

## Adiabene<sup>1</sup> Emerged from Athura (Assyria)

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Since the formation of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in northern Iraq in 1992 and more specifically after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the KRG and its empowered Kurdish tribal families have amassed great wealth from the sale of oil produced in the region and from the revenues generated by taxes collected at border crossings with Iraq's neighboring countries. This wealth has enabled the KRG to employ the services of journalists, photographers, correspondents, academics and historians to rewrite the history of northern Iraq (historic Assyria) and promote Kurdish studies in line with the Kurdish national agenda.

One such attempt has been in connection to the region of Adiabene (with its capital of Arbela, which is Arbail or Erbil/Erbil).<sup>3</sup>

GAZETTEER Ancient—Modern						Apāk-Aštamāku	
Neo-Assyrian Name	Type	Alternate, Classical, or Modern Name	Certainty	Lat	Lon	Map Grid	Bibliography
Apāk	town	Apāk	3	32°25'N	44°40'E	10	D4 Cole 1998 / George 1993, 50, 55
Apku	town	T. Abū Māriyā	2	36°24.88'N	42°36.52'E	4	B5 Reade 1967, Map, Pl. LXXXVII
Apqu	town	Tel Aḥq	1	32°6'N	34°55'E	7	C4 Survey of Israel
Aprē	river	*Aḥm, *Hrīn	2			2	C4 Forrer 1920, 56; STM, J-37-XXXI
Apsa	village	Apsū, Apsē	3	37°21.85'N	41°10.01'E	3	E3 Lewy 1952, 3
Apsu	city	Apsu(na), *ps, T. Aḥs	3	35°54.32'N	36°48.36'E	2	C6 Hawkins 1995; Kessler 1975, 61; STM, I-37-1
Apsu	town		4	33°19.27'N	44°23.14'E	10	D3 Nashif 1982, 33; TAYO
Aqaba	town	*Aqaba	3	33°32.14'N	42°55.56'E	10	B3 Streck 1916; Parpola*, ONC G4
Aqarbanu	town	Kherban	3	34°39'N	40°50'E	9	C2 Musil 1927; Russell 1985, 64
Arantu	river	Orontes	1			8	B1 RIA, I 139; ONC G4
Aranzai	territory					11	C2 Reade 1995
Aras/Rāsi	region					11	B3 Fuchs 1994, 400
Arbail	city	Arbēla, Arbīl	1	36°11.7'N	43°59.06'E	4	C5 Safar 1947, map; ONC G4
Arbātu	town	Goura Europus, as-Sābiyah	4	34°43.94'N	40°42.88'E	9	C2 Tn II, r. 6; STM, I-37-XI
Arganā	city		3	35°45'N	37°0'E	2	D5 Parpola* /RIMA 3 23:88
Argišṭinili	city	Armavir	1	40°3.96'N	44°6.05'E	4	D1 Roaf 1990, 230; ONC G4
Arbi	district					5	C2 Lanfranchi* /ABL 112
Ariawāte	town		3	36°48'N	40°17'E	3	D4 Parpola* /SAA 1 63
Arbi	tribe	Aššūr-Ḫindānu	2			10	A1 SAA, I 82
Arbi	tribe	mid-Euphrates	2			9	C3 SAA, I 88
Arbi	tribe	Šūpat-Rašappa	2			8	C1 SAA, I 175, 179f.
Arbi	tribe	East of Mā'ab	2			8	B6 Eph'al 1982, 149f.
Ardu (1)	town	T. *Arāda	2	37°0.27'N	40°23.82'E	3	D3 TAYO, I-IV 10; TPC G4B
Ardu (2)	city	Ruwandiz	4	36°37'N	44°31'E	4	D5 Parpola* /RIMA 3 14:15; TPC G4B
Arman	city	see Halmān	1				
Armariāl	district	Plain of Salmās/Šahpūr	2			4	D3 Liebig 1991; ONC G4
Armanāni	town		3	36°35'N	40°25'E	3	D4 Kühne 1980
Arne	town	Arna, T. *Arin, Erin	2	36°8.99'N	37°19.26'E	2	D4 Dussaud 1927, 468; STM, J-37-XXXII
Arpadda	prov. capital	T. Ri'fat, *pā	2	36°28.49'N	37°6.49'E	2	D4 OEA, 4, 427f.; STM, J-37-XXXII
Arqānia	mountain	Ergani				3	C2 Streck 1898-1900, 97
Arqā	city	Arca, Archis, T. *Arqā	1	34°32'N	36°2'E	8	A2 Kessler 1975, 60; Barrington Atlas, 68
Arragdi	town	Bingird	4	35°31'N	45°9'E	10	E1 Fadhl 1983, 76ff.; Speiser 1928, 15ff.
Arrapba	city	Karkūk	1	36°28.84'N	44°23.88'E	10	D1 Roaf 1990, 230; ONC G4

The Kurdish nationalists and activists have flooded social media pages with the claims that Adiabene was a Kurdish region via what they claim as the Kurdish Jewish connection. One such claim states, “*the Kurdish royal house of Adiabene accepted the Jewish faith in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and that when the Jews rose up against Roman occupation in the 1st century AD, Kurdish Adiabene sent troops and provisions in support of the embattled Jews.*”<sup>4</sup> There is not a single non-Kurdish reliable source that links the royal house of Adiabene to Kurds. Only Kurdish

<sup>1</sup> This article was published originally on AINA on October 30, 2007 under the title, *Adiabene was Assyrian, Not Kurdish* where I refuted a claim that Adiabene was connected to Kurds. Additional sources have been added to reflect the undisputed Assyrian heritage of Adiabene and its capital Arbela.

