

The Cultural Landscape of Sophene from Hellenistic to Early Byzantine Times*

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Abstract:

The paper surveys all available evidence concerning the cultural landscape of Sophene from the Hellenistic to early Byzantine times. The survey includes literary texts, onomastic data, papyrological and epigraphic evidence, and finally archaeological data. Available data shows that the culture of Sophene included many distinct cultural elements: local Anatolian, Iranian, Greek-Hellenistic, Roman, Armenian, and Syrian-Mesopotamian. What is more, from the fourth century CE on, Sophene became heavily infiltrated by Syriac Christianity, which replaced its ancient religions (especially Iranian cults).

Introduction

The goal of this paper is to offer a broad view of the *cultural landscape*¹ of Sophene² from the Hellenistic to early Byzantine times.³ To achieve this goal, I will attempt to collect, arrange and briefly discuss all possible sources: literary texts, onomastic data, papyrological and epigraphic evidence, and finally archaeological data (sites and monuments). These parts will be preceded by a

* This is the third paper out of five (and the concluding monograph) planned by the author's research project financed by the National Science Centre in Poland and devoted to three *regna minora* of Northern Mesopotamia – Sophene, Gordyene and Adiabene (DEC–2011/03/N/HS3/01159). The project is being conducted at the University of Rzeszów under the supervision of Prof. M.J. Olbrycht. See Marciak 2012b and Marciak 2013 (Gordyene); Marciak 2012a (Sophene), as well as my other previous studies on Adiabene – Marciak 2011a; Marciak 2011b; and Marciak 2014.

¹ *Cultural landscape* is understood as a result of the interaction between humankind and its natural environment, following the basic definition of the World Heritage Convention. Another term, *cultural environment* is also used throughout the paper as a synonym (one more term, frequently used in this context in *Altertumswissenschaften*, would be *material culture*, but this term is avoided here due to its materialistic connotations). For instance, the term *cultural landscape* is used in ancient history by Edwards, Gadd, Hammond 1970, 35.

² A short overview of the current state of research on Sophene can be found in Marciak 2012a, 297-298, n. 4.

³ The term *Hellenistic* is usually understood as a period between the death of Alexander the Great and the advent of Rome. From circa 188 (the Apamea treaty) to 93 BCE Sophene existed as an independent kingdom until it was subdued by Tigranes the Great who, however, lost this territory in 64 BCE because of Rome's intervention in the *Third Mithridatic War*. In this light, the end of the Hellenistic period can be dated to 64 BCE. Our quest in turn ends with the collapse of the Sasanian Empire in 651 CE.

short summary of the historical geography of Sophene, as the choice of archaeological sites to discuss is obviously dependent on our understanding of Sophene's geographical location. All in all, it is hoped that this discussion will help us gain a valuable insight into Sophene's cultural environment in its various aspects.

An Overview of the Historical Geography of Sophene⁴

There are quite a number of ancient sources which provide us with information about the territorial extent of ancient Sophene: Greek and Latin geographical and ethnographical texts (Strabo's *Geographika* 11.12.3-4, 11.14.2, 11.14.5, 11.14.12, 11.14.15, 12.2.1, Pomponius Mela 1.53, Pliny the Elder's *Historia Naturalis* HN 5.66, 6.26, Ptolemy's *Geographike Hyphegesis* 5.12.6), Greek and Latin historiographical accounts (Plutarch's *Vitae Parallelae*, *Luc.* 21-36, *Pomp.* 30-36, Appian, *Mithr.* 105, and Cassius Dio 36.53 in the context of the 3rd Mithridatic War; concerning the Corbulo campaigns: Tacitus, *Annales* 13.7, 15.7-17, Cassius Dio 62.19-23; and finally Petros Patrikios, *FHG* 14, Procopius of Caesarea, *De Bellis* 1.21.6 and *De Aedificiis* 3.2-3 in the context of the Roman-Sasanian wars), Byzantine sources concerning the administrative organization of the Byzantine Empire (*Corpus Iuris Civilis – Cod. Iust.* 1.29.5, *Leges Novellae* 31.1.3, Georgios Kyprios, *Descriptio Orbis Romani* 958), and finally Armenian writings (the *Epic Histories* in the first place, abbreviated as *BP* hereinafter). The fact that all these sources come from a span of a few centuries (from Strabo writing by 25 CE⁵ to Georgios Kyprios who completed his work ca. 604 CE⁶) enables us not only to approximately determine the original territory of Sophene but also to sketch the major geopolitical developments in the region until the eve of the Arab conquest.⁷

In the light of the available sources, the nucleus of Hellenistic Sophene was located between the Euphrates in the west, the Antitauros in the north and Tauros Mountains in the south (Str. 11.12.4), that is in the triangle marked by the main course of the Euphrates River, the modern Munzur Mts., and the Tauros range running west-east in today's Elaziğ province; this location agrees with

⁴ See Marciak 2012a.

⁵ Romm 1997, 359.

⁶ Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 67.

⁷ See Marciak 2012a. See also other publications touching (at least in passing) on the historical geography of Sophene: Hübschmann 245-248; Adontz/Garsoïan 1970, 25-37; Hewsen 1984, 349-352, 357-362; Hewsen 1985, 58-64; Sinclair 1989, 134-143; Hewsen 2002a (despite its attractive title, this paper is mainly devoted to 'post-ancient' periods); Hewsen 2002b; Wheeler 2002. See also encyclopedia entries devoted to Sophene: Weissbach 1927; Kessler 2001; and index entries in Garsoïan 1989, 456-458.

the center of pre-Hellenistic *Šuppani*⁸ (who gave its name to the Hellenistic kingdom) and includes the modern Dersim (Tunceli) province, the lower Murat valley (on either side of the river), and the Elaziğ plain (historically known as the Harput plain).

As a geopolitical entity, Sophene was able to expand its territory: westwards over the Euphrates (a very momentary episode attested in Str. 11.14.5), north into Akilisene (Str. 11.14.5, 11.14.12), eastwards towards Great Armenia (Str. 11.14.5: both alongside the Upper Euphrates to include Armenian *Karin* and *Derjan*, and alongside the northern rim of the Armenian Tauros to incorporate Balabtene and Asthianene) and finally over the Tauros into the Diyarbakır region and the upper Tigris valley (Pliny *HN*, 5.66; Plutarch, *Luc.* 24.4-8, Procopius, *Aed.* 3.1.17-27).⁹ However, it was especially the last direction of expansion which turned out to yield more lasting consequences: Sophene's expansion eastwards over the Tauros is attested in Plutarch's *Luc.* 24.4-8 (concerning 69 BCE) and Pliny's *HN*, 5.66 (23-79 CE, and to some extent in Str. 11.12.4 and 11.14.2). Finally (but not before 69 BCE), Sophene's expansion in the east included a considerable portion of the upper Tigris valley as far as the Batman River¹⁰ (east of which the territory of Arzanene was located and could at times be occupied by Gordyene). Sophene's presence in this region could also extend to the beginning of the limestone hills, *Ṭūr ʿAbdīn* and Mazi Mts. south of the Tigris, although it is impossible to draw a straight border line in this region to delimitate Sophene's sovereignty from that of other *regna minora* whose influence is recorded in this region for various periods (Edessa, Gordyene, Adiabene).

Sophene's acquisitions in the upper Tigris valley became closely integrated into Sophene as a geopolitical and cultural entity – the very name of the main province southeast of the Tauros (between the western Tigris and the Batman Su), *Sophanene* (likely to have been coined after the Semitic version of the original name¹¹) is clear proof of close political and cultural ties with the heartland of the Hellenistic kingdom of Sophene. At the same time, starting with Ptolemy at the beginning of the 2nd century CE a picture of geopolitical partition emerges in our sources – out of Sophene as a geopolitical entity, there appear several separate entities, although these are occasionally labeled as just Sophene (Cop'k' in Armenian sources: *Moses Khorenats'i* 2.8; *The Geography of Ananias of Širak* 5.22.2) or belonged to one administrative unit (Justinian's *Ar-*

⁸ See Levy 1965, 307, n. 10; Salvini 1972, 105-107; Forlanini 2004, 410 and n. 30; Barjamovic 2011, 129 and nn. 399-340; and Hawkins 1998, 281-282 in particular.

⁹ See also Hewsen 1985, 72-75.

¹⁰ See Wheeler 2002, 89-90.

¹¹ See Hübschmann 1904, 298; Levy 1965, 307, n. 10; Adontz/Garsoïan 1970, 33-34; Hewsen 1984, 359-360; Salvini 1972, 106; Forlanini 2004, 410; Barjamovic 2011, 129.

minia Quarta in 536 CE, see *Leges Novellae* 31.1.3): Anzitene, Ingilene, Sophanene, Balabitene, Asthianene, and Sophene (matching territorially the modern Dersim and the lower Murat valley).¹²

We learn of two royal cities of Sophene from ancient sources – Arsamosata (the seat of King Xerxes according to Polyb. 8.23) and Karkathiokerta (Str. 11.14.2; Pliny, *HN* 6.26; Ptolemy 5.13.22). Most likely, Arsamosata was the first capital of Hellenistic Sophene, and Karkathiokerta became a new (or another) capital after the expansion of Sophene's borders southeast over the Tauros.¹³ Karkathiokerta later became the center of the province of Ingilene in the Roman and early Byzantine times. Only two other major cities are known in this area from early Byzantine sources:¹⁴ Amida, fortified by Emperor Constantinus II in 349, was located in Ingilene, and Martyropolis, which became an important settlement from ca. 410 and served as the capital of the province Sophanene.

Geographical and ethnographical texts help us determine the original territory of Sophene and its geopolitical developments. In addition, it has been suggested that a geographical location may speak volumes about the cultural affiliation of a given country.¹⁵ In this context, it is interesting to note that geographical texts give us a mixed signal. On the one hand, Strabo sees Sophene as a distinctive part of Greater Armenia (see Str. 11.12.4 and Str. 11.12.3 in particular: Σωφηνή τῆς μεγάλης Ἀρμενίας). Likewise, Ptolemy treats Sophene and Anzitene under the heading of countries located in Greater Armenia (5.13.13).¹⁶ Pliny too mentions two cities of Sophene, Arsamosata and Karkathiokerta and counts them among the famous cities of Greater Armenia (*HN* 6.22). Finally, the label of Armenia is also attached to this region by Byzantine legislations, which name this province *Arminia Quarta* (*Leges Novellae* 31.1.3). On the other hand, both Pomponius Mela (fl. 40 CE) and (again) Pliny (23 or 24 CE-79 BCE, who used Mela as one of his sources) mention Sophene as part of Syria, which itself is understood in a broad sense as much of the Fertile Crescent (Pomp. Mela 1.53; Pliny, *HN* 5.66).¹⁷ Likewise, *Laterculus Polemii Silvii* 93 (list of Roman provinces

¹² See also Adontz/Garsoïan 1970, 32; Wheeler 2002, 89-90.

¹³ Likewise Hewsen 2002b, 128 and Wheeler 2002, 89, 92.

¹⁴ Likewise Comfort 2009, 204. Another city in the region, Dara, was located 30 km northwest of Nisibis; it is mentioned together with Amida and Martyropolis as three centers of the province of Mesopotamia by Georgios Kyprios in his *Descriptio Orbis Romani* 958, but it has never been explicitly connected with Sophene (or Sophanene).

¹⁵ Wheeler 2002, 89-90.

¹⁶ The edition of Stückelberger/Graßhoff 2006 is used here.

¹⁷ Syria and Assyria are frequently used interchangeably in ancient sources (see Nöldeke 1871, 443-468; Herzfeld 1968, 306-308; Rollinger 2006, 283-287, who brings together both old and most recent evidence). In turn, the understanding of the extent of Assyria may also vary – it can mean a specific region of the Near East (for instance, Adiabene in Amm.

dated to 448-449) lists *Sophanene* as a province in the Roman *Oriens* (together with Mesopotamia, Eufratesia, and Hosroene). In this light, Sophene does not really appear as a country which can be easily categorized in terms of broader geographical (and consequently cultural) affiliation. It can be labeled as neither predominantly Armenian¹⁸ nor Syrian-Mesopotamian¹⁹, but it rather appears as a country located very much ‘in-between’, specifically between Great Armenia and Mesopotamia.

Literary Sources

The first important writer who gives us an insight into Sophene’s material culture is Strabo of Amaseia (64 or 63 BCE-ca. 24 CE)²⁰. In his opus magnum, *Geographika* 11.14.12, Strabo reports what became known among scholars as a *Siedlungslegende* for Armenia.²¹ This *Siedlungslegende* is retold by Strabo a few times in his work (11.4.8; 11.14.12; 16.1.24-25; 16.2.5, and 16.1.4 about Arbelos and Arbela), and comes to the fore in the context of the story of the Argonautic expedition (heroic adventures of Jason and his companions, the Argonauts who went to faraway Kolchis to regain the Golden Fleece). Namely, Strabo writes that some of Jason’s companions settled in foreign lands: Armenos settled in Armenia and consequently “Armenia was named after him”, and “of the followers of Armenos, some took up their abode in Akilisene, which in earlier times was subject to the Sopheni (Σωφηνοί), whereas others took up their abode in Syspirtis, as far as Kalachene and Adiabene, outside the Armenian mountains”.²² The purpose of this tradition appears to be twofold. First, it is a typically ancient founding myth which seeks to explain the origin of an ethnos in connection to its famous ancestor (eponym);²³ in this case, it is a Greek mythic ancestor, which also suggests some affinity of a given ethnos to the Hellas.²⁴ Secondly, as the origin of Akilisene, Syspirtis, Kalachene and Adiabene is treated in Str. 11.14.2. under the heading of an ancient story (ἀρχαιολογία) of the Armenian race (ἔθνος), and, what is more, mythic eponyms of these countries are merely presented (and consequently subsumed) as “Armenos’ com-

Marc. 23.6.14-15), but also be used for all territory between the Euphrates and the Tigris (like in Amm. Marc. 24.1.1; 23.2.6). See de Jonge 1980, 263, n. “a”; den Boeft/Drijvers/den Hengst/Teitler 1998, 30-31, n. 2.7 and 148, n. 6.15).

