In sector j-m/14-18 of layer V, Özgüç unearthed the Late-Hellenistic 'Commagenean palace' that is central to this dissertation; its archaeological features are elaborately described and discussed in chapter 4. There I also argue that the palace was likely built in the early 1st c. BCE, probably under the reign of king Mithridates I Kallinikos (ca. 100-69 BCE) and indeed must be the structure Strabo referred to when he speaks of the 'seat of the Commagenean kings' that is located there (*τὸ βασίλειον*).[129] During the 1st century BCE,

[128] In general, for the re-foundation of Samosata, see Messerschmidt 2000, 40; Metzler 2000, 51; Facella 2006, 172– 73; Messerschmidt 2012, 92; Versluys 2017a, 172-174. The dating of this re-foundation and the identity of 'Samos' is based first and foremost on the fact that Strabo, writing in the early 1st c. CE, derived the name 'Samosata' from the writings of Eratosthenes (276-194 BCE), which excludes Samos II as a (re-)founder given that he lived after Eratosthenes' time. Strabo 16.2.3: '*Commagene is a rather small country; and it has a city fortified by nature, Samosata, where the royal residence used to be; but it has become a province; and the city is surrounded by an exceedingly fertile, though small territory. Here is now the bridge of the Euphrates; and near the bridge is situated Seleuceia, a fortress of Mesopotamia, which was included within the boundaries of Commagene by Pompey*'. For more arguments in favour of Samos I as the (re)founder of Samosata, see Sullivan et al. 1977, 751–52; Dörner 1981, 367–68; Messerschmidt 2000, 40; Messerschmidt 2012, 92; Metzler 2000, 51; Zoroğlu 2000, 75; Zoroğlu 2012, 135; Sartre 2001, 424*;* Schwertheim 2005, 78: *'Samos scheint die spätere Hauptstadt des Reiches Kommagene, Samosata, gegründet zu haben*'; Facella 2006, 169-174; Cohen 2006, 187-190; Winter 2008, 41-42: *'Demgegenüber* [Doliche] *verdankte die kommagenische Hauptstadt Samosata* – Commagenes caput Samosata- *ihre erneute Bedeutung der Initiative des armenischen Königs Samos I., der durch diese ‚Neugründung' des alten Zentrums von Kummuh um die Mitte des 3. Jhs. v. Chr. Seinen Anspruch auf Herrschaft im kommagenischen Raum dokumentieren wollte. (…) . Die erste Erwähnung des hellenistischen Samosata findet sich in einer Passage bei Strabon, der hier Eratosthenes zitiert. Strabon bezeichnet zudem Samosata als befestigte Polis und erwähnt in diesem Kontext auch die Bedeutung des königlichen Palastes (…). Der in augusteischer Zeit schreibende Geograph ist eine äußerst zuverlässige Quelle, die sehr sorgfältig in ihrer Charakterisierung von antiken Siedlungsplätzen ist'***;** Blömer and Winter 2011, 143: *'The city is said to have been renamed by a predecessor of the Commagenean royal family, the Armenian king Samos, in the 3rd century BCE'*; Kropp 2013, 107: *'the capital Samosata which was founded by king Samos in the mid-third century BC'.* Cohen gives the most detailed overview of this discussion, and settles with the *communis opinio* choosing the 3rd century BCE 'Samos': '*the person for whom the settlement was named predated Eratosthenes; hence this could have been Samos I. On balance the latter seems to be the more likely option*.' (Cohen 2006, 188). Contrary to this almost unanimous support for Samos I, Goell suggests in Sanders 1996, 20: '*Ptolemy was succeeded by Sames* [i.e. Samos II]*, founder of Samosata, the capital city and principal fortress of the state'.* Versluys 2017a, 172-173 questioned the complete historical veracity of both Samos I and II, but offers no satisfactory explanation for the available epigraphic and numismatic evidence for both. This concerns especially the coins for Samos II discussed in Facella 2005; Facella 2006, 205-208; Facella 2012, 79-82. Despite his assertion that '*I have not tried to argue that Ptolemy, Samos II and Mithridates I Kallinikos never existed, nor that they were an Antiochan invention and that, for instance, coins showing them are in fact all Antiochan*' (Versluys 2017a, 182), Versluys in fact *does* imply the latter several times: '*With our present knowledge, however, it seems thus not far-fetched to consider the possibility that these coins were, in fact, a sort of medallion struck by Antiochos I'* (Versluys 2017a, 182 n.306). Earlier, he talks about '*the perhaps doubtful status as historical evidence*' of these coins (Versluys 2017a, 177). Key to Versluys's argument is the small amount of pre-Antiochan coins, but he does not consider the possibility that a medallion-like mint could also have existed under Antiochos I's predecessors. For Samos I, the 3rd century BCE Armenian King and father of Commagenean King Arsames, see the inscription OGIS 394, found at Arsameia on the Euphrates: 'βασιλέα [Α]ρσά[μην] τον έκ β[ασιλέως] Σάμου'. See also Humann and Puchstein 1890, 285.