[https://www.fredaprim.com/pdfs/2007/Adiabene\\_Was\\_Assyrian.pdf](https://www.fredaprim.com/pdfs/2007/Adiabene_Was_Assyrian.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Many thanks to Adamu for sharing his sources.

<sup>3</sup> Arbela is also known as Erbil or Arbīl. It was the capital of the Assyrian kingdom of Adiabene, which was part of Athura (Assyria). See Parpola, Simo & Michael Porter, editors. “The Helsinki Atlas of the Near East in the Neo-Assyrian Period”. The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project. Helsinki. 2001.

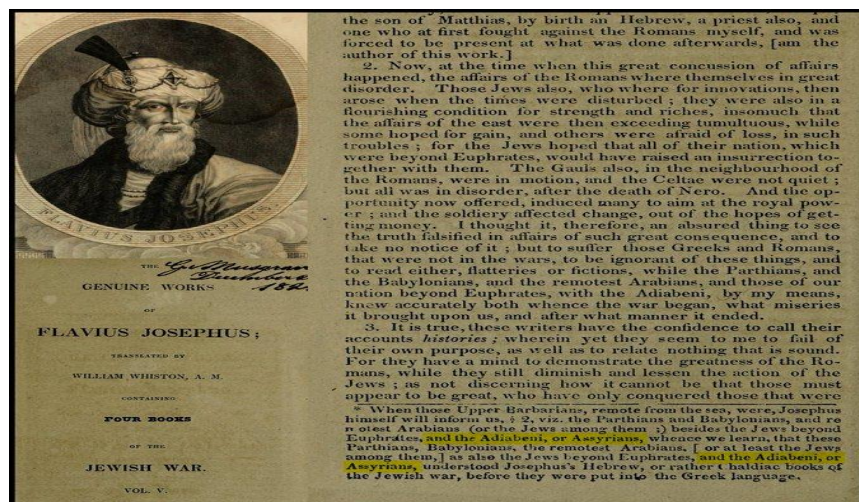
<sup>4</sup> Accessed 6/16/2025 <https://kurdishpeople.org/adiabene/>

writers make the wild claim that Queen Helena of Adiabene and her sons Izates and Monobazus, who converted to Judaism, were Kurdish. But, there should be no confusion at all about the Jews of northern Iraq. The Aramaic speaking Jews of northern Iraq who moved to Israel in 1950/51 are not related to the Kurds.<sup>5</sup> The Aramaic speaking Jews of northern Iraq and northwestern Iran for that matter are very clear regarding who they are. The Jews in and around Zakho (northern Iraq) speak Aramaic and know themselves strictly and clearly as Jews for the same reason that the Kurds know themselves as Kurds: because they know themselves to be different from the others. The Jews did not take a Kurdish language 2,600 years ago; they took the Assyrian-Aramaic language.

Let's consider the facts in the following sources:

1. Ancient Adiabene (Assyrian: ܐܕܝܒܢܐ) or Hidyab corresponds to the area of the “Assyrian triangle” situated between the Lesser Zab and Tigris rivers.<sup>6</sup> Grabowski studied the Batas-Herir relief [which represents the King of Adiabene] that was discovered near Erbil. He investigates the statue's origin and writes that it, may to a certain degree have been inspired by the numerous Neo-Assyrian rock sculptures of the Assyrian homeland. The worship of deities, depicted either in form of statues or divine symbols, by Assyrian kings represented with the “extended-forefinger” gesture was a frequent subject depicted on these monuments.<sup>7</sup> The region of Adiabene expanded and became a petty kingdom that was a vassal state of the Parthian Empire (247 BC–AD 224) in northern Mesopotamia. Its capital was (Arbela; modern Erbil). In the 1st century AD its royal family of the queen mother Helena, embraced Judaism.<sup>8</sup>

2. There is no better authority that describes early Jewish history, including the Royal House of Adiabene, than the first century Jewish renowned historian Flavius Josephus who clearly states that the inhabitants of Adiabene or the Adiabeni were Assyrians.<sup>9</sup>



<sup>5</sup> Accessed 6/20/2025 <https://www.fredaprim.com/pdfs/2024/Kurdish%20Jews%20is%20wrong%20hyperlined.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> MACIEJ GRABOWSKI. ABDISSARES OF ADIABENE AND THE BATAS-HERIR RELIEF. ŚWIATOWIT ROCZNIK INSTYTUTU ARCHEOLOGII UNIWERSYTETU WARSZAWSKIEGO. Vol. IX(L). 2011.