¹⁸ Hewsen 1984, 357-364; Hewsen 1985, 58-60; Kessler 2001.

¹⁹ To some extent Wheeler 2002, 91.

²⁰ Romm 1997, 359-362.

²¹ See Markwart 1928, 213-215; Kahrstedt 1950, 59, n. 7; Dillemann 1962, 118; Marciak 2011a, 181.

²² Jones 1928, 332-333

²³ For such stories with regard to the foundation of Rome and Hellenistic Judaism, see Gruen 1998, 254-260; Hard 2004, 584-588; Mason 2007, 484, 490-491.

²⁴ Marciak 2011a, 183.

panions”, it follows that this tradition is written from the Armenian perspective. That is to say that it presents settlements in other countries as originated from (or at least secondary towards) Armenia. For instance, such an understanding of Adiabene’s origin has been labeled as “Armenian Adiabene”.²⁵ Remarkably, as for Sophene, it is not really included in the list of countries founded by “Armenos’ companions” (unlike its close neighbor to the north, Akilisene). This is actually very striking if we take account of later Armenian sources which perceive rulers of Sophene as members of the Armenian commonwealth. Quite to the contrary, in *Geog.* 11.14.2 Strabo uses an ethnonym, Σωφηνοί, and dates their political sovereignty over Akilisene to the period preceding the mythical Greek foundation of Armenia. In this light, we can suggest that the origin of Sophene is not Armenian in character.²⁶

Another revealing episode about Sophene’s environment can be found in Plutarch’s description of the march of the Roman forces under Lucullus against the Parthian king, Tigranes the Great, in 69 BCE (*Luc.* 24.4-8). The Romans crossed the Euphrates at Tomisa, and upon entering Sophene,²⁷ found themselves in a remarkable countryside which is described by Plutarch in some detail: it was full of pastures for young sacrificial cows, which bore the brand of a torch on their heads, and were allowed to roam freely around, since they were used exclusively for sacrifice to “Artemis of Persia”; Lucullus sacrificed one of these cows to the goddess, as well as a bull to the Euphrates, in acknowledgment of a safe passage (*Luc.* 24.6-7).²⁸ Referring to an Oriental deity by a Greek name is a well-known practice of *interpretatio graeca*,²⁹ and it was the Iranian goddess Anāhitā who was most frequently viewed by the Greeks as a Persian equivalent of the Greek Artemis.³⁰ Furthermore, Plutarch’s description of Lucullus’ behavior corresponds very well with some essential aspects of the cult of Anāhitā: she was seen as the personification of water and venerated near springs and watercourses; bulls were in turn the animals most frequently sacrificed to her.³¹ The cult of Anāhitā was very popular in the Hellenistic East; in particular, Sophene’s neighbor to the north, Akilisene, was famous for its cult of Anāhitā to such an extent that it was interchangeably cal-

²⁵ Sellwood 1985, 457

²⁶ Wheeler 2002, 93-94.

²⁷ Eckhardt 1910, 82; Holmes 1923, 192; Weissbach 1927, 1016; Magie 1950, 344; Dillemann 1962, 117; Sherwin-White 1984, 177; Wheeler 1991, 506, n. 7; McGushin 1992, 171; Olbrycht 2009, 69.

²⁸ Perrin 1914, 548-549.

²⁹ De Jong 1997, 29.

³⁰ Chaumont 1965, 170 and n. 15 on 179; Boyce/Chaumont/Bier 2011.

³¹ Boyce,/Chaumont/Bier 2011.

led Akilisene and *Anaitica*, literally the land of Anaitis (Cass. Dio 36.48.1, 36.53.5; Pliny *HN* 5.83, possibly 6.84 too).³²

Concerning Lucullus' march through Sophene, there is yet another interesting detail that comes to the fore – according to Plutarch, the population of Sophene (like that of Gordyene) was positively disposed towards the Roman legions traversing its territory (*Luc.* 24.8). This disposition stands in contrast to the conviction held by some scholars that Sophene was ethnically Armenian and Tigranes the Great's purpose behind his conquests (including Sophene and Gordyene) was to unite "one people under one ruler".³³ If this had been the case, one could expect to see some resistance in Sophene against the Romans. On the contrary, we do not see about anything like this, and instead we have positive evidence that the cause of the Romans appeared to have more appeal to the population of Sophene than that of Tigranes the Great.

Very interesting details concerning the cultural and ethnical profile of Sophene can be found in Byzantine sources. As we already know, what was known in geographical sources (Strabo and Pliny) and early Roman historiography (Plutarch and Tacitus) by a single name, Sophene (occupying a large territory from the Munzur Mts. across the Tauros into the upper Tigris valley), became partitioned into separate geopolitical entities – Anzitene, Ingilene, Sophanene, Balabitenne, Asthianene, and Sophene (occupying the modern Dersim and the lower Murat valley).³⁴ It is very revealing to observe what terminology is used by ancient sources for these geopolitical entities. The Byzantine legislations (*Corpus Iuris Civilis*, esp. *Cod. Iust.* 1.29.5 and *Leges Novellae* 31.1.3) classify them as *gentes* / ἔθνη. This is a strictly ethnic terminology which shows that the population in these territories were culturally and ethnically distinctive from their neighbors³⁵ – for instance, from those included in the province *Magna Armenia* (renamed as *Armenia Tertia* in 527 CE, once part of the Armenian crown but incorporated into the Roman Empire in 390 CE following the partition of Armenia between Roman and Persia in 387 CE), *Prima* and *Secunda Armenia* (west of the Euphrates, previously called *Lesser Armenia*). What is more, it also suggests cultural and ethnic differences *between these six* territories once belonging to the Hellenistic kingdom of Sophene.³⁶ At the same time, the fact that the six *gentes* are still called just Sophene (Cop'k' in Armenian) in Armenian sources (*Moses Khorenats'i* 2.8; *The Geography of Ananias of Sirak* 5.22.2) may also indicate the existence of some common base (political, cultural, or

³² Dillemann 1962, 117; de Jong 1997, 276-277; Boyce/Chaumont/Bier 2011.

³³ Bedoukian 1978, 12.

³⁴ Adontz/Garsoïan 1970, 27.

³⁵ Adontz/Garsoïan 1970, 26.

³⁶ Toumanoff 1963, 166-167; Adontz/Garsoïan 1970, 27-28.

perhaps ethnic after all) between the *gentes*, despite all their cultural and ethnic differences.

What is more, the leaders of the *gentes* are called satraps (σατράπης) by the 6th-c.-CE Procopius of Caesarea (*Aed.* 3.1.17-27). The institution of satrapies is clearly of Iranian origin; the term itself goes back to the Iranian **khshathrapāvā* (meaning “protector of the province”).³⁷ This office was first used in the Achaemenid Empire,³⁸ with Alexander and the diadochoi adopting it from the Persian administration,³⁹ and it is also known to have been in use under the Parthians and the Sasanians.⁴⁰ Broadly speaking, satraps held power in their provinces, enjoyed some amount of autonomy, but were always subdued to the highest authority of the king (of the kings).⁴¹ This is the case with the Roman satrapies east of the Euphrates. We can infer from Procopius of Caesarea (*Aed.* 3.1.17-27) that the satrapies were not formally parts of the Roman Empire administration, but they acknowledged the suzerainty of Rome: satraps’ offices were hereditary and held for life, but they received their royal-like insignia (golden-purple cloak and boots) only from the Roman Emperor. They also had their own troops, but their foreign policy was under direct Roman control. They paid no regular taxes, but on occasion (throne accession, reign jubilees, military triumphs) they had to offer the gift of crown gold (*aurum coronarium*) to the Roman Emperor.⁴²

The fact that the satrapies were the site of local hereditary nobility of high political autonomy is also confirmed by Armenian sources: rulers of the *gentes* are usually termed *išxans* (*prince*) or *naḫarars* (*nobles*) and presented as hereditary and highly autonomous dynasts, though, in the view of the Armenian sources, they were also members of the Armenian nobility under sovereignty (though frequently only *de jure* and not *de facto*) of the Armenian king.⁴³ It also seems that the princes of Sophene Šahuni, Anzitene and Sopheanene played more important roles than the rest of the nobility of the *gentes*: Sophene Šahuni is termed *ašḫarh* (meaning a *realm*) in *BP* 3.12, which could possibly allude to its

³⁷ Schmitt 1976; Iren 2010, 250, n. 12; Shapour Shahbazi 2012, 132.

³⁸ Briant 2002, 62-67; Olbrycht 2010, 103-104; Frye 1983, 110-113; Shapour Shahbazi 2012, 131-132.

³⁹ Frye 1983, 116; Venetis 2012, 155.

⁴⁰ Olbrycht 2010, 258 (the Sasanians); Dąbrowa 2012, 181 (the Parthians); Olbrycht 2013, 148-149, 196 (the Parthians).

⁴¹ Briant 2002, 62-67.

⁴² Adontz/Garsoïan 1970, 84-88; Garsoïan 1997, 104; Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 41-45.

⁴³ See Toumanoff 1963, 170-179 (with caution); Adontz/Garsoïan 1970, 25-37; Hewsen 2001, 74. For the fact that even this picture of the *de jure* but not *de facto* sovereignty may be treated as at least an oversimplification (if not a biased attempt to disguise the real independence of the elites of the *gentes*), see Garsoïan 1971, esp. 344-345.

highly autonomous status;⁴⁴ Zareh, ruler of Sophanene, is called the *nahapet* in *BP* 3.12; and in *BP* this term means “a senior member and consequently head of a *naḫarar* family”;⁴⁵ likewise, the Anzitene nobility held the office of *hazarapet* (perhaps a civil office, and meaning a *chancellor*) for a few generations.⁴⁶

Armenian sources also shed light on the process of Christianization of the Sophenean territories. The sources mention missionary activities of a number of the 4th-c.-CE Armenian saints: St. Aristakēs, son and successor of St. Gregory the Illuminator, in Cop‘k‘ (*BP* 3.2⁴⁷); St. Epip‘an in Great Cop‘k‘, especially near a place called Mambre on the Mamuşeḷ river, likely to be identified as the vicinity of the upper reaches of the Batman River⁴⁸ (see *BP* 3.14,⁴⁹ *BP* 5.27-28⁵⁰); St. Nersēs in Cop‘k‘ (*BP* 4.14⁵¹, see also *BP* 4.4⁵²). Likewise, *BP* 3.12 recalls Christian “ministers from the palatine church of the royal fortress of Bnabeḷ in the district of Great Cop‘k‘”, which could perhaps be sought in the vicinity of today’s ruins of a castle (known as “Numan Bey Kalesi”) on a hill ca. 1 km southeast of the village Bnabeḷ (located south of the Tigris).⁵³ However, the picture of the spread of Christianity in Sophene as an integral part of Christianization of (Greater) Armenia should be supplemented by sources showing the other possible direction of the arrival of Christianity into Sophene: Edessa and Syriac-speaking Christianity.⁵⁴ It is to this context that various legends about St. Thaddeus belong (e.g. *BP* 3.1⁵⁵), showing close ties between Edessa and Eḡil, the chief city of Ingilene and likely once the site of Karkathiokerta, the capital of Sophene.⁵⁶ Likewise, the traditions concerning Mashtots and his invention of the Armenian script in Edessa for ecclesiastical purposes (e.g. *Moses Khorenats‘i* 3.54⁵⁷) points to the same direction of influence in the implemen-

⁴⁴ Garsoïan 1989, 456.

⁴⁵ Garsoïan 1989, 548

⁴⁶ See Garsoïan 1989, 532-531. See also Hewsens 2002b, 126-128.

⁴⁷ Garsoïan 1989, 67.

⁴⁸ Sinclair 1994-95, 194-195, n. 15; Sinclair 1989, 281-282, 292.

⁴⁹ Garsoïan 1989, 90.

⁵⁰ Garsoïan 1989, 206-207.

⁵¹ Garsoïan 1989, 139.

⁵² Garsoïan 1989, 111.

⁵³ Sinclair 1989, 340-341, 371-372.

⁵⁴ See Thomson 2006b, 97-110. See also Garsoïan 1971, who, emphasizing the autonomy of the satrapies as independent Armenian states, suggests that Christianization could take firm root in the satrapies before the official Christianization of Great Armenia. Therefore, the traditional label of the beginning of Christianity in Armenia (as such) may rather belong to the satrapies and not to Great Armenia.