[129] Strabo 16.2.3:' *καθόλου μὲν οὕτω, καθ᾽ ἕκαστα δὲ ἡ Κομμαγηνὴ μικρά τίς ἐστιν: ἔχει δ᾽ ἐρυμνὴν πόλιν Σαμόσατα ἐν ᾗ τὸ βασίλειον ὑπῆρχε, νῦν δ᾽ ἐπαρχία γέγονε: χώρα δὲ περίκειται σφόδρα εὐδαίμων, ὀλίγη δέ. ἐνταῦθα δὲ νῦν ἐστι τὸ ζεῦγμα τοῦ Εὐφράτου* (…)'.

Samosata is besieged twice; first by the Roman general Lucullus in 69 BCE[130] and later by general Ventidius and Mark Antony in ca. 38 BCE; these events are not archaeologically attested.[131] The palace likely was abandoned and partially destroyed after 17 CE, when Commagene was provincialized under emperor Tiberius.[132] Layer IV was dated to the early Roman period (ca. 1st c. CE) and contained the so-called 'structure in *opus reticulatum'*, a rectangular basilica-shaped building that partially covered the Commagenean palace.[133] In approximately the same period, a large citadel wall as well as a fortification wall encircling the Lower Town were constructed, both in *opus reticulatum* (for its course, see Appendix B, map B1). It is suggested in chapter 7 that these structures were all created during the rule of Antiochos IV.[134] After the provincialization of Commagene in 72/73 CE[135], a Roman legion (*Flavia Firma XVI*) is stationed in Samosata[136], and the city seems to thrive as an economic and cultural centre throughout the 2nd c. CE, when its coins bear on the reverse '*ΦΛΑ CAMO MHTPO KOM'* (i.e. Flavia Samosata Metropolis of Commagene).[137] In the 2nd c. CE, the city is the birthplace of the famous author Lucian of Samosata (ca. 120-180 CE) and, in the 3rd c. CE, that of Paul of Samosata (200-275 CE), who would become bishop of Antioch in the later part of his life.[138]

The famous trilingual 'Res Gestae' inscription of Sassanid king Shapur I on the Kaʿba of Zoroaster at Naqsh-i Rustam in Fars attests of severe pillaging of Syria, Cilicia and Cappadocia in 252/253 CE, and Samosata is mentioned as one of the captured and pillaged cities.[139] Layer III was dated by Özgüç to the Byzantine period of Samosata, and seems to attest of a renewed flourishing from approximately the 4th-early 6th c. CE, when it held the seat of the bishopric of the province of Euphratesia.[140] After an Arab raid in 531 CE, the region is quickly restored to Byzantine hands;

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[130] Plin. *HN* 2.235: '*In urbe Commagenes Samosata stagnum est emittens limum — maltham vocant — flagrantem. cum quid attigit solidi, adhaeret; praeterea tactu et sequitur fugientes. sic defendere muros oppugnante Lucullo; flagrabat miles armis suis. aquis et accenditur; terra tantum restingui docuere experimenta*.' The nature of this '*maltha'* is explained as follows by Mayor 2009, 167: '*Maltha was apparently a very viscous form of naphtha skimmed from great pools of asphaltum, petroleum tar that oozes from fissures in sandstones in the region.*'

[131] Plut. *Vit. Ant.* 34; Cass. Dio 49.22; Oros. 6.18.23; Joseph. *BJ* 1.16.7.