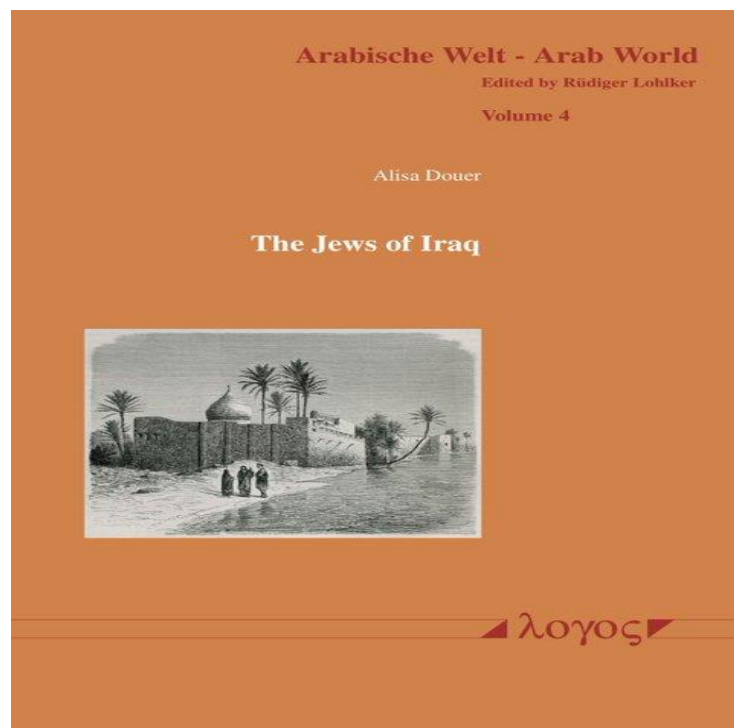
<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Accessed 6/18/2025 <https://www.britannica.com/place/Adiabene>

<sup>9</sup> Whinston, William. Translator. “The Works of Josephus”. Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers Inc. 1999.

3. We are informed that Judaism flourished in the second century of the Christian era in Adiabene, but Adiabene at the time was, and as Gibbon refers to it, "primitive Assyria."<sup>10</sup>

4. Alisa Douer, photographer, author, and PhD in oriental studies, explains, "Christianity came into Iraq (particularly in Assyria) between the 1st and 3rd centuries AD, and Assyria became a center of the Eastern Church. Erbil was an integral part of Assyria from around 2050 BC, becoming a relatively important city during the Old Assyrian Empire (1750-1750 BC), Middle Assyrian Empire (1365-1050 BC) and the Neo Assyrian Empire (935-612 BC), until the last of these empires fell between 612-599 BC, and it remained part of Assyria under Persian, Greek, Parthian, Roman and Sassanid rule. The Persian emperor Cyrus the Great occupied Assyria in 547 BC, and established it as an Achaemenid satrapy called in Old Persian (Athura), with Arbela as the capital. The ancient Assyrian kingdom of Adiabene had its center at Erbil, and the town and kingdom are known in Jewish Middle Eastern history for the conversion of the royal family to Judaism. Its populace then gradually converted from the Mesopotamian Religion between the 1st and 4th centuries to the Assyrian Church of the East Christianity, although the ancient Assyrian religion did not die entirely until the 5th century AD".<sup>11</sup> Assyriologist Simo Parpola explains that Athura is recorded in a loanword from Imperial Aramaic Athur, "Assyria".<sup>12</sup>



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<sup>10</sup> Gibbon, Edward. "The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire". David Womersley, ed. Penguin Books, 2000.

<sup>11</sup> Douer, Alisa. "The Jews of Iraq". Vol. 4. Logos Verlag Berlin, 2017.

<sup>12</sup> Parpola, Simo. "Assyrians After Assyria". Accessed 6/20/2025.  
<https://www.atour.com/education/20000703a.html>



5. It is well established historically that when the heartland of Assyria was back into focus in early Christianity (during the Parthian era and about six centuries after the fall of the Assyrian Empire), "it was with an Assyrian, not a Persian let alone Greek, self-identification: the temple of Ashur was restored, the city was rebuilt, and an Assyrian successor state that returned in the shape of the client kingdom of Adiabene."<sup>13</sup>

## HAGARISM

### THE MAKING OF THE ISLAMIC WORLD

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#### *The Hagarisation of the Fertile Crescent*

Although Iraq thus became a predominantly Muslim country, its fate was still not an unrelenting Hagarisation. In the first place, the surviving Christians remained 'Syrians':<sup>34</sup> despite the early adoption of Arabic<sup>35</sup> and the ultimate disappearance of Syriac as a literary language,<sup>36</sup> Syriac survived as the liturgical language throughout the province and as a vernacular in the rural strongholds of the Assyrians;<sup>37</sup> similarly, despite the total ignorance to which the Nestorians had been reduced, they were in no doubt as to their own non-Arab identity. The coming of the Europeans thus meant the revival of the *Suryane*, and not as in Syria their final disappearance among the Arabs. Where the Christians of Syria were to turn down the label of Arabised Greeks, those of Iraq readily accepted identification as Chaldeans and Assyrians;<sup>38</sup> where the Christians of Syria were to lead the way in creating a modern Arab culture, those of northern Iraq adopted modern Syriac; and where the Christians of Syria were to provide the theorists of Arab nationalism, the Assyrians yearned once more for a polity in Nineveh's fair city and Mosul's fertile plain.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the second place, the converts left an after-image: the image of Assyria projected onto an Arab screen in the case of the Christians, that of Babylon in its Chaldean form in the case of the pagans. The Assyrians had a polity where the metropolitan Christians were above politics, and it is therefore not surprising that only Assyria came through via the Christians. But at the same time the Assyrians shared their ethnicity<sup>40</sup> and the metropolitan Christians were above ethnicities, and it is therefore equally unsurprising that the Christians failed to make their mark ethnically or linguistically in Islam: on the one hand there was no Syrian Shi'ism,<sup>41</sup> and on the other there were no 'Syrian' Muslims.<sup>42</sup> But if the converts failed to retain their civilisation as *Suryane*, they could nevertheless do so as South Arabians; and the Arab Christians of Najran having settled in Najran of Kufa to provide the pivot, 'an Arab from Dayr Qunna' came to mean a spurious Yemeni.<sup>43</sup> The Christian converts thus became Arabs, but Arabs with a difference; and it was as part of this rather different Arab heritage that the Assyria of the converts<sup>44</sup> reappeared. The king of Hatra in northern Mesopotamia was accordingly either an Assyrian,<sup>45</sup> an Arab with an Assyrian title,<sup>46</sup> or simply a South Arabian,<sup>47</sup> and if he was quite correctly remembered to have defeated Septimius Severus<sup>48</sup> and to have been defeated in turn by Shapur,<sup>49</sup> he was also endowed with the more fanciful reputation of having conducted Sennacherib's expedition against Jerusalem in the days of Jeremiah.<sup>50</sup> Likewise the king of Hira in southern Mesopotamia was regarded as an Assyrian or South Arabian,<sup>51</sup> and if the dynasty of Hira was too well-known to acquire Biblical deeds, it could at least descend from Abiqar;<sup>52</sup> while Abiqar himself, though known in Christian Arabic, reappears in his Muslim guise as Luqman the Wise.<sup>53</sup>