⁵⁵ Garsoïan 1989, 67.

⁵⁶ Wheeler 2002, 91-92; Thomson 2006b, 107-109.

⁵⁷ Thomson 2006a, 322-323.

tation of early Christianity in Armenia, and the more so in Sophene.⁵⁸ In fact, most of pre-Islamic church remains in this region can be found in the Upper Tigris Valley and especially south of the Tigris (located where the territorial extension of Sophene could reach at its farthest point), and their architecture can usually be labeled as typical of Syriac Christianity.⁵⁹

Onomastic Data

Speaking about the very name of Sophene and its various regions, it has been noted that the names known to us from Greek sources in fact go back to pre-Hellenistic names.⁶⁰

There is no doubt that both Σωφηνή and Σωφονηνή go back to the ethnonym *Šuppani* (**Šuppa[na]*) – a people who inhabited this area in the first half of the 1st millennium BCE and are frequently referred to in Hittite and Assyrian sources.⁶¹ According to Adontz, this correlation is indirect – Σωφηνή is coined after the Armenian toponym *Cop'k'*, which itself is directly derived from *Šuppani* (and the Armenian final *k'* perfectly renders the suffix *-ani*); in turn, Σωφονηνή is formed after the Syriac *Šōphan-āyē* (which is a direct and the linguistically most correct preservation of the *Šuppani*).⁶² Interestingly, Σωφηνή as a region matching the modern Dersim (Tunceli) in the Byzantine period is also known in Armenian sources as *Cop'k' Šahuneac'* (“*Cop'k'* of the *Šahuni*”), and it has been suggested that the adjective *Šahuneac'* may be connected with the 8th-c.-BCE Hittite patronymic *šah-uḫi*, borne by a Hittite prince or a royal family in this area.⁶³ Alternatively, this adjective could also be understood as containing the Persian word *šāh* (a king); consequently the whole construct would mean “*Cop'k' des Königs*” (“royal *Cop'k'*”).⁶⁴

In a similar fashion, the origin of the toponyms Ἀνζιτηνή and Ἰνγίληνη can also be traced back to pre-Hellenistic and pre-Armenian names. *Ingilene* is frequently thought to correspond to the *Ingalave* of Hittite texts,⁶⁵ but this identification

⁵⁸ Thomson 2006b, 100-102, 104-105.

⁵⁹ See Sinclair 1989, 161-196, 230-357.

⁶⁰ See a brief overview in Wheeler 2002, 90, n. 3.

⁶¹ See Hübschmann 1904, 298; Levy 1965, 307, n. 10; Adontz/Garsoïan 1970, 33-34; Salvini 1972, 106; Forlanini 2004, 410; Barjamovic 2011, 129. Furthermore, an attempt to connect *Šuppani* with the name of Mt. Šuppina has not found much acceptance among scholars. See del Monte/Tischler 1978, 368, 559; Wheeler 2002, 90, n. 3.

⁶² Adontz/Garsoïan 1970, 33-34.

⁶³ Toumanoff 1963, 167; Hewsens 1992, 156, n. 35; Hewsens 2002b, 127.

⁶⁴ Hübschmann 1904, 299.

⁶⁵ Forrer/Unger 1932, 89; Toumanoff 1963, 297.

has recently been called into question on geographical grounds, since *Ingalave* was located northwest of the Euphrates.⁶⁶ Instead, *Anganu*, known from one of Tiglath-Pileser III's inscriptions, has been suggested.⁶⁷ Finally, *Anzitene* is clearly akin to *Enzi*, known from Neo-Assyrian texts.⁶⁸

Since we know a number of personal names used by some Sopheneans, we can also undertake an analysis of the onomastic data in order to gain an insight into this aspect of Sophene's cultural environment. Let us start with the names belonging to the royal family described by Strabo.

In *Geog.* 11.14.5 and 11.14.14 Strabo mentions two rulers of Sophene – Zariadris (who together with his colleague from Great Armenia became independent from Antiochos III and assumed a royal title) and Artanes (who lost Zariadris' possessions to Tigranes the Great) respectively. Zariadris (Ζαρίαδρις or Ζαριάδρης) is definitely an Iranian name: it is attested as ZRYTR (ZRYHR) in the Aramaic inscriptions from Sevan and Zangezur/Siwnik⁶⁹, and as Zareh in Armenian chronicles, and its etymology can be traced back to the Old Iranian Zari āθra (“with golden fire”).⁷⁰ The name of Artanes is clearly of Iranian origin too – it goes back to the Old Iranian *Ṛta-namah, which translates as “dem Ṛta Verehrung darbringend”.⁷¹ Additionally, Polybios 8.23 names another ruler of Sophene – Xerxes, who was besieged by King Antiochos IV Epiphanes at Arsamosata. Xerxes is of course an Iranian name *par excellence*, which was particularly popular with Achaemenid rulers (Xerxes I, 486-465 BCE; and Xerxes II, 424/423, but also in the form Artaxerxes with five Achaemenids bearing this name).⁷²

Several personal names belonging to the Sophene nobility can also be found in Armenian sources. Nerseh, prince of Cop'k' Šahēi, is mentioned in *BP* 3.9⁷³ in the context of the reign of the Armenian king, Khosrov (Khosrov III, 330-338 CE).⁷⁴ Nerseh is undoubtedly an Iranian name; its attestation in Avesta suggests the meaning “of manly speech”, “divine messenger”.⁷⁵ Likewise, the name of Varaz (prince of the realm of Cop'k' Šahuni in *BP* 3.12,⁷⁶ contemporary to King Tiran,

⁶⁶ See Garstang/Gumey 1959, 36-39; del Monte/Tischler 1978, 141; Wheeler 2002, 90, n. 3.

⁶⁷ Kessler 1995, 60; Wheeler 2002, 90, n. 3.

⁶⁸ Russell 1984, 180-182; Wheeler 2002, 90, n. 3.

⁶⁹ See Perikhanian 1966 and Perikhanian 1971.

⁷⁰ Boyce 1955, 465-467; Perikhanian 1966, 19-21; Garsoïan 1989, 432.

⁷¹ Schmitt 2011, 105.

⁷² Olbrycht 2010, 969-970.

⁷³ Garsoïan 1989, 76-77.

⁷⁴ Garsoïan 1997, 94.

⁷⁵ Garsoïan 1989, 394.

⁷⁶ Garsoïan 1989, 82.

ca. 338-350⁷⁷) is not only of Iranian origin, but also has a clear Zoroastrian connotation – it translates as “wild boar”, which was one of the divine epithets attributed to *Verethragna*.⁷⁸ Still in *BP* 3.12,⁷⁹ we hear of Zareh, the nahapet of Cop’k’. This name is an Armenian version of the above-mentioned Greek name Zariadris, and goes back to the Old Iranian *Zari āθrā. The next personal name from Armenian chronicles to be discussed is that of Mar, prince of Great Cop’k’, known from *BP* 3.9.⁸⁰ The etymology of this name is not clear; it can be either of Iranian (*Māda- meaning a *Mede*) or of Syriac (Mār: *my lord*) origin.⁸¹ In turn, *BP* 4.4 mentions “the great *prince* Daniel of Cop’k’ ... and Noy, *prince* of the other Cop’k’” (attending the consecration of Nersēs [ca. 353-373 CE] for the patriarch of Armenia).⁸² Both Daniel and Noy are Armenian adaptations of the biblical names - Daniel (דניאל) and Nōah (נוח) respectively.⁸³ Their appearance among names of the 4th-c.-CE Sophene nobility clearly results from the process of Christianization of the region.

Indeed, great popularity of biblical anthroponyms can be observed among Christian bishops from the territory of Sophene who attended church synods and councils – the most well- preserved cases⁸⁴ follow the names of biblical heroes (in the Greek version)⁸⁵: *Symeon* (ACO II.ii.2 § 109), *Noe* (ACO II.ii.2 § 110), *Abramius* (ACO II.v § 24), Ἡλίας (*Mansi*, XI, col. 992); names such as *Cyriacus* (ACO IV.i § 40) or *Cyrion* (ACO IV.i § 131) are also inspired by biblical (New Testament) tradition (the Greek κύριος, meaning a lord, is used in the LXX for the divine *Tetragrammaton*, and in the NT it may simply mean Lord, God, or refer to Jesus, thus the names mean “of the Lord”, “belonging to the Lord”); two other examples are typical Greek names which were frequently used in a religious context (also before the advent of Christianity): *Theodorus* (ACO IV.i.1 § 135, see below) and *Eusebius* (ACO II.ii.2 § 114, coined after εὐσέβεια).

⁷⁷ Garsoïan 1997, 94; Preisler-Kapeller 2001, 38.

⁷⁸ Garsoïan 1989, 422.

⁷⁹ Garsoïan 1989, 82.

⁸⁰ Garsoïan 1989, 76-77.

⁸¹ Schmitt 1996, 692.

⁸² Garsoïan 1989, 111.

⁸³ For Noy, see Garsoïan 1989, 396.

⁸⁴ Many names are badly distorted and consequently their etymology is impossible to ascertain. For a full list, see Garsoïan 1988, 272-276 and Garsoïan 1998, 259-260. One of a few legible exceptions is the name of the bishop of Amida, who attended the first council of Ephesus in 431 CE (ACO I.i.5 § 13): Ἀστέριος (meaning star, starry or the ruler of stars); its background is typically Greek: this name (also in the form Asterion) is attested in the Greek mythology (borne by a river-god, son of Oceanus and Tethys; as well as by the first king of Crete and his son, Minotauros).

⁸⁵ Likewise Schmitt 1996, 692.

Two names of satraps of Sophanene can be found in Byzantine sources. Namely, Procopius makes mention of Θεόδωρος in *Aed.* 3.2.1-9. This is a Greek theophoric name meaning “God-given”, “God’s gift”; this name appears before the emergence of Christianity, but since the 1st century CE has become very popular with Christians regardless of their social position.⁸⁶ Another satrap of Sophanene known to us from *Cod. Theod.* 12.13.6 is Gaddana.⁸⁷ This name is Aramaic or Syriac in origin, and is based on the theophoric (Syriac) element *gaddā*, which simply means *fortune* but can also denote the deity *Gad* (an Oriental equivalent of *Tyche*).⁸⁸ A strictly religious interpretation of this name is theoretically possible on the linguistic level (as a conscious reference to the deity *Tyche/Gad*), but it is extremely unlikely in historical terms – such a person would not have been allowed to hold a high office in Christian Byzantium. Therefore, it is most appropriate to interpret this name as a testimony of the survival of (a rather) secular (in nature) belief in good and (bad) turns of fortune.

Only one name in our onomasticon belongs to an individual of low ranking – *Qardannaea Diane*. The provenance of the name *Qardannaea* is unclear; perhaps one could suggest a Semitic origin. In turn, *Diane* is a Greek name, also popular in its Latin form as *Diana*. Its adoption by *Qardannaea* in addition to what appears to be her native name, clearly shows some amount of Hellenization/Romanization.⁸⁹

In addition to personal names, we know the names of two royal cities of Sophene. First, Polybios 8.23 recalls Arsamōsata (Ἀρσαμόσατα) as the royal seat of King Xerxes (see also Tac. *Ann.* 15.10.6; Plin. *HN* 6.26; and Ptol 5.12.8.). This city name is widely interpreted as formed on the personal name, Arsames, who must have been its royal founder.⁹⁰ The name of Arsames is definitely of Iranian origin; among others, it is attested in the Bisitun inscription for Darius I’s grandfather.⁹¹ More problematic is the case of a royal city mentioned by Strabo in *Geog.* 11.14.2. That is to say: according to Strabo, its name was Καρκαθίοκερτα, but Pliny, *HN* 6.26 and Stephanus of Byzantium, most likely meaning the same city, use different forms: *Arg(i)athicerta* and Ἀρτεσικέρτα.⁹² In turn, in Ptolemy 5.13.22 we read Ἀρταγγάρτα or Ἀρτατιγάρτα.⁹³ Strabo’s form is widely accepted

⁸⁶ Llewelyn 1998, 7.

⁸⁷ Mommsen 1962, 731; Pharr 1952, 382.

⁸⁸ Tubach 2011, 464.

⁸⁹ Likewise French 1986, 279, about the Romanization of Anatolia on the basis of Roman names attested in Amaseia.

⁹⁰ Toumanoff 1963, 281; Hewsens 1985, 59; Schottky 1989, 105; Cohen 2006, 45.

⁹¹ Lincoln 2007, 4.

⁹² Radt 2008, 318, n. 26.

⁹³ Stückelberger/Graßhoff 2006, 556-557.

by scholars and used to emendate Pliny's and SB's names.⁹⁴ However, Markwart prefers Pliny's form, and suggests that it was named after Ἀρκαθίας, or, if the emendation of Ptolemy's form into ΑΡΓΑΤΙΓΑΡΤΑ or ΑΡΓΑΚΙΓΑΡΤΑ is to be accepted, then one can suggest the personal names of Ἀρταξίας or Ἀρτάξης as underlying the city name.⁹⁵ The final emendation is not self-evident, but it is most likely that the city was named after a personal name of Iranian provenance.