[132] Suet. *Calig.* 16. For the 'structure in *opus reticulatum*, see chapter 4.

[133] See chapter 4 and paragraph 7.5.1 for a detailed archaeological discussion.

[134] See paragraph 7.5.3 of this dissertation for this dating.

[135] Joseph. *BJ* 7.7 1-3. Perhaps described also in the famous *Letter to Mara bar Sarapion*, for which see Merz and Tieleman 2009 (especially the contributions by Facella, Blömer and Versluys).

[136] Zoroğlu 2000, 75–6; cf. Kennedy 1998a, 156. Attested also by multiple tile stamps, cf. Özgüç 2009, pl. 29, fig. 205. It is not known where exactly the Roman legion would have been stationed. See Pollard 2000, 266-268.

[137] Butcher 2004, 467-476. At that time, it was considered one of the 'four cities of Commagene' (*quattor civitates Commagenorum*), see *infra* n.51.

[138] For Lucian, see *infra* n. 67. For Paul of Samosata, see Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* VII, xxvii-xxx.

[139] Henning and Taqizadeh 1957; Huyse 1999; Curtis and Stewart 2010, xl.

[140] Özgüç 2009, 5-28. Özgüç mentions that, within the M.E.T.U. project, research on these later periods was primarily executed by Prof. dr. Metin Ahunbay. For the Islamic ceramics, see Bulut 1991. For the bishopric of Euphratesia, cf. Lewin 2011. For an elaborate discussion of Late-Antique Samosata, see Redford et al. 1998, 5-30.

emperor Heraclius (610-641 CE) is the last Byzantine emperor to visit the city.[141] Important archaeological features include several Byzantine mosaics[142] and a Byzantine apsidal building (maybe a church) on top of the Roman fortification wall in *opus reticulatum* in the Lower Town.[143] During this time, a smaller fortification wall was built in the Lower Town, significantly reducing the extent of the city (see fig. 1.5).[144]

In the 7th c. CE, the Arab conquest of the region by caliph Omar (634-644 CE) ultimately brings Samosata, by then known as Sumeysat, under Rashidun and, soon after, Ummayad control.[145] After a short-lived Byzantine occupation between 701 and 710 CE, the Ummayad Calliphate controls the area of Sumeysat from 711-1032 CE. The city turns to Byzantine rule again between 1032-1071 CE, with the Euphrates functioning as the south-eastern border of the empire, running all the way south to Antioch (and also including Urfa, for which Samsat functioned as an important supply link). After the famous battle of Manzikert led by Alp Arslan, the Seljuks gained control of Sumeysat, lasting from 1071-1099 CE. Subsequently, the city came under control of the Frankish Crusader County of Edessa, which was short-lived (1099-1148 CE), but during which Samsat was again an important supplier of animals and foodstuffs for Urfa.[146] The Turkish emirs of Syria and Northern Mesopotamia almost constantly attacked the Crusader County, until in 1146 CE, emir Nūr al-Dīn captured Urfa and Sumeysat in 1148 CE. In 1174 CE, the city came under control of the Ayyubid dynasty, after which, in 1188 CE, Saladin captured it. His son, al-Afdal, gained the city as a fief from his father's successor, al-Malik al-Adil.[147] In 1202 CE, after al-Afdal was defeated by his uncle and brother and only left with Sumeysat, he submitted to the Rum Seljuk Sultan, Kukn ad-Din Kay Rhusraw, starting to strike coinage in the sultan's name. The Rum Seljuks invaded the city twice thereafter, in 1208 and 1238 CE.[148] A year before, in 1237 CE, the city was however already plundered and destroyed by the Mongol invasion.[149] After the waning power of the Mongols in the succeeding decades of the 13th century, the strategic importance of Samsat Höyük decreased, with the frontier of this region moving more towards the north (in the area of Eski Kâhta) during the rising power of the Mamluk Dynasty.