#### *The Near-Eastern provinces*

produced practical men in the style of Pachomius or Shenute, but no thinkers, and compared with Syria or Iraq it had only rudimentary monastic learning.

This is not to say that without the Arab conquests Egypt would have seceded from the Byzantine Empire either politically or culturally. It is true of course that the emperor was a figure extrinsic to Holy Egypt, and that the Egyptians insisted on dating from Diocletian's persecution, not Constantine's conversion;<sup>41</sup> but a Pharaoh with only ecclesiastical power, an aristocracy with only Graeco-Roman culture, and temples represented only in the desert were not the components of a viably autonomous polity; and the kibbutzniks in the desert had no illusions as to their need of an emperor in Constantinople to keep the barbarians off. Equally Coptic boorishness was hardly capable of providing the basis of a viably autonomous culture. The characteristics of the Coptic church nevertheless provided the components of a highly distinctive provinciality: an Egypt distinguished from the rest of the world by its peculiar sanctity yet linked to it as an example for mankind – in other words, an Egypt on the model enunciated by the late pagan priests;<sup>42</sup> or again, an Egypt distinguished from the rest of the world by its peculiar ethnicity and semi-active aristocracy yet linked to it as a member of a Graeco-Roman empire – in other words, an Egypt on the model reversed in the late Ottoman period.<sup>43</sup>

Unlike Egypt, Iraq accommodated not one but two provincial identities, the Assyrian and the Babylonian. Both cultures had of course suffered violent destruction on their fall a thousand years before the Arab conquests: as Nabopolassar and the Medes turned Assyria into 'heaps and ruins' in 612 B.C.,<sup>44</sup> so Xerxes razed the walls of Babylon, expropriated its citizens and turned its god into bullion after the revolt of 482.<sup>45</sup> Both identities nonetheless survived, the first under a Christian aegis, the second under a pagan.

This unusual division of labour between Christianity and paganism was a result of the differing impact of foreign rule on the two provinces. Assyria, which had neither the fabled wealth nor the strategic importance of Babylon, had been left virtually alone by the Achaemenids and Seleucids;<sup>46</sup> condemned to oblivion by the outside world, it could recollect its own glorious past in a certain tranquillity.<sup>47</sup> Consequently when the region came back into the focus of history under the Parthians, it was with an Assyrian, not a Persian let alone Greek, self-identification: the temple of Ashur was restored, the city was rebuilt,<sup>48</sup> and an Assyrian successor state returned in the shape of the client kingdom of Adiabene.<sup>49</sup> The Sasanids put an end to the autonomy of this kingdom,<sup>50</sup> but they did not replace the local rulers with a Persian bureaucracy: though reduced

6. In his thesis, Vittorio Cattelan talks about the continuity of the Assyrian people following the fall of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. In one passage, he notes that despite the collapse of the empire, the Assyrians continued to live on their ancestral lands and continued to practice the religion of their forefathers. The same passage notes that the cultural life of the Assyrians was far more superior than that of neighboring peoples, particularly in fields such as literature, astronomy, medicine, mathematics, and history. The author reflects on the Greek general Xenophon, who wrote a chronicle describing Assyrians living along the banks of the Tigris River. He noted that the ancient city of Ashur, then called Kinai, remained prosperous, with many survivors, homes, and monuments still standing. In another section, the author explains how "Assyria" persisted as a geopolitical entity even after the fall of the Neo-Assyrian state, and that its inhabitants continued to be identified as Assyrians. The author states that in the first century AD, a city called Hatra emerged near Ashur and its inhabitants spoke Aramaic. These people worshipped Mesopotamian deities that corresponded to the Assyrian pronunciation of "Ishtar" and the god Shamash. Later, Greek historians who arrived with the conquering forces of Alexander the Great began to call the region of Nineveh "Aturia." He then talks about another post-imperial Neo-Assyrian kingdom known as Adiabene located between the rivers Tigris, the upper Zab and the

<sup>13</sup> Crone, Patricia & Michael Cook. "Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World". Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

lower Zab. In 116 BC this kingdom was conquered by Trajan who converted it into a Roman province with the name of Assyria, and its capital Arbela (Erbil).<sup>14</sup>

Le città principali degli Assiri erano la capitale Ashur, Nimrud o Calah, Ninvea, Arbela, Khorsabad e Harran che erano anche i principali centri religiosi dell'impero. Non vi è alcun dubbio che dopo la caduta dell'impero assiro, i suoi abitanti continuarono a vivere e a praticare la religione dei loro padri. La vita culturale del popolo Assiro era di gran lunga superiore a quelle dei vicini paesi, essa includeva un'ampia produzione letteraria<sup>68</sup> che ancora ci sorprende per la vivacità dei suoi contenuti: la medicina, l'astronomia, la matematica e la storia. Ed è proprio grazie a questa letteratura degli Assiri che conosciamo la storia di popoli altrimenti completamente dimenticati.