Papyrological and Epigraphic Evidence

A few interesting insights into Sophene's cultural environments can be gained from the extant papyrological and epigraphic evidence.⁹⁶

The first piece of evidence comes from an archive of 21 documents (on papyri and leather) which came to light in 1988.⁹⁷ The documents, composed in Greek and Syriac, are dated to the 3rd century CE and come from the middle Euphrates region.⁹⁸ Document no. 9, dated to 13 June 252, is the deed of sale of a female slave, *Qardannaea Diane*.⁹⁹ The text informs us briefly about Diane's background: she was born in the district Ortene, originally belonged to the wife of a centurion of the Legion I Parthica stationed at Nisibis, and was next sold to a villager living in Abourene, and finally in 252 to a resident of Beth Phouria.¹⁰⁰ How does this document contribute to our understanding of Sophene's cultural environment? Nisibis, Abourene, and Beth Phouria are all toponyms which belong to the Upper Euphrates region marked by the confluence of the Euphrates and the Syrian (Western) Khabur.¹⁰¹ Most importantly, the toponym Ortene is known from later, especially Syriac sources, from which we can infer that it was located in Anzitene,¹⁰² and Ortene's population spoke neither Armenian nor Aramaic but had their own distinctive language (see John of Ephesus, *Vitae* 554, *HE* 3.6.14).¹⁰³ This shows that local culture(s) in Sophene could also feature highly distinctive characteristics which defy any strict labeling in accordance with, so to speak, mainstream

⁹⁴ For instance: Manandian 1965, 35; Toumanoff 1963, 131, 301; Dillemann 1962, 117; Sinclair 1989, 416; Hewsen 2001, 37 and many others.

⁹⁵ Markwart 1930, 34, 37-38.

⁹⁶ See also Wheeler 2002.

⁹⁷ See Feissel/Gascou 1989 (Greek documents) and Teixidor 1989 (Syriac texts important for the history of Edessa).

⁹⁸ Feissel/Gascou 1989, 537, 540-545.

⁹⁹ Feissel/Gascou 1989, 559.

¹⁰⁰ Feissel/Gascou 1989, 544, 559.

¹⁰¹ Feissel/Gascou 1989, 544, nn. 44-45; Wheeler 2002, 120.

¹⁰² For Ortene, see Nöldeke 1879, 163-165; Hübschmann 1904, 235-236; Dillemann 1962, 613-614; Luther 1997, 174-175 and n. 288.

¹⁰³ Nöldeke 1879, 164; Luther 1997, 174; Wheeler 2002, 120.

cultural elements (Greek, Roman, Armenian, Aramaic). Furthermore, the adaptation of the nickname Diane by a native of Anzitene also suggests that this local population had to partly adapt to the current cultural mainstream – in this case, to dominant Greco-Roman culture. Lastly, it can also be said that the document testifies to “Sophene’s commercial ties with Nisibis and northern Mesopotamia” in the 3rd century CE.¹⁰⁴

Another item relevant to our understanding of Sophene’s material culture has been suggested by Everett Wheeler¹⁰⁵: a late-3rd-century epitaph from Özkönak located on the northern slopes of Mt. Idis (north of the Halys River and some 60 km north of Caesarea in Kappadokia).¹⁰⁶ The epitaph is devoted to commemorating an Armenian eunuch named Euphrates who spent most of his life in Kappadokia, where he reached some social importance, but who originally came from Armenia.¹⁰⁷ However, it is not exactly known which part of Armenia the eunuch came from. His name indicates that he was born in a part of Armenia located along the course of the Euphrates, that is possibly from Lesser Armenia, Akilisene, Greater Armenia or Sophene. Out of these options, the least likely one is that Euphrates was born in Lesser Armenia, since Roman law prohibited the castration of young boys (a rule not always respected), and therefore eunuchs were usually imported from outside the empire, especially from the Near East, including the area from Mesopotamia to the eastern coast of the Black Sea in the first place.¹⁰⁸ Thomas Drew-Bear, the editor of the epitaph, understood Armenia as Greater Armenia and this is definitely possible.¹⁰⁹ However, Akilisene or Sophene, as suggested by Wheeler, also come into play.¹¹⁰ If Euphrates was born in Sophene, then the Özkönak epitaph can be taken as another example of, broadly speaking, Oriental, but more specifically, Iranian influence in Sophene.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁴ Wheeler 2002, 120.

¹⁰⁵ Wheeler 2002, 120.

¹⁰⁶ See the text, translation and commentary by Drew-Bear 1984 and Pleket/Stroud 1984.

¹⁰⁷ Cooper/Decker 2012, 188.

¹⁰⁸ Drew-Bear 1984, 141; Pleket/Stroud 1984; Wheeler 2002, 120.

¹⁰⁹ Drew-Bear 1984, 141.

¹¹⁰ Wheeler 2002, 120.

¹¹¹ Eunuchs were known in many cultures, but from the Roman perspective this was a particularly Oriental matter. It should be noted that in the Ancient Near East it was the Achaemenid Empire where eunuchs became a fully developed institution at the royal court. See Patterson 1982, 315 and Briant 2002, 268-277. See also Amm. Marc. 16.7.5 for his description of what is considered to be a typical example of how some eunuchs could climb up the social ladder in Byzantium.

Three Latin inscriptions discovered near Kharput also contribute to our knowledge on Sophene's culture.¹¹² The inscriptions were made on behalf of Aurelius Fulvus, the legate of Emperor Nero, in the Legio III Gallica stationed at Ziata in Sophene, and can be dated to 64 CE (as they refer to titles and offices held by Nero, especially to his 11th tribunician power).¹¹³ The discovery of this inscription and its date reveal two things. First, in terms of political history, it shows that after the peace agreement of Rhandeia between Rome and Parthia in 63 CE, Sophene remained within the sphere of Roman interests to an extent that allowed Rome to keep their forces stationed there.¹¹⁴ Secondly, the presence of Roman troops in Sophene and, more importantly, Rome's political protectorate over Sophene even before its full and formal incorporation (as late as by Emperor Justinian in 536 CE), brings up the question of the influence of Roman culture in that territory.

Archaeological Sites

The Upper Euphrates and Tigris region has never been an area that has been well explored archaeologically. Instead, since the 19th century it has frequently been visited by travellers who conducted on-the-spot examinations.¹¹⁵ However, some changes in this regard can be observed from the 1960s – modern archaeology in this region has been instigated by dam construction projects.¹¹⁶ First came the *Keban Project* from 1966 to 1974, whose archaeological surveys and excavations preceded the construction of the dam on the Euphrates in the Elaziğ province (see Map 1).¹¹⁷ This project is of paramount importance to our study, as some of its surveys and excavations took place literally in the heartland of ancient Sophene. Secondly, the *Lower Euphrates Project* (1975-1988) led to the construction of two dams – the Karakaya and Atatürk Dams (see Map 2).¹¹⁸ In this case, only some surveys to the north of the project area (the Karakaya Dam) are relative to the territorial extent of ancient Sophene. Another important ongoing archaeological project in the region is called the *Salvage Project* of the Archaeological Heritage of the Ilisu and Carchemish Dam Reservoirs, and it is the Ilisu Dam Project which concerns the region of interest to

¹¹² CIL 6741 / 6742, 6742a.

¹¹³ Wheeler 2002, 114; Whitfield 2012, 49-50.

¹¹⁴ Likewise Wheeler 2002, 114-115.

¹¹⁵ A good list of modern and (medieval) travellers can be found in Comfort 2009, 277-289.

¹¹⁶ Nowadays the whole project is called "the South-East Anatolia Project", but this name was coined well after the beginning of the first dam works.

¹¹⁷ See Pekman 1970; Pekman 1971; Pekman 1972; Pekman 1974; Pekman 1976; McNicoll 1978; Pekman 1979; Mitchell 1980; Pekman 1982; McNicoll, 1983; Mitchell 1989.

¹¹⁸ See Özdoğan 1977; Serdaroğlu 1977; Pekman/Günay 1987.

us.¹¹⁹ This project is a subject of legal and political tensions because of its ecological and cultural implications. So far, only preliminary reports of the seasons from 1998 to 2002 have been published, and consequently a full assessment of these excavations will remain a future task.¹²⁰

The first important site to take a look at must be Sophene's capital – Arsamosata. It has most frequently been suggested that ancient Arsamosata lies under today's Haraba (see Map 3). To be more precise, there were several villages in the vicinity known collectively as "Arşimşat", one of which is specifically called "Haraba" (meaning "Ruin").¹²¹ It is indeed located near ruins which became the scene of archaeological excavations during the Keban archaeological project (three campaigns in 1969, 1970 and 1973). Archaeological work was in fact centered on the citadel located on a steep hill – it is 46.86 m high and is surrounded by the Murat River to the north and south;¹²² it is not entirely clear where the adjacent city was located, but perhaps to the southeast of the citadel.¹²³ The survey on the citadel was carried out on a very limited scale – archaeologists dug six sounding trenches which revealed the partial remains of walls and towers along the western, southern and eastern side of the site. The uppermost and best-preserved architectural remains are clearly from the medieval ages (the Seljuq period), while unearthed fragments of city walls founded on the original rock were Urartian.¹²⁴ It has also been tentatively suggested by the excavators that some parts beneath the medieval layers could be Roman.¹²⁵ At least one rectangular tower of large blocks fitted without mortar in the southern course of the walls was identified as Hellenistic (see plate 1, trench C).¹²⁶ Furthermore, the survey also brought to light considerable amounts of pottery from various periods including Late-Hittite, Ur-

¹¹⁹ Surveys and excavations preceding the construction of the Cizre Dam are relevant to the study of Gordyene.

¹²⁰ See Numan/Ozturk 1999; Numan/Ozturk/Velibeyğlu 2000, Numan/Velibeyğlu 2002; Numan/Ozturk/Velibeyğlu 2004; Numan/Doonan 2011.

¹²¹ Sinclair 1989, 281.

¹²² Öğün 1971, 43.

¹²³ Sinclair 1989, 112; Öğün 1972, 77 speaks of the lower city identified "on the south side of the city", but the terminology used by the excavators is confusing: they speak about "the fortress of Şimşat" (rightly) and its "city walls" (instead of "citadel walls" or "fortress walls"). See Sinclair 1989, 116.

¹²⁴ Öğün 1971, 45

¹²⁵ Öğün 1971, 45; Öğün 1972, 77.

¹²⁶ Öğün 1971, 45; Sinclair 115. A large mud-brick construction with two columns in front discovered in trench A is also identified by the excavators as Hellenistic (see Öğün 1972, 77). Likewise, in trench D the excavators distinguished three "building layers belonging to Hellenistic, Roman and later periods ... intertwined one within the other in a layer 1.50 meters thick" (see Öğün 1972, 78). Neither identification is confirmed by Sinclair 1989, 113-115.

artian (10-7th centuries BCE), Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine and medieval.¹²⁷ Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine finds include ceramic (predominantly cream-colored ware slipped on its interior and exterior surfaces with a lustrous red glaze-like material, clay ware with grooved interiors and red slipped surfaces,¹²⁸ but also remarkable pieces of the 4th-c.-BCE Attic glazed black pots and Phrygian type vases), glass and terracotta unguentaria, terracotta pots, lamps and plates, and Byzantine crosses.¹²⁹

The evidence brought to light by the Keban exploratory excavations in Haraba can rightly be called “slight and superficial”.¹³⁰ However, it still allows us to reach a few conclusions. Firstly, the evidence shows that the citadel at Haraba and its adjacent settlement was a significant site from Urartian times until the Middle Ages.¹³¹ Secondly, the site was definitely settled in the Hellenistic and Roman periods and was of some military significance.¹³² Thirdly, archaeological investigation on the ground corresponds well to the identification of Haraba as ancient Arsamosata, otherwise formulated on the basis of its geographical location and local tradition.¹³³ Thus, this identification appears to be highly likely. Fourthly and lastly, our slim evidence may indicate some degree of progressing Hellenization of the urban environment of Sophene.

Karkathiokerta was another capital of Sophene, apparently established in a more central position for a recently expanded kingdom. Unfortunately, it has never been subject to archaeological excavations, and our entire knowledge about Eḡil comes from on-the-spot examinations (see Map 4). The site of archaeological interest includes the citadel and the nearby tombs. The citadel is located on a steep and rocky prominence above one of Tigris’ gorges, as a result giving the citadel a dominant position overlooking the west bank of the Tigris; it is also located not far from the nearby route from Tomisa to Amida.¹³⁴ Considerable remains of the citadel walls are preserved and run along the citadel’s rim – they present a hardly identifiable mixture of layers now, but most of the walls appear to be Kurdish in their present shape.¹³⁵ However, older layers can also be detected (Inalid or Artukid); particularly, there is a considerable amount of reused Hellenistic masonry.¹³⁶ Beneath the citadel’s southeast-

¹²⁷ Öğün 1971, 43-46; Öğün 1972, 77-78; Öğün 1979, 29-32.

¹²⁸ Öğün 1979, 30.

¹²⁹ Öğün 1971, 44, 46; Öğün 1972, 77-78; Öğün 1979, 29-32.

¹³⁰ Howard-Johnston 1983, 248.

¹³¹ Likewise Howard-Johnston 1983, 247.

¹³² Öğün 1971, 46.

¹³³ Öğün 1971, 46.