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[141] Özgüç 2009, 25.
[142] Mosaics at the foot of the *höyük* in the north: Özgüç 2009, 23, pl. 72, 167. Mosaics south of the *höyük*: Özgüç 2009, 23; pl. 73, 168a+b.
[143] With the apsis facing SW. Özgüç 2009, 23, 138, plan 11; pl. 70, 163; pl. 71, 164-165; pl. 72, 166.
[144] Özgüç 2009, 21-25.
[145] Bulut 1991. For this period, I rely heavily on Özgüç 2009, 5-6 and Redford 1986, 113-118.
[146] For which see Segal 1970, 215ff.; and Tritton 1934, 278.
[147] Humphreys 1977, 116.
[148] For the invasion of 1208 see Humphreys 1977, 159. For that of 1238, see Duda 1959, 206.
[149] See Redford 1986, 117: '*Samsat, as we have seen, kept its value as the controlling fortress on an important invasion route well into the 1230's*'. The 13th century, Baghdad-based Greek geographer Yakut (1225 CE), probably describes one of the last phases of the city before its destruction: '*Sumaisat is a town on the west bank of the Euphrates. It has a castle. In one quarter of Sumaisat, Armenians dwell*' (Geographical Lexicon, iii, 151).

This long period full of political shifts was attested archaeologically in Özgüç's (and also Theresa Goell's) layers I and II on the *höyük*. Important structures are the Seljuk-period tower (still partially standing at the time of excavation) in sector k-l/23-24[150], the ramparts in sector m-r/0-1 at the north side of the *höyük*[151], and the 7th/8th c. CE Arabic *hamam* structure in sector n-s/14-16 on top of the *höyük*.[152] Domestic contexts similar to those retrieved by Goell in the 1960s were also found by Özgüç and her team.[153] Interesting finds attributed to the 12th c. CE Crusader County period include a so-called 'crusader relief' in limestone representing a lion and a warrior.[154] In layer I, Goell and Özgüç unearthed an elaborate 'citadel residence' with a courtyard plan.[155] After the destruction, the town was largely abandoned, although the presence of a village at the foot of the *höyük* is already attested for the 16th century, under the rule of Ottoman emperor Selim I, and probably continued into the village observed by Von Moltke and others in the 19th century (see the previous paragraph).[156]

1.6 Introduction to the history and archaeology of the kingdom of Commagene (ca. 2nd c. BCE – 1st c. CE)

Following this general historical overview of Samosata's history and archaeology is a brief introduction to the history and archaeology of Commagene from ca. the 2nd c. BCE until the 1st c. CE, thus familiarizing the reader with the specific archaeological and historical context of the Late-Hellenistic kingdom of which Samosata was the capital. This chronological overview of key events and key archaeological sites functions as a stepping stone to the more critical discussion of its historiography in the next chapter, especially regarding Commagene's 1st c. BCE cultural dynamics and transformations, an issue that is central to the research questions of this dissertation and further developed in chapter 2 and 3.

[150] Özgüç 2009, 10-11, 133, plan 5; pl. 22, 62-63; pl. 23, 64-65; pl. 24, 66; pl. 20, 58, 59; pl. 21, 60.
[151] *Idem*, 9-10, 132, plan 4.
[152] *Idem*, 11, pl. 24, 67, pl. 25, 58. Plan 7; pl. 70, 162; pl. 25, 69.; pl. 26, 70.
[153] *Idem*, 11.
[154] *Idem*, 12; pl. 27, 73, pl. 28, 74-76.
[155] Goell 1974, 96
[156] Özgüç 2009, 6.

Fig. 1.9. Map of Asia Minor and Syria with the political situation in the 1st c. BCE. Note that under most of the reign of Antiochos I (ca. 69-36 BCE) Commagene extended further south and included Zeugma and Doliche. Figure by Carole Raddato (19-08-2000, Wikipedia Creative Commons).