Nonostante la distruzione di Ninvea, Nimrud, Ashur e varie altre città ad opera dei Babilonesi nel 612 a.C.<sup>69</sup>, gli Assiri poterono mantenere in vita le loro tradizioni religiose. Nel 401 a.C. un generale greco, Senofonte, al servizio di Ciro figlio di Dario e re di Persia, scrisse una cronaca sugli Assiri che vivevano sulla sponda del fiume Tigri. Osservò che Ashur, che al tempo si chiamava Kinai, era una città prosperosa e annotò che vi erano molti sopravvissuti, e che si erano preservati un gran numero di monumenti e di dimore. Sopravvissero inoltre alcune città dell'area circostante a Nimrud, nota al tempo col nome di Larissa. Senofonte scrisse inoltre di una città chiamata Mapila, nome che secondo diversi autori è all'origine della parola Mossul che sorgeva nei pressi di Ninive. Nel primo secolo dell'era cristiana, una città chiamata Hatra emerse in prossimità di Ashur e sembra che i suoi abitanti parlassero l'aramaico. Questo popolo adorava le divinità mesopotamiche come Ishshar-Bel. ("Ishshasr" infatti corrispondeva alla pronuncia assira di "Ishtar"<sup>70</sup>) e il dio Shamsh. Successivamente, gli storici Greci che arrivarono con le forze conquistatrici di Alessandro Magno iniziarono a chiamare la regione di Ninvea<sup>71</sup> "Aturia." Un altro regno Neo-assiro post imperiale fu Adiabene<sup>72</sup> situato tra i fiumi Tigri, l'alto Zab e lo Zab inferiore. Nel 116 a.C. questo regno fu conquistato da Traiano che lo convertì in una Provincia romana con il nome di Assyria, e capitale Arbela<sup>73</sup> (Erbil).

Il problema di comprovare la continuità storica del popolo Assiro dopo la caduta dell'impero è connesso con la confusione terminologica creatasi lungo il corso dei secoli. Diamo perciò uno sguardo ai due termini Atur e Ashur che costituiscono in un certo senso il nocciolo di tutta questa questione. Autori come Cook<sup>74</sup>, Olmsted<sup>75</sup> e Rawlinson<sup>76</sup> hanno indagato l'etimologia di queste parole. Il termine "Aturia" è stato ritrovato nelle iscrizioni reali sin dai tempi di Re Dario (558-486 a.C.) ed è equivalente al termine "Assiria" che secondo Cook designa geograficamente la regione al

names at various places, for instance on the ruined site of Ashur, for many centuries, but the essential truth remains the same. A nation, which had existed for two thousand years and had ruled over a wide area, lost its independent character." Cf. I.M. Diakonof, *Media*, The Cambridge History of Iran, vol. 2 (Cambridge: The University Press, 1985), 36-148, especially p. 124, where the author explicitly rejects the annihilation of the Assyrians

68 Sulla produzione letteraria assira vedi: A. Jaakko Hameen, *Bibliography of Neo-Assyrian (Post War Period)*, in *State Archives of Assyria*, Bulletin 2 (1988), 73-92; Alasdair Livingstone, *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea*, *State Archives of Assyria*, vol. 3 (Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1989); S. Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars*, *State Archives of Assyria*, vol. 10 (Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1993); idem, *Assyrian Prophecies*, *State Archives of Assyria*, vol. 9 (Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1997).

69 Antonio Invernizzi, *Dal Tigri all'Eufrate II. Babilonesi e Assiri*, Ed. Le Lettere, Firenze 1992

70 S. Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies*, p. XXVI: The word "Ishtar" is translated as "it is the spirit of God, who, residing in the heart of the prophet, spirits him and speaks through his or her lips"

71 Cf. E. Hertzfeld, *The Persian Empire* (Wiesbaden: 1968), 305.

72 *American Encyclopedia*, art. Adiabene (1982) II, p.166.

73 Cf. Paulys *Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, (Wiesbaden: 1983)

74 J.M.Cook, *The Rise of the Achaemenids and the Establishment of their Empire*, *Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: The University Press, 1985), 200-291.

75 A.T.E. Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948).

76 G. Rawlinson, *The History of Herodotus* (New York: 1859).

<sup>14</sup> Vittorio Cattelan. "Il monastero di Gabriel Mor nella regione di Tur Abdin come caso simbolo di intolleranza religiosa in Turchia" (Mor Gabriel Monastery in Tur Abdin Region as a Symbolic Case of Religious Intolerance in Türkiye). Thesis. In Corso di Laurea magistrale (ordinamento ex D.M. 270/2004) in Lingue e istituzioni economico giuridiche del Mediterraneo. Administered by Prof. Giampiero Bellingeri & Matthias Kappler. University of Ca'Foscari, Venice.