¹³⁴ Taylor 1865, 36; Sinclair 1989, 162, 196.

¹³⁵ Sinclair 1989, 198.

¹³⁶ Sinclair 1989, 198.

ern rim is a group of three impressive tombs in a line with conical roofs carved from the natural rock.¹³⁷ Two other single tower-tombs are located in the vicinity.¹³⁸ At present, the tombs are empty, but in the 19th century CE they were still filled with human remains and burial installations,¹³⁹ which, according to local informants, were removed by European visitors at the turn of the 20th century CE.¹⁴⁰ On the western slope of the Eğıl height, there is a small Assyrian relief carved on the cliff face: it is considerably worn-out, but we can definitely make out a figure of a bearded king carrying an axe and wearing a sword; to the left of the figure, there is also a now illegible cuneiform inscription.¹⁴¹

Again, our evidence for the historical interpretation of Eğıl is slim, and at best it can be used to reinforce the identification of Eğıl as the site of ancient Karkathiokerta only in terms of likelihood. Namely, it is located near the Tigris, was inhabited in the Hellenistic period and, due to its geographical location and highly defensible character, must have had a considerable strategic importance. What is more, the existence of impressive tombs in Eğıl corresponds well with the testimony of Armenian chronicles placing Armenian royal tombs in Angł (Epic Histories 4.24).¹⁴² In terms of material culture, Eğıl appears to be one of the typical Near-East settlements which due to its strategic location featured a very long record of continuous settlements. This could in turn mean that its material culture could represent a sort of ‘case study’, and consequently reflect all major stages of geopolitical and cultural developments in the area, although at present we lack substantial evidence to back up this statement.

The Keban archaeological project brought to light a number of sites, most of which are not known to us from literary sources.

Very significant evidence concerning Hellenistic and Roman Sophene comes from two sites located south of the Lower Euphrates (Murat Su): Aşvan Kale and Taşkun Kale (see Map 1). The survey at the site of Aşvan Kale revealed a building complex of the late Hellenistic period (2nd-1st centuries BCE) which was located on the top of the mound and apparently accounted for the center of a village settlement. The complex included a two-storey range of five rooms (three with clay bread ovens) which must have served as the main living quarters of its inhabitants, and a single storey annexe of two rooms designed

¹³⁷ Sinclair 1989, 196, 199.

¹³⁸ Sinclair 1989, 199.

¹³⁹ Taylor 1865, 36-37.

¹⁴⁰ Sinclair 1989, 199.

¹⁴¹ See Wäfler 1976.

¹⁴² Garsoian 1989, 441; Sinclair 1994-95, 196, n. 19.

either to house animals or for storage.¹⁴³ Judging from the relative abundance of finds (fine and course pottery, bronze vessels [e.g. scale pans, hinges of a wooden chest] and coins), the complex served a well-off local family. Most importantly, the settlement was destroyed by fire in the 1st century BCE, and its dating can safely be settled due to the discovery of a coin hoard. Namely, the hoard of 48 silver drachms in a small jar was found hidden in the south wall of one of the most remote rooms of the complex.¹⁴⁴ Only one coin was issued by Ariarathes IX Eusebes of Kappadokia (101-87 BCE); the rest was struck on behalf of Ariobarzanes I Philorhomaioi of Kappadokia (96-63 BCE) in the years ranging from his 26th to 31st regnal years, that is from 71 to 66 BC.¹⁴⁵ It follows that the hiding of the hoard and the destruction of the building complex took place in 66 BCE or soon after.

This spectacular find can help us make a connection between archaeological data and historical records concerning the 3rd Mithridatic War (74 or 73-63 BCE¹⁴⁶) – we know from literary sources (see Plutarch, *Pomp.* 33; Appian, *Mithr.* 105; and Cass. Dio 36.53 in particular) that in the autumn of 66 BCE Tigranes the Great finally surrounded Pompey near Artaxata: Tigranes had to yield most of his conquests, and Sophene (as well as Gordyene) was given to his son, also named Tigranes. However, a dispute between Pompey and the younger Tigranes arose over the opening of treasures in fortresses in Sophene (Cass. Dio 36.53): the treasures were to be given to Tigranes the Great so that he could pay the contribution to Pompey, but those guarding fortresses in Sophene (which was now to belong to the younger Tigranes) would not obey without their new master's order. However, when Pompey sent troops with the younger Tigranes, the guardians still refused to give in to his order, claiming that he issued it under compulsion and not of his own free will. At this, Pompey put the younger Tigranes in chains and gave Sophene to Ariobarzanes I of Kappadokia. According to Mitchell and McNicoll, such fortresses had to be captured by the Romans.¹⁴⁷ Although Aşvan Kale was not a fortress, its destruction can be understood as a one of the “less happy side-effects” of Roman military campaigns,¹⁴⁸ that is as an example of depredation.

After its destruction in ca. 65 BCE, the living quarters on top of Aşvan Kale were rebuilt in the 1st century CE, this time as a building which had the form of a roofed rectangular hall, with two internal columns and a circumambula-

¹⁴³ Mitchell 1998, 92-93.

¹⁴⁴ Mitchell 1980, 40.

¹⁴⁵ Mitchell 1980, 10-11.

¹⁴⁶ For the dating, see McGing 1984, 12-18.

¹⁴⁷ Mitchell 1980, 12.

¹⁴⁸ McNicoll 1973, 186.

tory corridor.¹⁴⁹ Such a structure is definitely inappropriate for domestic or military use.¹⁵⁰ What is more, immediately outside the entrance the excavators found a circular arrangement of river pebbles in a wide paved area and a large deposit of smashed animal bones.¹⁵¹ Consequently, it was suggested that the building was a temple in Iranian mode, perhaps dedicated to Iranian Anāhitā.¹⁵²

Although the excavations on Taşkun Kale were focused on well-preserved medieval layers, a few interesting details concerning Hellenistic and Roman-Byzantine layers emerged from occasional soundings.¹⁵³ In the area known as “the church area” (since a Christian cultic building was later erected in this place) the remains of a building of the late Hellenistic period (1st century BCE) were found; the building was probably rectangular or square in ground plan, with paired walls on the north and south sides (measuring at least 15 m), thus forming a circumambulatory corridor round a central chamber.¹⁵⁴ The material used for this building (carved architectural blocks) was of much higher quality than that used for buildings in contemporary living quarters (for instance in Aşvan Kale).¹⁵⁵ Just outside this building and close to the threshold, a pit cut into virgin soil was found containing a horse’s skull and two hooves.¹⁵⁶ According to the excavators, the building was of a religious character, and the horse remains point to the cult of Shamash or, more likely, to Iranian Anāhitā.¹⁵⁷ Indeed, sacrificing horses in this region appears to be a distinctively (Indo-)Iranian custom¹⁵⁸: in the Persian festival organized by Cyrus, horses were sacrificed to the Sun (Cyr. 8.3.12,24.); according to Herodotus, the Scythians did likewise (*Hist.* 1.216). Horses were also sacrificed to the Sun by commoners in Armenian villages (Xenophon, *Anab.* 4.5.35). The Sun God was frequently understood as Mithra in Iranian traditions,¹⁵⁹ and it was during the *Mithrakana* (the festival in honor of Mithra) that a hecatomb of horses was offered, which were delivered by the satrap of Armenia (Str. 11.14.9). However, we know that

¹⁴⁹ Mitchel 1980, 45; Mitchell 1998, 93.

¹⁵⁰ Mitchel 1980, 45; McNicoll 1983, 48.

¹⁵¹ Mitchel 1980, 45; Mitchell 1998, 93.

¹⁵² Mitchell 1998, 93.

¹⁵³ McNicoll 1983, 19-20, 39.

¹⁵⁴ McNicoll 1983, 23-24. See also Sinclair 1989, 98-99; Mitchell 1998, 93.

¹⁵⁵ McNicoll 1983, 24; Sinclair 1989, 99; Mitchell 1998, 93.

¹⁵⁶ McNicoll 1983, 19. See also Sinclair 1989, 98-99; Mitchell 1998, 93.

¹⁵⁷ McNicoll 1983, 24. See also Mitchell 1998, 93.

¹⁵⁸ Boyce 1975, 151. This is of course not to say that they did not occur at all outside Indo-Iranian culture, for which see Hubbell 1928. What is more, the use of a pit as a place over which a sacrificed animal was killed or as a repository of animal remnants is attested in Zoroastrian traditions. See de Jong 2002, 137, 140.

¹⁵⁹ However, see also Briant 2002, 252, who cautions that “on the one hand, ... in the Achaemenid period, Mithra was closely related to the Sun and, on the other hand, that there was never either formal or exclusive assimilation”.

horses could also be sacrificed in Iranian traditions without an explicit reference to the Sun God (Mithra): the magi sought good omens by sacrificing white horses at the River Strymon in Thrace (Herod. *Hist.* 7.113); similarly, sacred white horses were used by Cyrus to attempt the crossing of the Gyndes (Herod. *Hist.* 1.189), and Tiridates sacrificed a horse as a propitiation to the river god before crossing the Euphrates (Tac. *Ann.* 6.37).¹⁶⁰ This context could indeed point to Anāhitā, a river goddess. What is more, in *Yašt* 5.21 (*Aban Yašt*), horses (stallions) are explicitly listed as a sacrifice for Anāhitā.¹⁶¹ All in all, it is hard to decide unambiguously on the identity of the worshipped deity (Shamash or Anāhitā), but perhaps the presence of water resources in the vicinity of the sacred place could speak slightly in favor of Anāhitā.

In this area, a Christian basilica was built between the 4th and 6th century CE and maintained perhaps until the 11th century; it consisted of a broad nave and two narrow aisles separated from the nave by three stone piers.¹⁶² Architecturally speaking, the basilica represents an interesting mixture of cultural phenomena with a predominance of Christian Syrian influence. That is to say, a tripartite basilica with an inscribed apse is a typical feature of Syrian basilicas (three fragmentary Syriac inscriptions dated to the 10th-13th centuries CE were also found), but the width ratio of aisles to nave (the former being much narrower), and the use of piers (instead of internal colonnades) is typical of early Armenian churches.¹⁶³

The surveys carried out in the Elaziğ district within the Lower Euphrates Archaeological Project revealed more information about ancient Tomisa and its nearest vicinity (see Map 2).¹⁶⁴ Tomisa was known in the Hellenistic and Roman periods as the major crossing of the Euphrates on the route towards India (see Str. 14.2.29 and Polyb. 8.34.13 who both refer to Eratosthenes); the fortress guarding the crossing was located on the east bank of the Euphrates (Str. 11.12.3; 12.2.1)¹⁶⁵ and is widely identified as today's (Tomisa) Kale (also known today

¹⁶⁰ See other references in Tuplin 2010, 144, n. 171.

¹⁶¹ Maspero/Sayce/McClure 1900, 592; Tuplin 2010, 144, n. 171. By contrast, see de Jong 2002, 143 and n. 64 who, having quoted this passage, claims: "even though there does not seem to be direct evidence for horse sacrifice".

¹⁶² McNicoll 1983, 26-31. See also Sinclair 1989, 98-99; Mitchell 1998, 93.

¹⁶³ McNicoll 1983, 48-49.

¹⁶⁴ See Serdaroğlu 1977, 55; Özdoğan 1977, 82.

¹⁶⁵ By contrast, Weissbach 1927, 1016: puts it "auf dem kappadokischen Ufer des Euphrat". Yet, Strabo locates it "on the far side of the Euphrates" (τὰ πέρα τοῦ Εὐφράτου), and from his point of view (placed in Kappadokia) this phrase must mean the left bank. Similarly, Eckhardt 1910, 82; Sinclair 1989, 41, 43; Wheeler 1991, 506, n. 7 and many others.

as Yazilikaya or Izoglu).¹⁶⁶ The hill of Tomisa Kale is a rock-mass of limestone and is about 700 m high, and as a result has a dominant position overlooking the Euphrates and the paths leading to and from the crossing.¹⁶⁷ On the southwestern side of the hill facing the river (at an elevation of some 670 m), there is a rock-cut Urartian inscription commemorating the achievements of King Sarduri II (764-735 BCE).¹⁶⁸ Among others, it mentions the fortress Tumeiški as a guarding post of the nearby crossing.¹⁶⁹ The existence of this inscription points to the use of the Tomisa crossing as late as the beginning of the first millennium BCE.¹⁷⁰ On the top of the hill are remains of rubble stone foundations and wall beds, which suggests the existence of a fortress.¹⁷¹ Additionally, pottery fragments collected from the surface belong to the Roman period, with a small amount dated to the Byzantine period; according to the excavators, pottery finds suggest the existence of a limited settlement (covering an area of about 70x80 m) next to the fortress, although this ceased after the Late Roman period or the Early Byzantine period.¹⁷²

Moving south of the Tauros, that is outside the heartland of Hellenistic Sophene (see Map 5), it is necessary to take a look at the material remains of two key cities in this area in the Roman and Byzantine period – Amida (modern Diyarbakır) and Martyropolis (modern Silvan). Neither site has been investigated archaeologically, and consequently our knowledge is mainly based on surface examination of material remains.