The archaeological, historical and epigraphical record of Commagene is like a photograph with a very shallow 'depth of field'; only a small portion of the kingdom's history and social strata is in focus, while all the rest is blurred at best. The paper thin sheet that is relatively well known belongs almost solely to the reign of king Antiochos I (ca. 69 – ca. 36 BCE), and consists particularly of the archaeology and epigraphy found in relation to its so-called *hierothesia* (tomb sanctuaries) and *temene* (sanctuaries), constructed as part of the king's ruler cult.[157] For the period before the reign of Antiochos I we are dependent on a very scanty record.[158] In the 2nd c. BCE, Commagene seems to have developed as an independent state during the period's increasing disintegration of the Seleucid Empire, with the Seleucid *epistates* Ptolemaeus (ca. 163 – ca. 130 BCE) succeeding in

[157] A problem already considered by Blömer 2012, 98: '*Apart from the restricted royal perspective on the land, our knowledge of Commagene is extremely vague. Little is known about the king's predecessors and his successors alike. Sources on everyday life, culture and society in the Late-Hellenistic and early Roman periods hardly exist*'. See also Versluys 2017a, 137–141, 172–184. I am aware that the applicability of the term 'ruler cult' to the religious context of late-Hellenistic Commagene is contested, cf. De Jong 2021. It is however not within the capacities of the present author, nor the scope of this dissertation, to elaborate on this issue here further.

[158] I rely here heavily on Margherita Facella's 2006 monograph on the Orontid dynasty, cf. Facella 2006. For an overview of the available primary sources for Commagene (mostly later Roman sources such as Tacitus, Cicero, Plutarch, Appian, Flavius Josephus and Cassius Dio), see Sullivan 1978; Facella 2006, 425-433 and Speidel 2009.

achieving autonomy and becoming the kingdom's first king.[159] The exact territorial extent of the kingdom at that time as well as in the succeeding centuries is unclear but the Commagenean heartland was definitely located around Samosata, on the west bank of the Euphrates river and further north into the Anti-Tauros mountains (see fig. 1.9).[160] During that period, Commagene was surrounded by the kingdoms of Sophene in the northeast, Osroehne in the southwest, Cilicia in the west and Seleucid Syria in the south. We know very little about the population of Commagene; it is likely that they were an Aramaic speaking people but even this is debated.[161] The rest of the 2nd c. BCE remains largely dark apart from a few numismatic finds attributed to king Samos II (ca. 130-100 BCE).[162]

Under the reign of Mithridates I Kallinikos (ca. 100-69 BCE), Commagene likely gets under the sphere of influence of the Armenian Kingdom of Tigranes II.[163] Through the dynastic monuments of his son, Antiochos I, we know that Mithridates I was married to Laodike, the daughter of Seleucid king Antiochos VIII Grypos.[164] This dissertation argues that the palace of Samosata was commissioned in the early 1st c. BCE, probably early during the reign of Mithridates I Kallinikos (see chapter 4). On the basis of recent discoveries and a new reading of older excavation results, it becomes more and more likely that Mithridates I already initiated something of the beginnings of a ruler cult at places like Arsameia on the Nymphaios and a sanctuary at the Güzelçay.[165]

After Antiochos I succeeded Mithridates I Kallinikos in ca. 69 BCE, the political changes in Commagene and the wider Near East happen in rapid succession.[166] After Roman general Lucullus besieges Samosata in 69 BCE, Pompey strikes a deal with Antiochos I in 64 BCE, during the congress of Amisos in 65/64 BCE when the political organization of large parts of Asia Minor and Syria were profoundly reorganized, *de facto* bringing the region under Roman control.[167]

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[159] Diod. Sic. 31, 19a.

[160] Under the reign of Antiochos I, Commagene briefly also extended further south including Zeugma and Doliche, cf. Strabo 16.2.3; Plin. *HN* 5.21; Tac. *Ann.* 12.12; Hartmann and Speidel 2003, 101ff; Speidel 2009, 566. This either ended after Mithridates II defeat at Actium (Facella 2006) or later, in 17 CE (Butcher 2009). Under Antiochos IV, in the early 1st c. CE, Commagene also briefly included Cilicia. Recently, Blömer has suggested that the Euphrates might have been a less 'hard' eastern border than often thought, cf. Blömer 2017.