7. The Jewish Encyclopedia agrees with the above where it states: “Trajan invaded Adiabene, and made it part of the Roman province of Assyria; under Hadrian in 117, however, Rome gave up possession of Assyria, Mesopotamia, and Armenia.”<sup>15</sup>



*Courtesy of Maps of the Armenian Empire of Tigranes*<sup>16</sup>

8. Archeologists tell us that Erbil is ranked as the most important royal residence and sacral center of the ‘Land of Aššur’ and its reconstructed pattern and size confirm its remarkable position among Assyrian royal capitals. After the fall of the Assyrian Empire, Erbil retained the status of a regional capital and its extensive Assyrian fortification, albeit possibly in a ruined state, sustained the structuring principle of the city. Adiabene (Hidyab), a region bounded by the rivers Tigris, Great and Little Zabs and Zagros Piedmonts, whose traditional capital was Erbil, used to be a very stable, historical administrative unit whose boundaries may have been established as early as in the 11<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>17</sup>

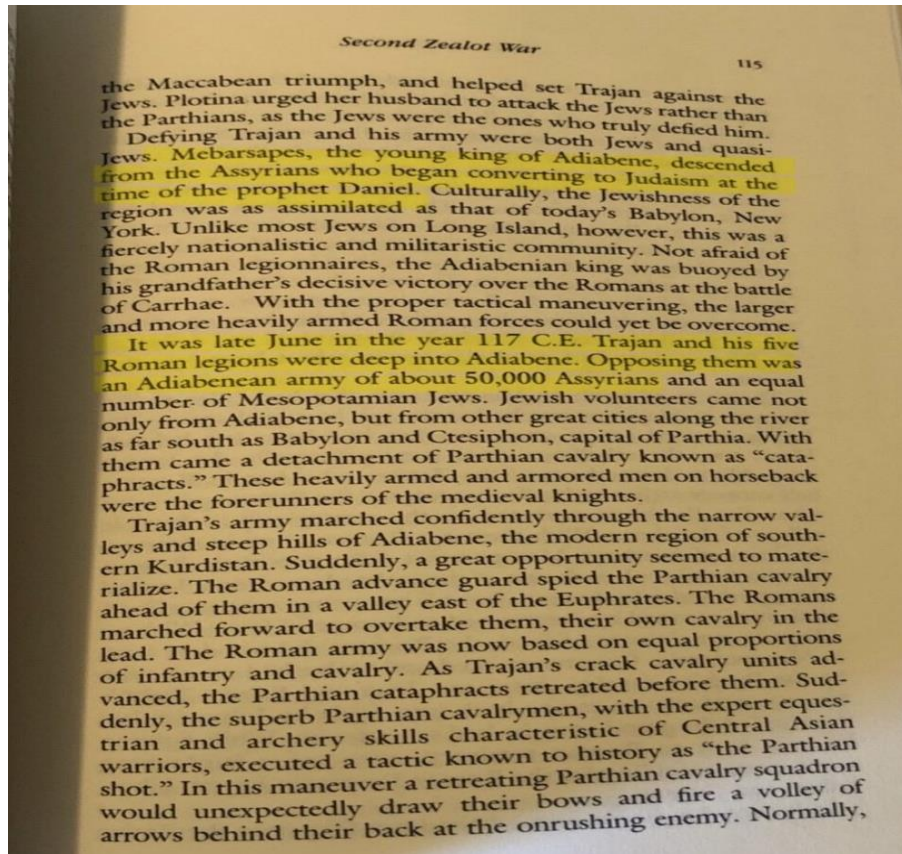
9. We are also told that in the 1st century of the Christian Era, Helena and the royal family of Adiabene embraced Judaism. Then we are told that in the year 117, Trajan and his Roman Army

<sup>15</sup> Accessed 6/20/2025 <https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/801-adiabene>

<sup>16</sup> Accessed 6/19/2025 [https://www.jatland.com/home/File:Maps\\_of\\_the\\_Armenian\\_Empire\\_of\\_Tigranes.gif](https://www.jatland.com/home/File:Maps_of_the_Armenian_Empire_of_Tigranes.gif)

<sup>17</sup> Nováček, Karel. “Contextualizing Arbīl: Medieval urbanism in Adiabene”. In *The Archaeology of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and Adjacent Regions*. Edited by Konstantinos Kopanias and John MacGinnis. Archaeopress and the authors, 2016.

were deep in Adiabene, but they were opposed by about 50,000 Assyrians and equal number of Mesopotamian Jews.<sup>18</sup>



10. Archeologists tell us that from one end there is a strong continuity in the ceramic continuity in the Assyrian heartland. On the other hand, there is a clear lack of materials directly related to distinguishable Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid administrations. This have helped to subsume the historical periods under the general label of Post-Assyrian, a classification that continued to be used until the Seleucid dynasty.<sup>19</sup>