Amida¹⁷³ was fortified by Emperor Constantinus II in 349, and only then became a large and important city in the Roman period.¹⁷⁴ Amida must have profited from the exodus of population from Nisibis after its loss by the Ro-

¹⁶⁶ Eckhardt 1910, 82; Magie 1950, 789, n. 17 and 1099, n. 16; Honigmann 1954, 37; Frankfort 1963, 181; Sinclair 1989, 41, 43.

¹⁶⁷ Serdaroğlu 1977, 55.

¹⁶⁸ Serdaroğlu 1977, 55; Barnett 1982, 347.

¹⁶⁹ For the inscription, see Beran 1957, 133-145 and Salvini 1972, 107-111.

¹⁷⁰ Serdaroğlu 1977, 55.

¹⁷¹ Serdaroğlu 1977, 55.

¹⁷² Özdoğan 1977, 82; Serdaroğlu 1977, 55: “the Early Christiane period”.

¹⁷³ See Gabriel 1940, 85-92; Sinclair 1989, 164-195; Comfort 2009, 283-284; Sellwood 2011, Hamarneh 2012, 1069.

¹⁷⁴ According to Ammianus 18.9.1, it was a very small city (“civitas perquam brevis”) before Constantinus’ construction. It follows that the site must have been refounded by Constantinus, especially as the city appears in Assyrians sources as *Amedi* – the capital of the 9th-century-BCE Aramean state Bit-Zamani – and was the center of an Assyrian province in the 8th century BCE. At the same time, Hellenistic and Roman sources do not mention it until Constantinus, and especially Ptolemy does not know of it. Likewise Wheeler 2002, 93; Gabriel 1940, 87. By contrast, see Baumgartner 1894, 1833, who suggests that it may have been known to Ptolemy 5.18.10 under Ammaia.

mans to Persia in 366 CE.¹⁷⁵ The city, built on a plateau overlooking the west bank of the Tigris (close to its bend), was located at the crossroads of important routes: – from Melitene to Tigranokerta (and further to Armenia via the Bitlis pass), and from Melitene to Nisibis – as such occupied a strategically important position.¹⁷⁶ Not surprisingly, the struggle for control over it played an important role in the Roman-Sasanian wars – the city changed hands several times from the 4th to the 7th century CE: 359 (to Persia), 363 (back to Rome), 502 (to Persia), 504 (regained by Rome), 602 (to Persia), 628 (back to Rome, but lost to the Arabs in 639 CE).¹⁷⁷

Roman Amida was a strongly fortified city – enclosed with a chain of fortified walls and towers.¹⁷⁸ The current shape still includes impressive fortifications faced in dark basalt – a 5½-km-long city wall with large towers (most of which are U-shaped, but some rectangular and polygonal too), another outer, lower wall (*proteichisma*) on all sides except the east one overlooking the Tigris, and a citadel to the northeast (occupying an area of some 8 hectares) with its own wall.¹⁷⁹ The problem, however, is that there is no stratigraphic evidence from Amida, and the dating of the enceinte must be based on (mainly) epigraphic and historical evidence.¹⁸⁰ Historical sources indicate at least two major architectural activities: by Constantinus' in 349 CE and by Justinian (ca. 518-527 CE); as for epigraphic evidence, there are a number of inscriptions from the city walls: a Latin inscription commemorating the rebuilding of the walls under the emperors Valentinian, Valens, and Gratian (367-375 CE), numerous Byzantine inscriptions (both on reused material and found *in situ*) and finally Arabic inscriptions of the 9th to the 12th centuries CE.¹⁸¹ This evidence is interpreted in two different ways: either stressing that the surviving remains are mainly Byzantine but also include later medieval repairs¹⁸²; or emphasizing that the core of today's fortifications is in fact medieval, though based on earlier layers.¹⁸³

Silvan, known as Martyropolis in ancient times, was an important city in the Late-Roman and Byzantine period – it served as the capital of the satrapy

¹⁷⁵ Sinclair 1989, 166; Comfort 2009, 200.

¹⁷⁶ Sinclair 1989, 166; Comfort 2009, 283.

¹⁷⁷ Wheeler 2002, 128; Hamarneh 2012, 1069.

¹⁷⁸ Next to being important in military terms, the city must have had a high cultural profile – an amphitheater is known to have existed in Amida in 504 CE (see Joshua Stylites 76). Parts of the remains of the church known as “the Virgin” can be dated to the 6th century CE (Sinclair 1989, 184-185).

¹⁷⁹ Gabriel 1940, 95-157; Sinclair 1989, 167-176; Pollard 2000, 289.

¹⁸⁰ Pollard 2000, 289.

¹⁸¹ Gabriel 1940, 133-144; Pollard 2000, 289.

¹⁸² Gabriel 1940, 175-182; Oates 1968, 103-106.

¹⁸³ Sinclair 1989, 167-168; Sellwood 2011.

Sophanene and then of the province *Armenia Quarta* in the 6th century CE. It owes its Latin name to the story about Bishop Marutha, who brought relics of martyrs from Persia in ca. 410 and buried them in a newly-built church founded in “a large village” (*karya ‘azīma*); Emperor Theodosius II followed suit by undertaking major enlargement and embellishment of this settlement.¹⁸⁴ However, the military role of Martyropolis was greatly strengthened only by Emperor Justinian who, according to Procopius (*Aed.* 3.2.10-14), doubled the height of the city walls to 40 feet (and briefly renamed the city after his own name – Iustinianopolis).¹⁸⁵ The defense of Martyropolis played an important role in Byzantine-Sasanian wars in the 6th century CE (esp. from 584 to 591 CE);¹⁸⁶ in 712 CE it was conquered by the Arabs, and it reached the height of its importance from the 10th to the 12th centuries CE under the Marwanids and Artukids.¹⁸⁷

Today’s Martyropolis still features the remains of impressive walls with towers. However, several towers and some parts of the walls have been turned into private houses.¹⁸⁸ The extant remains appear to be largely ancient (especially on the south and east sides): “their basic shape, the design of their towers and the sitting of the gates reflect the Justinianic reconstruction of the city, in spite of the numerous repairs which have had to be made in later centuries”¹⁸⁹ (particularly the 10th to the 12th century CE).¹⁹⁰ At the northwestern corner of the city wall (on one of the towers of the gate), a Greek inscription was found,¹⁹¹ which was formerly thought to corroborate the identification of Silvan as the site of ancient Tigranokerta.¹⁹² The inscription is only partially preserved, and commemorates the recovery of his dominions (the place name Νέκρα is explicitly recalled, likely denoting Martyropolis, known as *Np’rkert* in Armenian and as *Mayyāfāriqīn* in Arabic) by a king who, because of the lack of the beginning of the narrative, remains anonymous. The inscription can be dated to the 5th or 6th century CE on paleographic grounds and to the 6th century

¹⁸⁴ Minorsky 1936, 159.

¹⁸⁵ It has recently been suggested that some achievements ascribed by Procopius to Justinian in fact belonged to his predecessor, Anastasius. See Comfort 2009, 42-44, 209.

¹⁸⁶ Greatrex/Lieu 2002, 167-175; Comfort 2009, 302.

¹⁸⁷ Sinclair 1989, 287.

¹⁸⁸ For a detailed description of Martyropolis’ city walls, see Gabriel 1940, 213-220.

¹⁸⁹ Whitby 1984, 179.

¹⁹⁰ Sinclair 1989, 287-289.

¹⁹¹ For the (not entirely clear) location of the inscription, see Lehmann-Haupt 1908, 499; Mango 1985, 95, n. 24; Pleket/Stroud 1985; Sinclair 1994-95, 230, n. 60.

¹⁹² This is a famous but now definitely outdated interpretation by Lehmann-Haupt. See Lehmann-Haupt 1908, 497-520; Lehmann-Haupt 1910, 410-419, 498-515; Lehmann-Haupt 1936, 1002-1003.

CE on account of its grammar and vocabulary.¹⁹³ On the basis of the content of the lacunose inscription, it is now widely assumed that the narrative best fits the events of 588-591 CE: the Persian king Khusrav II was forced to flee to Byzantium because of an internal coup in his kingdom, but, with the help of the Byzantine Emperor Maurice, regained his kingdom; in return, the Romans received from Khusrav II Martyropolis (lost in 588 CE in a pro-Persian rebellion), Dara and Aljnik' (just to name the most important cessions).¹⁹⁴

In addition to Amida and Martyropolis, which themselves had defensive functions, we can infer from Procopius of Caesarea (esp. *De Aedificiis* 2.4.14¹⁹⁵), Georgios Kyprios (*Descriptio Orbis Romani* 910-947 under ἐπαρχία Μεσοποταμίας¹⁹⁶) and *Notitia Dignitatum* (in its list of military officials subdued to "dux Mesopotamiae"¹⁹⁷) that the upper Tigris region became densely covered with a network of Roman forts in the 6th century CE (see Map 5). This picture is in general corroborated by extant evidence on the ground: although many place names recalled in ancient sources remain unidentified, several extant castle-like buildings in the region have been suggested as the remains of possibly ancient (late-Roman and Byzantine) fortifications¹⁹⁸: Abarne (near modern Çermik), Amini Kale (likely ancient *Ziata*,¹⁹⁹ ca. 7.5 km east of Eğil, near the confluence of the Dibni and the upper Tigris), Birkleyn and Dakyanus Kale (both north of Silvan, perhaps matching Procopius' *Illyrisos* and *Pheison*, defending the route across the Tauros to Kitharizon²⁰⁰), Antağ (ca. 35 km north-west of Silvan, likely ancient *Attachas*), Semrah Tepe (perhaps ancient *Samochartha*, ca. 20 km south-east of Silvan), *Rhipalthas* and Hasankeyf (the latter definitely matching the ancient fort *Cepha*,²⁰¹ both on the south bank of the Tigris and guarding north-south crossings), Kale Bozreşa / Hisarkaya and Savur (possibly ancient *Idriphthon* and *Tzauras* respectively, both located south of the Tigris and guarding one of the possible approaches from the Nisibis area towards Amida), Kale-i-Zerzevan

¹⁹³ Mango 1985, 101-104. Likewise Chaumont 1982, 104.

¹⁹⁴ Chaumont 1982, 104-105, n. 94; Mango 1985, 91-104; Sinclair 1994-95, 230-232.

¹⁹⁵ Dindorf 1833.

¹⁹⁶ Gelzer 1890, 46-48.

¹⁹⁷ Seeck 1876.

¹⁹⁸ See Comfort 2009, 208-228, 314-330.

¹⁹⁹ Likewise Sinclair 1989, 269. By contrast, Gabriel 1940, 257; Howard-Johnston 1983, 249 identifies it as modern Eğil.

²⁰⁰ See also Honigmann 1935, 19; Dillemann 1962, 39 (fig. III) and 235-236; Sinclair 1989, 272-277.

²⁰¹ Cepha is known to Georgios Kyprios as a fortress (κάστρον), it is also listed by ND as the seat of "the praefectus legionis secundae Parthicae". And yet we know of the existence of Cepha's bishop, who participated in the Council of Chalcedon, which implies that Cepha must have developed into at least a small town, if not a city. There is some archaeological evidence concerning Roman occupation at Cepha (Roman mosaics and shops) arising from recent excavations, yet these have not been fully published. See Comfort 2009, 204, 270 and n. 557 on 373.

(south of the Tigris and on the route from Nisibis to Amida, perhaps matching ancient *Samachi*).

Speaking about the militarization of the Upper Tigris region in the late Roman/Byzantine period, it is also necessary to mention the existence of a number of Late Roman/Early Byzantine bridges and of a partially traceable network of Roman roads in the region (see Map 5).²⁰² First of all, there is the Ongöz bridge at Diyarbakır (2.3 km south of the old city), dated to the end of the 5th century CE; this bridge served communication lines with areas east of Amida: Martyropolis, Arzen (Tigranokerta), and further on to Armenia (via the Bitlis pass).²⁰³ The Harap bridge is located along the same route – on the Batman (ancient Nymphios) River.²⁰⁴ The ruins of the bridge at Karaköprü, on the Devegeçidi River (18 km north of Diyarbakır), are Artukid in its final shape (11-12th centuries CE), but it must have developed from a Roman predecessor as there is a clearly traceable Roman road (including stretches of paving) between Amida and Köprükoy.²⁰⁵ This road must have continued north-west to the Taurus passes near Ergani.²⁰⁶ Another Roman bridge was located (now destroyed by the Dicle Dam) on the Dicle River near Dibne/Döğner (and known as the Dibne bridge), and likely carried a Roman road (traces of paving were reported by Sykes²⁰⁷) from Amida (through Eğil) to Palu, and so possibly linking Sophene and Ingilene with other Armenian principalities beyond the Tauros (via the Birkleyn pass, 24 km to the east of the Dibne bridge).²⁰⁸ Similarly, the Antağ (Gömeş Perdi) bridge, on a branch of the Kulp River (a tributary of the Batman River) carried a road across the Tauros linking Martyropolis with Kitharizon.²⁰⁹ Another bridge, recently destroyed, was located on the Tigris at Köprükoy (6 km south-west of the junction of the Batman Su with the Tigris) and probably facilitated communication across the Tigris from Martyropolis to Mardin.²¹⁰ It is not certain whether the present medieval bridge at Hasankeyf had a Roman predecessor – if this was the case, it would have connected a

²⁰² See Comfort 2009. See also Algaze's map in Algaze 1991, 219, fig. 10.