[161] Hoepfner 2000, 67; Speidel 2005, 91; Kropp 2013, 358. Kropp 2013, 23 n. 116 points to the Semitic onomastics on funerary stelai from Zeugma, cf. Parlasca 2005 232-235. *Contra* Millar 1993, 452-456. See now Jacobs 2021.

[162] Sullivan; Bedoukian 1985; Facella 2005; Facella 2006, 205-208; Gariboldi 2007; Brijder 2014, 533-562. The cultic program of Antiochos I suggests that Samos II was buried at the *hierothesion* of Arsameia on the Euphrates, where he is also depicted in a large rock relief, cf. Facella 2006, 205-208. Versluys has suggested that it is possible that this merely an Antiochan fiction, cf. Versluys 2017a, 174.

[163] Ehling 2008.

[164] Facella 2006, 209-224.

[165] See *infra*, n.165. See paragraph 4.3.7 of this dissertation for a discussion.

[166] For a detailed historical narrative and a discussion of the primary sources, see Speidel 2009 and Facella 2006.

[167] For the character of Roman power in Commagene see Speidel 2009.

Antiochos I is allowed to keep his throne and even is granted a territorial extension of his kingdom towards the south, including the important river crossing at Seleukeia on the Euphrates (Zeugma).[168] This means the start of a complex diplomatic buffer role of Commagene, crammed between two fiercely competing super powers – the Roman empire in the west and the Parthian empire in the east (see fig. 1.9).[169] Antiochos I plays a seemingly skillful and fairly successful diplomatic role, walking on thin ice by supporting both powers; he calls himself 'philorhomaios' and, in 59 BCE, is awarded the prestigious Roman *Toga Praetexta* by Julius Caesar while, at the same time, he marries away his daughter Laodike to the Parthian royal house.[170] Around 40 BCE, this fine balance is tested severely when, during the Parthian invasion of Pacorus, Antiochos I is accused of disloyalty to the Romans and attacked by Ventidius and Mark Antony, a great peril he just manages to escape by bribing the Roman general.[171]

As mentioned above, the only aspect of the history of the kingdom of Commagene that is relatively sharp in focus is the ruler cult of king Antiochos I. This is due to the high amount of epigraphic and archaeological material, and especially the monumental and elaborate character of its sanctuaries.[172] Throughout the kingdom, sanctuaries (*temene*) were founded that contained reliefs with a more or less standardized inscription and, often, a so-called *dexiosis* scene, with the king shaking the right hand (hence *dexiosis)* of a deity (see paragraph 6.5 of this dissertation and fig. 8.13 for examples).[173] Most of the known *temene* were located in or in the near vicinity of Samosata, suggesting that this area should be considered the religious *Kernland* of the Commagenean ruler cult (see fig. 1.4). Two *temene* were likely located in Samosata while several others were located close to Samosata (Selik, Ancoz).[174] Three larger tomb-sanctuaries in the northern part of Commagene (Nemrut Dağı, Arsameia on the Nymphaios[175] and Arsameia on the Euphrates[176]), contained elaborate monuments and provide us with the most contextual data for Antiochos I's ruler cult.

[168] App. *Mith.* 106, 117; Plut. *Vit. Pomp.* 45.5.
[169] For the complex role of Commagene as an allied kingdom, see Facella 2010.
[170] *Philorhomaios*: Facella 2006, 225-298. *Toga Praetexta*: Cic. *QFr.* 2.11.2-3. *Marriage*: Wagner 1983, 218.
[171] Cass. Dio 48.41.5; Facella 2006, 243-248.
[172] Not limited to epigraphic sources in Commagene alone; see OGIS 405, an honorary inscription for Antiochos I in Ephesos mentioning the king as '*Theos Dikaios Philorhomaios Philhellen*'. See also Fraser 1978.
[173] For the Commagenean *dexiosis* and the interpretation of its iconography, see Jacobs and Rollinger 2005; Rose 2013.
[174] For evidence and a discussion of *temene* in Samosata, see *infra* paragraph 6.5, ID688 ('Sa'), ID689 ('Sy'), ID690 ('Sz'), and ID691 ('Sx').
[175] Dörner and Goell 1963; Hoepfner 1983; Hoepfner 2000; Hoepfner 2012; Brijder 2014, chapter 2. See paragraph 10.5.1 of this dissertation for an elaborate discussion of the site in relation to the palace of Samosata.
[176] Brijder 2014, chapter 2.