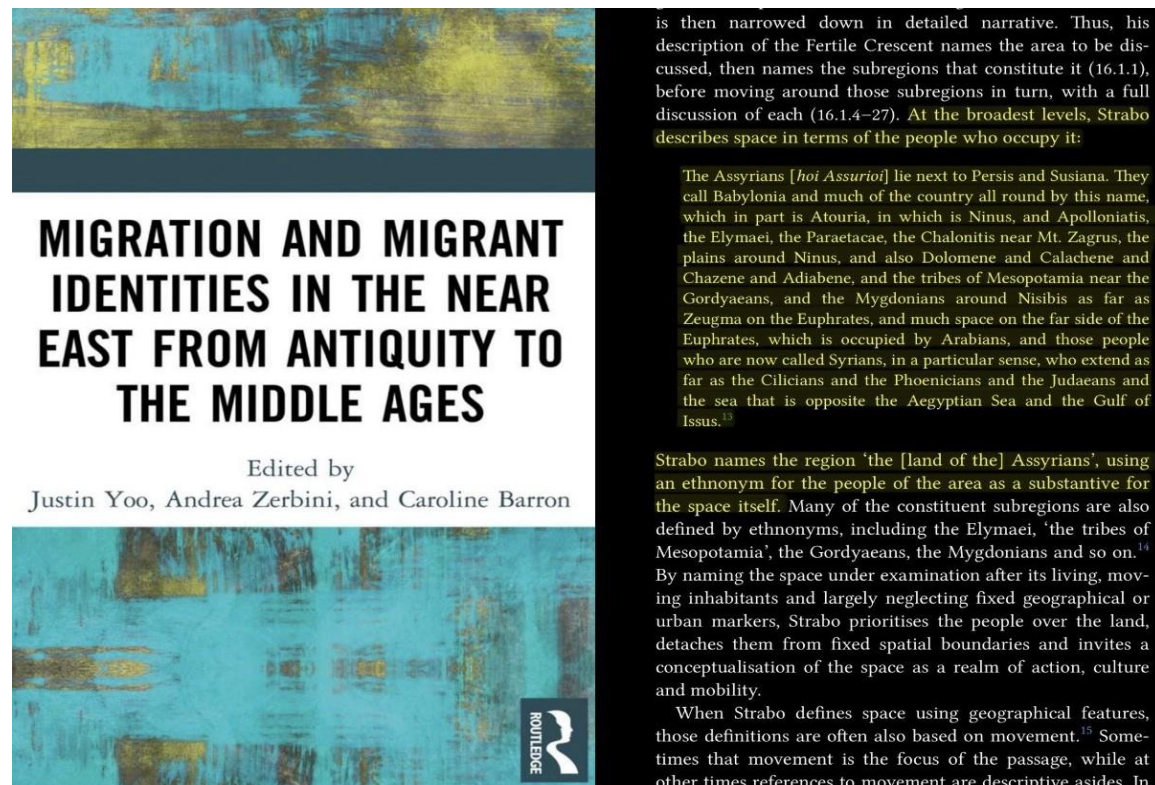
This is important since Adiabene was the center of the Assyrian heartland and for a long time remained Assyrian in essence judging from the overwhelming Assyrian excavations that have been uncovered in northern Iraq since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

11. Authors of "*Migrations and Migrant Identities in the Near East from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*" include the Assyrians in their study. To describe the Assyrians, the researchers relied on Strabo, a prominent Greek geographer, historian, and philosopher who lived during the birth of

<sup>18</sup> Rosenthal, Monroe & Issac Mozeson. "Wars of the Jews: A Military History from Biblical to Modern Times". Hippocrene Books. 1990.

<sup>19</sup> Cinzia Pappi. "Between Assyria and Adiabene: Discussing Resilience and Collapse in the Transtigrine Region". 2022.

Christianity, for the description of the Assyrian people. Strabo stated that the Assyrians call their land Atouria, which is basically Mesopotamia that includes many regions, including Adiabene.<sup>20</sup>



12. The diocese of the Church of the East have been present in Adiabene since the early days of Christianity. Erbil lost much of its former importance with the growth of the city of Mosul, that is situated across the River Tigris from Nineveh. The Assyrians of Nineveh built Mosul after the collapse of the capital of Nineveh. In the *Chronicle of Arbela*, probably written in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, collected information about the Christian community and the history of Erbil between 132 and 540. The bishop became the “Metropolitan of Adiabene” of the Church of the East during the 4<sup>th</sup> century, and the cathedral was reconstructed between 450 and 498. The Sasanians maintained a suspicious watch over Adiabene because of its Christianity and the possible influence of Rome, especially after Constantine declared Christianity as a permitted religion in the Roman Empire; two early bishops, Yohannan and Abraham, were martyred in 343 and 345 under Shapur II. This attitude changed only in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, when Arbela became the seat of a Nestorian [Church of the East] Metropolitan.<sup>21</sup>

During the reign of the Patriarch Timothy I (780–823) the seat of the metropolitans of Adiabene was moved to Mosul. The dioceses of Adiabene were governed by a “Metropolitan of Mosul and

<sup>20</sup> Yoo, Justin, Andrea Zerbini, and Caroline Barron. “Migrations and Migrant Identities in the Near East from Antiquity to the Middle Ages”. Routledge. 2018.

<sup>21</sup> MacGinnis, John and David Michelmore. “Arbela”. Published online in 2024.



Erbil” for the next four and a half centuries. Around 1200, Mosul and Erbil became separate metropolitan provinces.