²⁰³ Comfort 2009, 52, 60-61.

²⁰⁴ Another Roman bridge, already in Arzanene, is the Şeyhosel bridge located on the Garzan Su 2.8 km before its confluence with the Tigris. The Şeyhosel bridge carried a Roman road from Hasankeyf (located 16.4 km southwest from Şeyhosel) along the north bank of the Tigris to the Roman fort at Tilli/Çattepe (at the confluence of the Tigris and the Bitlis River). See Comfort 2009, 68-71.

²⁰⁵ Comfort 2009, 22-23, 55, 57.

²⁰⁶ Comfort 2009, 57.

²⁰⁷ Sykes 1915, 364.

²⁰⁸ Comfort 2009, 58-60.

²⁰⁹ Comfort 2009, 67-68.

²¹⁰ Comfort 2009, 60-61.

road from Nisibis and Dara in the south to Arzen (Tigranokerta) and further on to Armenia (the Bitlis pass).²¹¹

The Tigris region is known for numerous ancient rock-cut reliefs of monumental size. Most reliefs come from Assyrian times;²¹² however, several can be safely dated to the Hellenistic period or Roman-Parthian times,²¹³ one of which is located in the vicinity of Martyropolis: at Boşat, a village located 12 km north of the city and at the foot of the Hazro hills. This features a man sitting on a rightward-prancing horse and another standing figure to the left (additionally, below the relief is a simple rock-cut tomb-chamber).²¹⁴ It has been argued that these two presentations are independent from each other (as they seem to be carved into two niches of different depths), that is, the standing figure belongs to an earlier relief which perhaps presented a sacrifice scene (at which the standing figure looked at) and was connected with the presence of the tomb chamber.²¹⁵ The horseman, facing half-right, holds the horse's reins with his right hand, and his trousers are loose and have many horizontal pleats; the figure to the left is only partly preserved, and wears a long, pleated robe and a smock-like dress over it, with at least one arm raised forward.²¹⁶ The horseman relief is definitely Parthian in style, and has been dated to the end of the 2nd or beginning of the 3rd century CE,²¹⁷ it is harder to date the earlier relief due to the poor state of preservation, but it does not seem to be much older.²¹⁸

Summary

Our inquiry into Sophene's material and cultural environment revealed quite a number of characteristics which can be tentatively labeled as different cultu-

²¹¹ Comfort 2009, 63-64.

²¹² Ornan 2005, 134.

²¹³ Algaze 1989, 249-250.

²¹⁴ See Taylor 1865, 40; Nogaret 1983, 221-232; Sinclair 1989, 281.

²¹⁵ Sinclair 1989, 281 and Gropp 1989, 122 who seem to have reached the same conclusion independently from each other and in contrast to Nogaret 1983.

²¹⁶ Sinclair 1989, 281. The state of preservation makes all attempts to identify the figures even less than tentative (not to mention the fact that the identification depends on whether we interpret reliefs as independent or a part of one scene). It was Lehmann-Haupt 1910, 420; 1926, 539, who (too easily, one might say) suggested that the relief depicts either Sapor II (Lehmann-Haupt 1910, 420) or Ardashir I (Lehmann-Haupt 1931, 984), or the Roman general Corbulo (Lehmann-Haupt 1926, 539) and a figure embodying Armenia. Nogaret 1983, 231 very tentatively suggests a divinity and a member of local nobility for the horseman. In turn, according to Russell 1987, 106, n. 83: "presumably, it depicts rather the god Mithra or else, more likely, an Arm. Artaxiad king."

²¹⁷ Sinclair 1989, 281-282; Gropp 1989, 122; likewise Nogaret 1983, 230-231.

²¹⁸ Sinclair 1989, 281.

ral elements: local Anatolian, Iranian, Greek-Hellenistic, Roman, Armenian, Syrian-Mesopotamian, and Christian.

The local Anatolian (and pre-Hellenistic) cultural component is first suggested by literary evidence – Str. 11.14.12, who makes the case that the people who inhabited this area were not Armenian in origin – and by Plutarch’s description of a positive reaction of Sophene’s population towards Roman troops (*Luc.* 24.8). In both cases, this element comes to the fore in contrast to any expectation of the existence of Armenian influences in this area. Furthermore, the local Anatolian cultural component is most strongly attested in the onomastic material preserved in later (Greek and Roman) sources. All this evidence suggests that the settlement in this area in the Hellenistic and Roman period could essentially be a continuation of pre-Hellenistic populations.

The evidence for the existence of Iranian culture in this area is overwhelming. It concerns Sophene’s elites and its religion in particular. This is not surprising if we take into account the fact that we find many examples of the spread of Iranian culture among Sophene’s neighbors (in Armenia but also in the countries located more to the west than Sophene: Kappadokia, Kommagene). In the first case, Sophene’s kings and nobility preferred Iranian names for themselves and for their royal cities. They also dressed up and expressed their tastes in an Iranian manner (the Boşat relief). Iranian cults were very popular with both Iranian elites (theophoric Iranian names) and the village population (the Taşkun Kale evidence). It was the goddess Anāhitā in the first place who enjoyed great popularity in Sophene (near Tomisa, likely in Taşkun Kale and possibly in Aşvan Kale). The political institutions (satrapies) and the social makeup (hereditary and autonomous nobles) were also of Iranian character. It is also possible that some other social customs of Iranian origin (acceptance of eunuchs – see the Özkonak epitaph) were firmly rooted in Sophene among the lower classes.

As far as Armenian influences in this area are concerned, it can be said that to some Greek and Roman geographers Sophene appeared to be a distinctive part of Great Armenia (Str. 11.12.3-4; Ptolemy 5.13.13; Pliny *HN* 6.22). Later Armenian chronicles also tend to see the nobility in this area as part of the Armenian political and religious Commonwealth. The evidence of Armenian culture in the archaeological record is, however, minimal (some features of the basilica in Taşkun Kale).

Greek-Hellenistic culture was strongly present in Sophene and particularly concerned the economic levels (see the evidence from the Keban sites and Eğil): a considerable amount of everyday objects of this background are at-

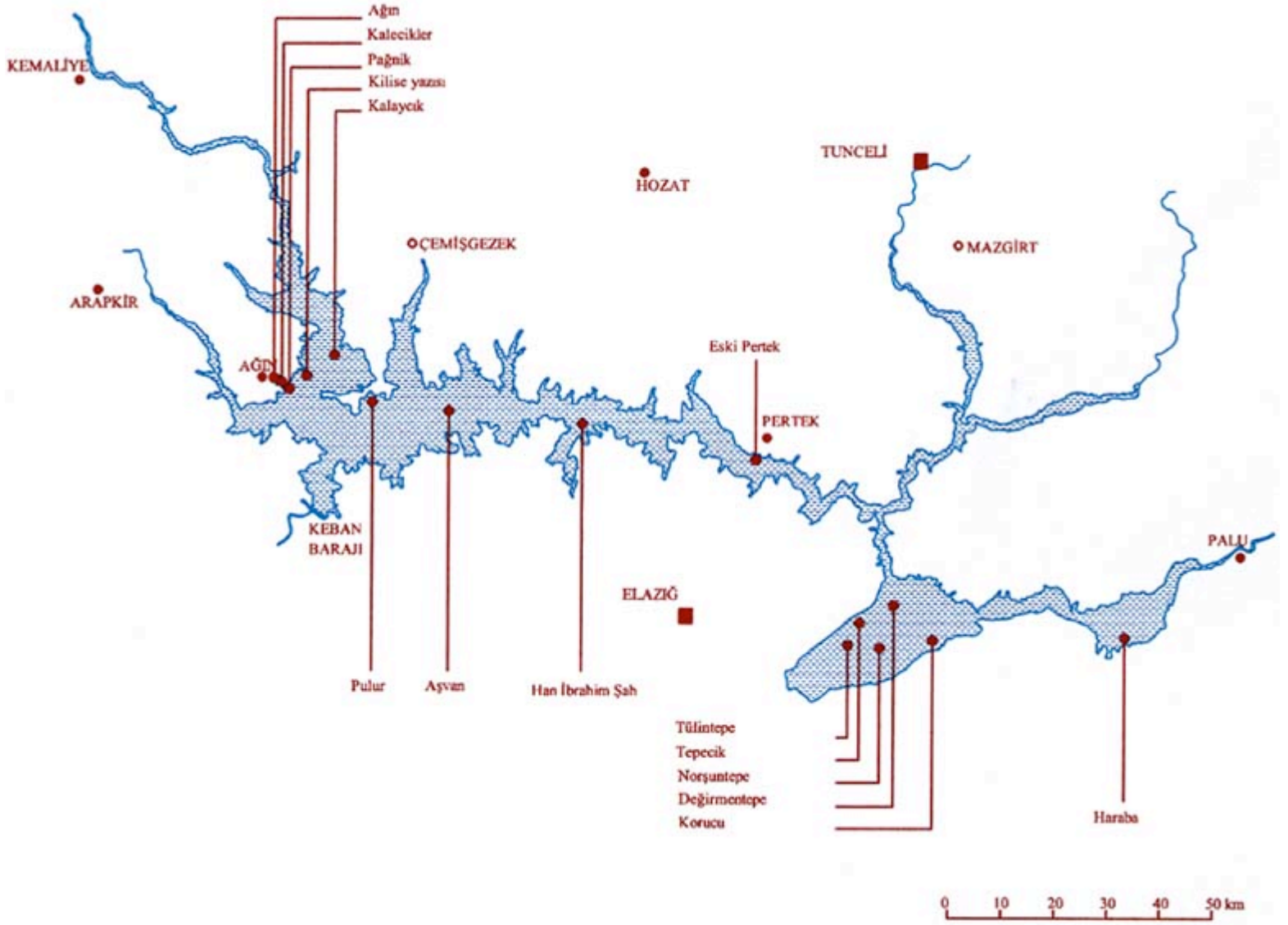
tested in the archaeological record, both in cities and in the rural environment (domestic and military architecture, masonry, ceramic), and the coins used in this area were also Hellenistic issues (Aşvan Kale).²¹⁹ Like almost everywhere in the Hellenistic Near East, the Greek influence brought a fashion for the use of Greek names, language and script (the Martyropolis inscription), and could also be felt in other aspects of 'high culture' (e.g.: the amphitheater in Amida). In turn, the Roman cultural influence in this area (following Rome's political might) made its mark on communication and the military aspects of the material culture: this region became densely covered with a network of Roman roads, bridges and forts.

Especially south-eastern parts of the kingdom of Sophene were geographically exposed to the cultural influences of the Mesopotamian area (Pomp. Mela 1.53; Pliny, *HN* 5.66; *Laterculus Polemii Silvii* 93), which is known as the origin of the highly distinctive cultures of Edessa, Gordyene, Adiabene, and Hatra, to give only four examples. This part of Sophene had close commercial ties with the Syrian-Khabur area (see the middle Euphrates archive), and despite the testimony of Armenian chronicles it seems that Christianity on the territory of Sophene took its origin from Syriac-speaking Christianity and was under its strong influence ever after (traditions concerning St. Thaddeus and Mashtots). Christianity replaced Iranian cults in Sophene, which slightly echoes in the repertoire of personal names of Sophene's elites and is most clearly manifested by the custom (well attested elsewhere too) of building Christian temples in the place of formerly non-Christian sacred places (Taşkun Kale).