Fig. 1.10 The hierothesion *of Nemrut Dağı (East Terrace). Picture by the author.*

Of these three *hierothesia*, Nemrut Dağı is the most monumental and is supposed to contain the grave of the king himself (fig. 1.10).[177] A large tumulus grave on a highly visible location in the anti-Tauros mountain range (at ca. 2206 m. altitude) was flanked on the east and west side by large terraces that contained colossal sculptures of the king enthroned amidst four enthroned deities. Their names are known through a 'Great Cult Inscription'– containing the *nomos* (holy law) with a precise instruction regarding the rituals conducted at the sanctuary and a detailed account of the achievements of Antiochos I, a text largely overlapping with the known inscriptions of the *temene*[178] - depicted on the back of the statues: Zeus-Oromazdes, Kommagene, Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes and Herakles-Artagnes. These 'syncretic', Greek-Persian names resonated well with the ancestral claims made by Antiochos in a large row of figurative stelai that together made up an ancestral gallery; here he claimed descend from Alexander the Great on his mother's side and to Persian king Darius I through his father's lineage.[179] The innovative juxtaposition of these two different cultural elements was consciously explored in the visual style and

[177] For more detailed descriptions, I refer to Brijder 2014.
[178] In the remainder of this dissertation, I refer to the Great Cult Inscription with N (Nemrut Dağı) or A (Arsameia on the Nymphaios) followed with the line number cited.
[179] It is commonly assumed that this 'syncretic' phase of the Antiochan cult succeeded a pre-syncretic, purely Greek phase, exemplified specifically by early *temene* dedicated to the gods Apollo Epekoos and Artemis Diktynna. The related stelai are AD, Cb, SO and Bee. The latter stele is later overwritten by the syncretic inscription BEC, which suggests the proposed chronological distinction. *Contra* Versluys 2017a, 178-182.

iconographies of the statuary and imagery belonging to his cult, with, amongst other things, (imagined) 'Persian' garments and attributes, a 'Greek' understanding of anatomy, and a reduced realism that, in scholarship, is considered more 'Oriental'.[180] Antiochos I explicitly explains his intentions regarding this eclecticism in an inscription on Nemrut: *'the kingdom subject to my throne should be the common dwelling place of all the gods, in that by means of every kind of art I decorated the representations of their form, according to the ancient manners of Persians and Greeks – the fortunate roots of my ancestry*.'[181] This eclectic combination of cultural models could also be observed in the king's epithets, which included both 'Philhellene'[182] and, as mentioned before, 'Philorhomaios'. Many of these very innovating and experimental elements recur in almost the same fashion in other *hierothesia* and *temene* of Commagene and thus show a very centrally planned, completely novel, 'cultic grid' that Antiochos I seems to have placed over the kingdom.[183] It is far from clear whether the *hierothesion* of Nemrut Dağı was actually finished, and in fact there is good reason to assume it was not.[184] Especially the row of unfinished stele and the comparison with the colossal statues of Arsameia on the Nymphaios, which have been rendered in much more detail, seems important evidence for the generally unfinished state of Nemrut. This suggests that soon after the reign of Antiochos I, his ruler cult was not anymore active.

The successors of Antiochos I – especially Mithridates II, Mithridates III and Antiochos III - are again much less in focus than Antiochos I and his ruler cult, and only a handful of data remind us of developments during this period.[185] Mithridates II's tumulus tomb at Karakuş suggests that at least some concept of his predecessor lingered on – a tumulus grave, a *dexiosis* relief, colossal sculptures of lions and eagles - but without the cultic character and elaborate inscriptions, nor the magnitude and innovative eclecticism found in the Antiochan *hierothesia*.[186] Mithridates II supported Mark Antony at Actium but achieved a deal with Augustus and could remain in power, albeit without its southern territories including the river crossing of Zeugma/Seleukeia on the Euphrates.[187] By this point, it is clear that the Roman emperor decided over Commagenean kingship and its succession[188], something especially witnessed with the appointment of Mithridates III (ca. 20 BCE-12 BCE) by Augustus in ca. 20 BCE.[189] About both him and his son,

[180] See the next chapter for a critical discussion of these cultural labels.
[181] N29. Translation from Sanders 1996, 206-217; OGIS 383.
[182] Facella 2005.
[183] See Versluys 2014.
[184] Şahin 1991, 333–341.
[185] For an overview, see Facella 2006, 299-358.
[186] For Karakuş, see Humann and Puchstein 1890; Blömer and Winter 2011, 96-99; Facella 2006, 303-307; Brijder 2014, 206-217.
[187] Facella 2006, 299-312.
[188] For the character of Roman power in Commagene before and after its provincialization, see Speidel 2009. At this point, Commagene formally became a client kingdom. See Braund 1984; Kaizer and Facella 2010 and Kropp 2013.
[189] Facella 2006, 312-314.

Antiochos III (12 BCE – 17 CE), we know very little.[190] In 17 CE, Antiochos III dies and Germanicus provincializes Commagene under emperor Tiberius.[191]

Under Caligula and Claudius, Commagene is again restored as a kingdom and ruled by the great-great-grandchild of Antiochos I, Gaius Julius Antiochos IV *philokaisar* (38-72 CE), who was a Roman citizen and a youth companion of Caligula.[192] Under his rule, Commagene was extended and briefly included Cilicia, and he was known as the richest of all Hellenistic kings.[193] He founded several cities, that he named after the Roman emperors that he was loyal to: Germanikeia, Claudiopolis and Neronias. During the Jewish wars of the late 60s CE, Antiochos IV fought faithfully alongside the troops of Vespasian.[194] As a consequence of (probably unjustified) accusations of collaboration with the Parthians, L. Caesennius Paetus, consul of Syria under Vespasian, attacks Commagene, and Antiochos IV flees.[195] At that point, in 72 CE, Commagene became provincialized and officially annexed by the Roman empire, with a Roman legion stationed from that point at Samosata (the *legio* XVI *Flavia Firma*).[196]

This brief historical overview of the history and archaeology of the kingdom of Commagene shows that especially in terms of archaeology, for this period we lack good archaeological contexts that provide evidence for the periods before and after Antiochos I. Also, we lack contextual evidence for other social strata, particularly for less elevated social domains than that of the Antiochan ruler cult. Both lacunae are probably to some extent explained by a traditional focus on epigraphic sources in the research history of Commagene.[197] In this light, the results from the excavations of Samosata are of great importance. They might not provide a non-royal context, but they do offer contextual archaeological data that transcend the rule and ruler cult of Antiochos I. Crucially, the archaeological legacy data of Samosata allow for a unique diachronic look at the 1st c. BCE cultural dynamics and their transformations through time.[198] In the next chapter, I will provide a critical state of research concerning the scholarly interpretations of the cultural dynamics of 1st c. BCE Commagene.

[190] Facella 2006, 314-316.
[191] Tac. *Ann.* 2.56.4; Strabo 16.2.3, 749; Joseph. *AJ* 18.53; Millar 1993, 52-53; Facella 2006, 316-317.
[192] Suet. *Calig.* 16.3; Cass. Dio 59.8.2; Joseph. *AJ* 19.276.
[193] *Cilicia*: Cass. Dio 60.8.1; Joseph. *AJ* 19,5,1. *Richest of all Hellenistic kings*: Tac. *Hist.* 2, 81.
[194] Facella 2006, 328-331.
[195] Joseph. *BJ* 7.7.1. Facella 2006, 331-338.
[196] Tac. *Hist*. 2.83.3; Joseph. *BJ* 7.219-223. For the dating, see Speidel 2009, 563 n.1.
[197] As argued for by Blömer 2017.
[198] This will be offered in chapter 7 of this dissertation.