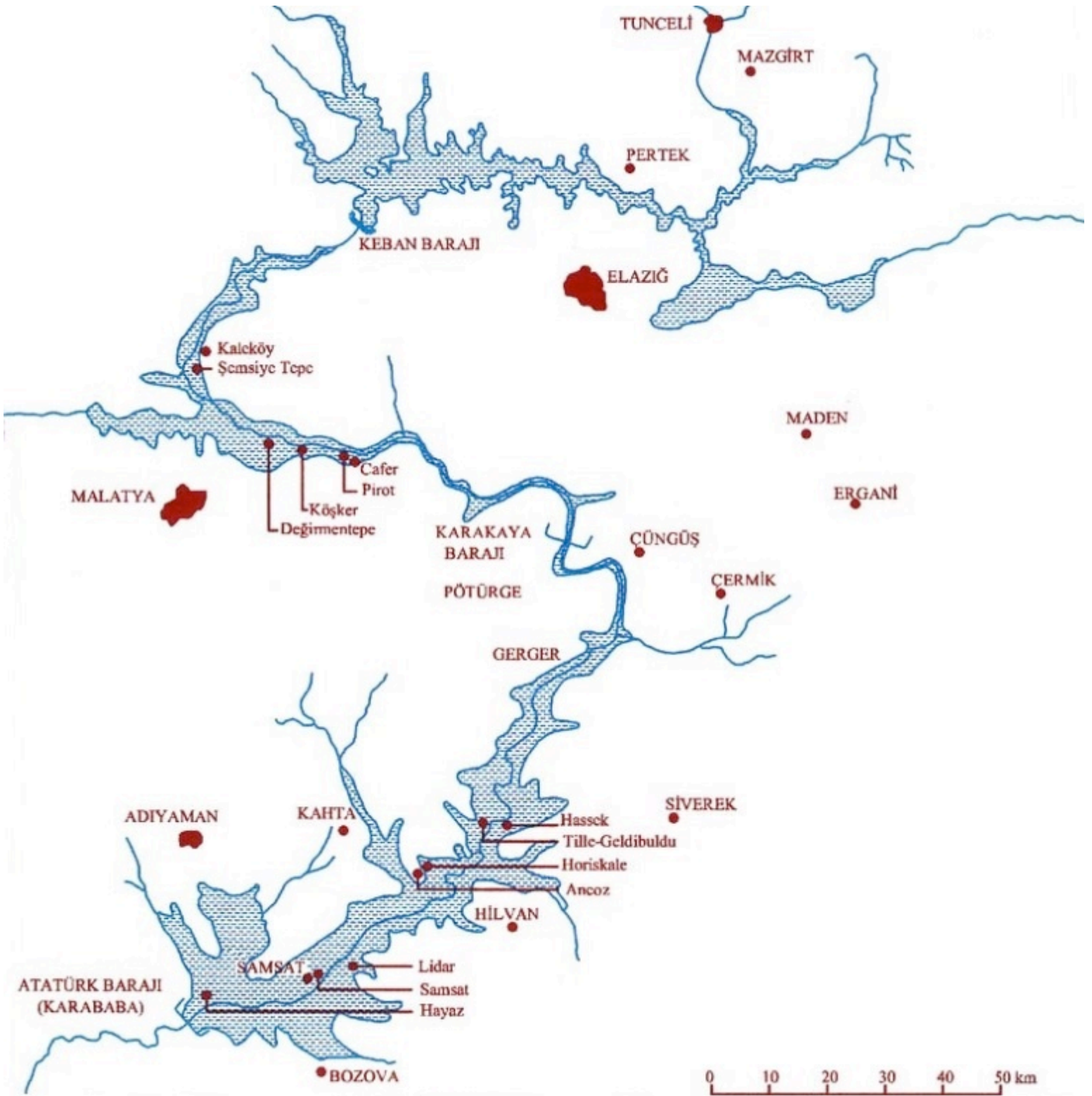
To conclude, a picture of a striking cultural diversity results from our inquiry into Sophene's cultural landscape. Ancient Sophene was located at an important crossroads between West and East (the Tomisa crossing), and consequently its distinct local population was greatly exposed to common cultural influences in the Near East including Greco-Hellenistic, Roman, Iranian, Armenian, and Syrian-Mesopotamian cultures. What is more, from the fourth century CE on, Sophene's territory became a vivid habitat for Syriac Christianity (replacing its ancient religions, especially Iranian cults).

²¹⁹ What is more, several coins have been attributed to kings of Sophene by Bedoukian 1985. However, the numismatic material itself does not directly hint at Sophene and such connections may be suggested only by the comparison with the Nemrut Dağ inscriptions. This issue requires separate treatment. See Bedoukian 1985 and Facella 2006.

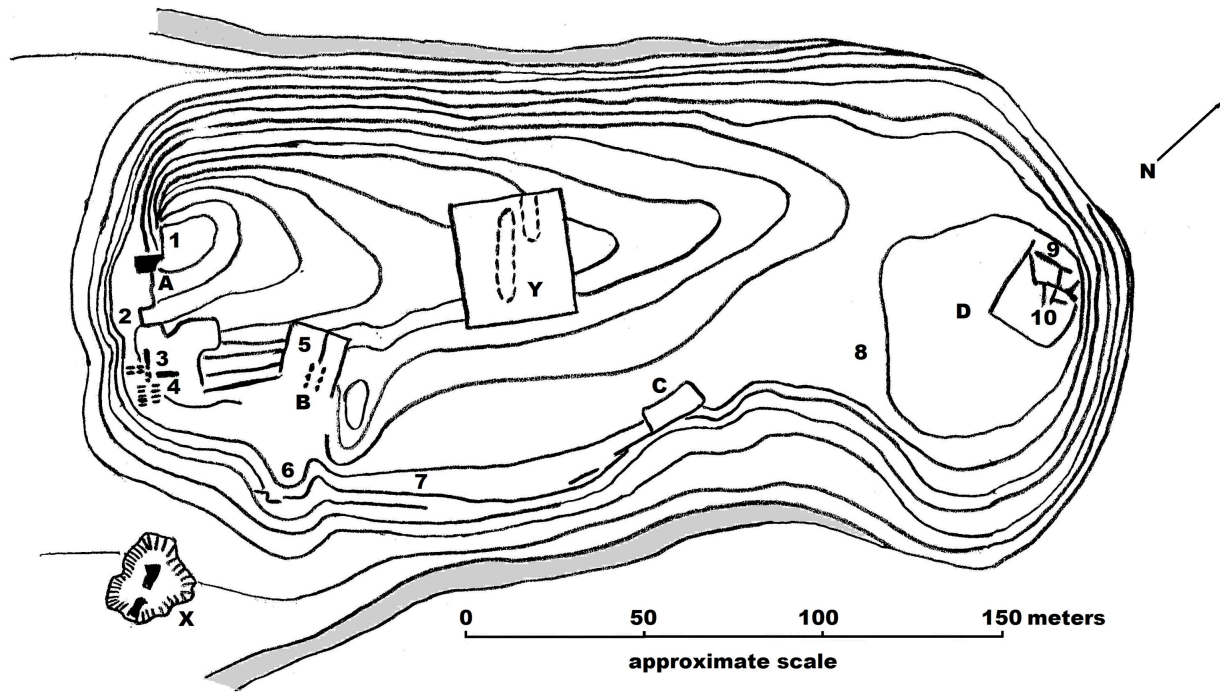
Maps



Map 1: Archaeological Sites of the Keban Project (<http://tacdam.metu.edu.tr/node/81>).

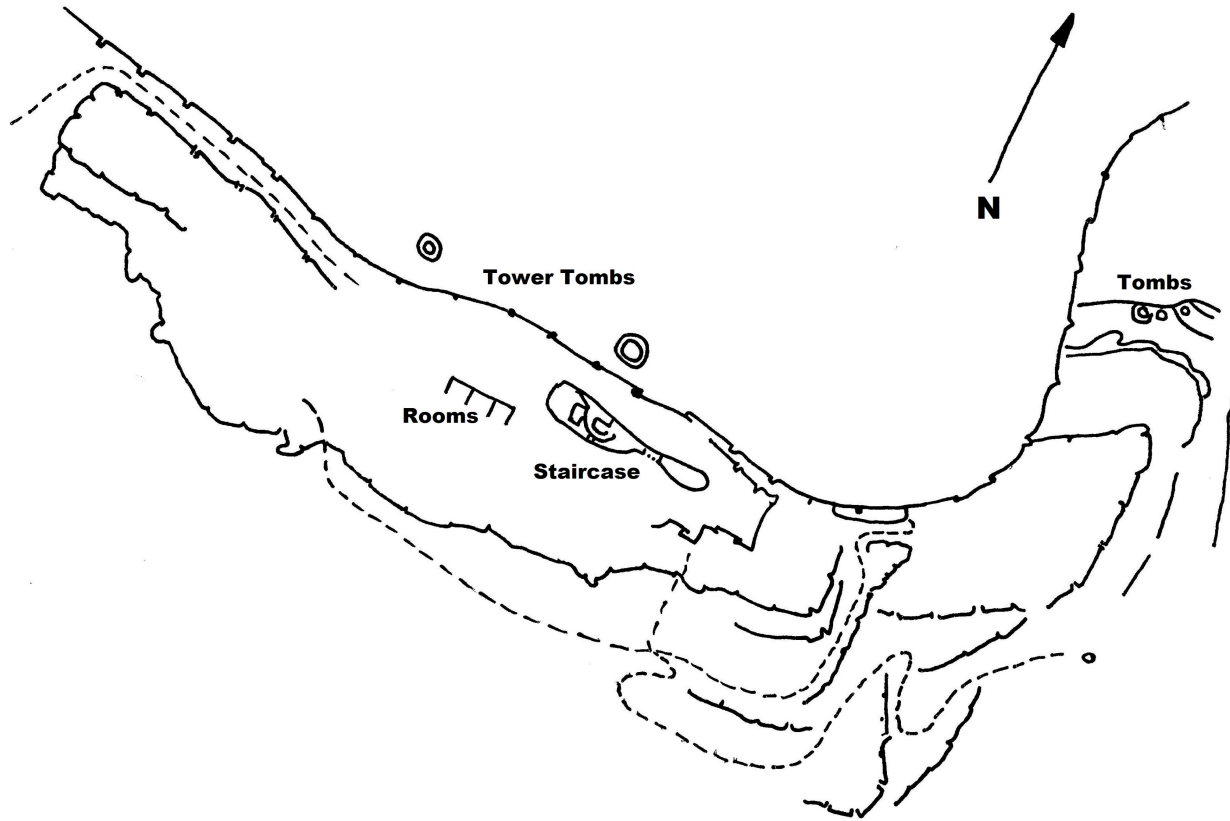


Map 2: Archaeological Sites of the Lower Euphrates Project
<http://tacdam.metu.edu.tr/node/81>.

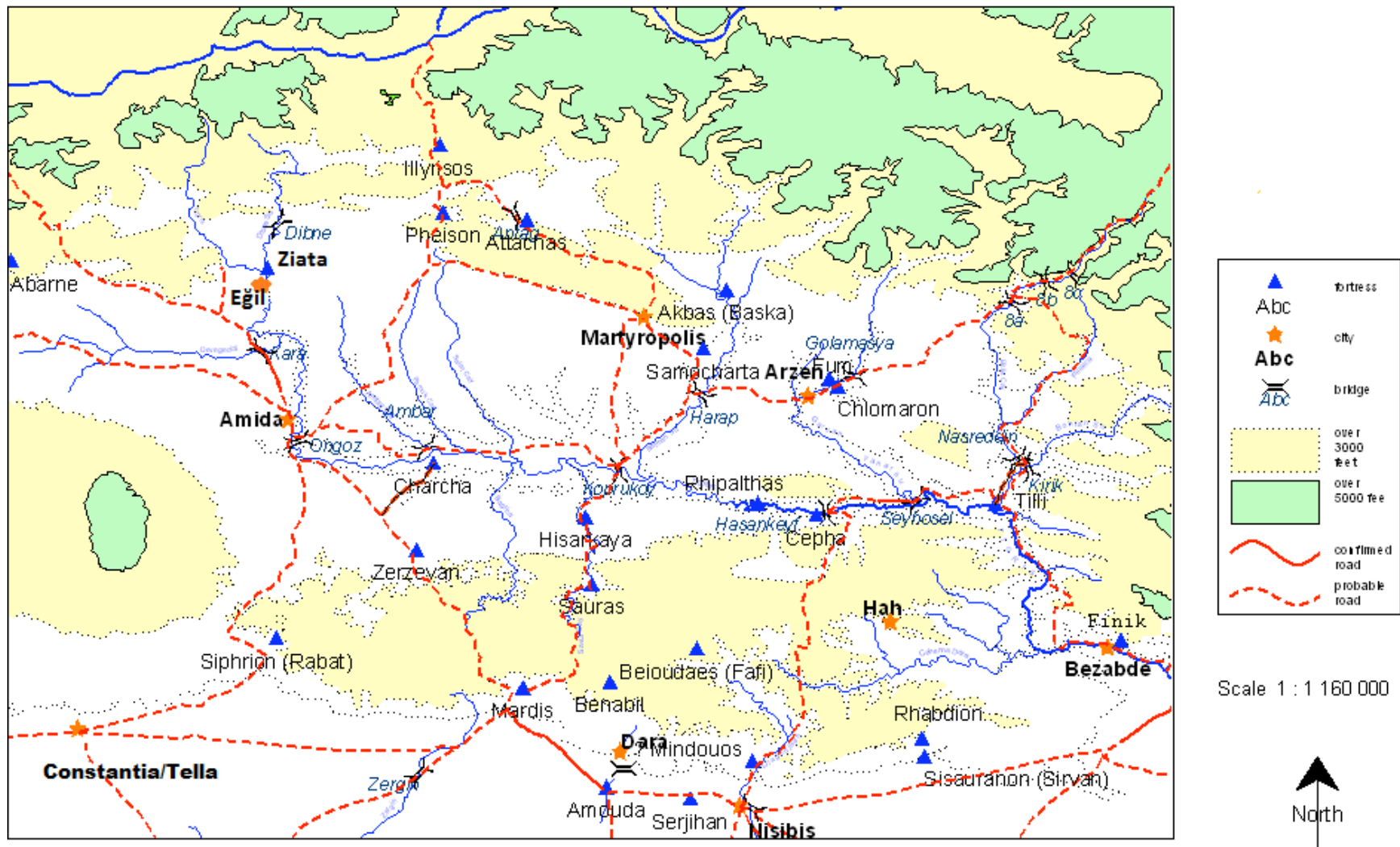


Map 3: Sketch of Haraba – Arsamosata (Own Drawing after Sinclair 1989, 114).

- A, B, C, D, X, Y: trenches
- 1: wall remains
- 2: two levels of buildings
- 3-10: wall remains



Map 4: Sketch of Egil's Citadel (Own Drawing after Sinclair 1989, 197).



Map 5: Sketch of cities, fortresses, routes, and bridges in Roman Sophene (after Comfort 2009, 218).

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