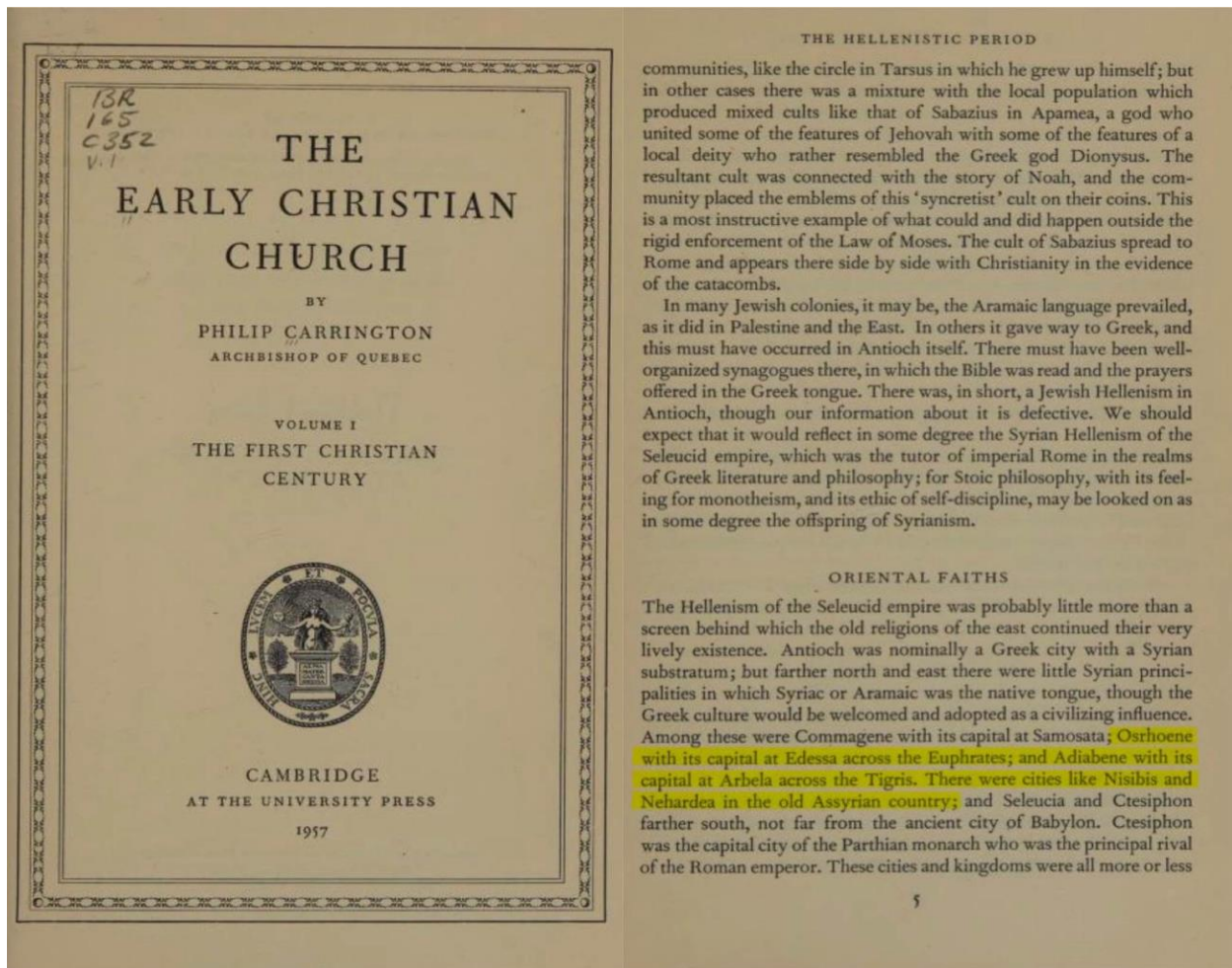
*Nenif Matran Hariri. Map of Adiabene v2.0 (Church of The East, diocese)*

This strong Christian and Assyrian presence in Adiabene region could not be overlooked, ignored or denied. The region was “administratively centered around its capital city at Arbēlā (Erbil, Iraq), this geopolitical entity was also commonly known as Ḥiḍyāb (Adiabene), a name that was used synonymously, by early Syriac Christian authorities— both East Syriac and West Syriac —to mean Assyria. As a result of progressive missionary activities in the region, Assyria was transformed into a leading center for Syriac-speaking Christians.”<sup>22</sup>

13. The above fact about early Syriac Christianity and the role of the Assyrians in spreading Christianity in Osrhoene (Edessa), Adiabene (Arbela), and others centers in historic Assyria could not be disputed.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Edward, Ramsin. “Christianising Assyria”. Banipal: Issued by General Directorate of Syriac Culture and Arts No. 51. Spring 2024.

<sup>23</sup> Carrington, Philip. “The Early Christian Church”. Vol I. Cambridge University Press. 1957.



The Assyrian Christian region of Adiabene was born from the womb of the region of Athura (Assyria) with its capital in Arbela.

14. Emmet Sweeney, who holds a Master's Degree in Early Modern History from the University of Ulster and has had numerous articles published in historical journals such as the "Society for Interdisciplinary Studies Review" and "Ancient Warfare, informs us that during the Achaemenid Empire, Assyrian was divided into the two regions of Athura and Mada. In fact, the Assyrian language was still used by the Persian in their normal diplomatic correspondances. The Book of Ezra (450 BC) refers to an Assyrian governor by the name Sanballat (Assyrian: Sin-uballit) and the Greek historian Xenophon mentions another governor named Abracomus (400 BC)—both holding authority over Athura (Assyria) under Persian rule. So deeply-ingrained was the Assyrian culture that it survived well beyond the Persian period and into the Seleucid period and beyond, when the region began to be referred to as "Syria"—a term which was identical in meaning to Assyria.<sup>24</sup> Prof Richard Frye, an American scholar of Iranian and Central Asian studies and a professor emeritus at Harvard University, explains that Syria and Assyria were

<sup>24</sup> Sweeney, Emmet. The Ramissides, Medes and Persians. The Series: Ages in Alignment. Vol. 4. Algora Publishing, 2008.



synonymous.<sup>25</sup> In addition, scholars tell us that large areas of Syria and Phoenicia were part of a satrapy known as Athura (Assyria).<sup>26</sup>

15. The Map of the Achaemenid Empire and the West below covers the period of around 500 BC by Dr. Michael Ditter Michelstadt. It reflects the region of Athura.



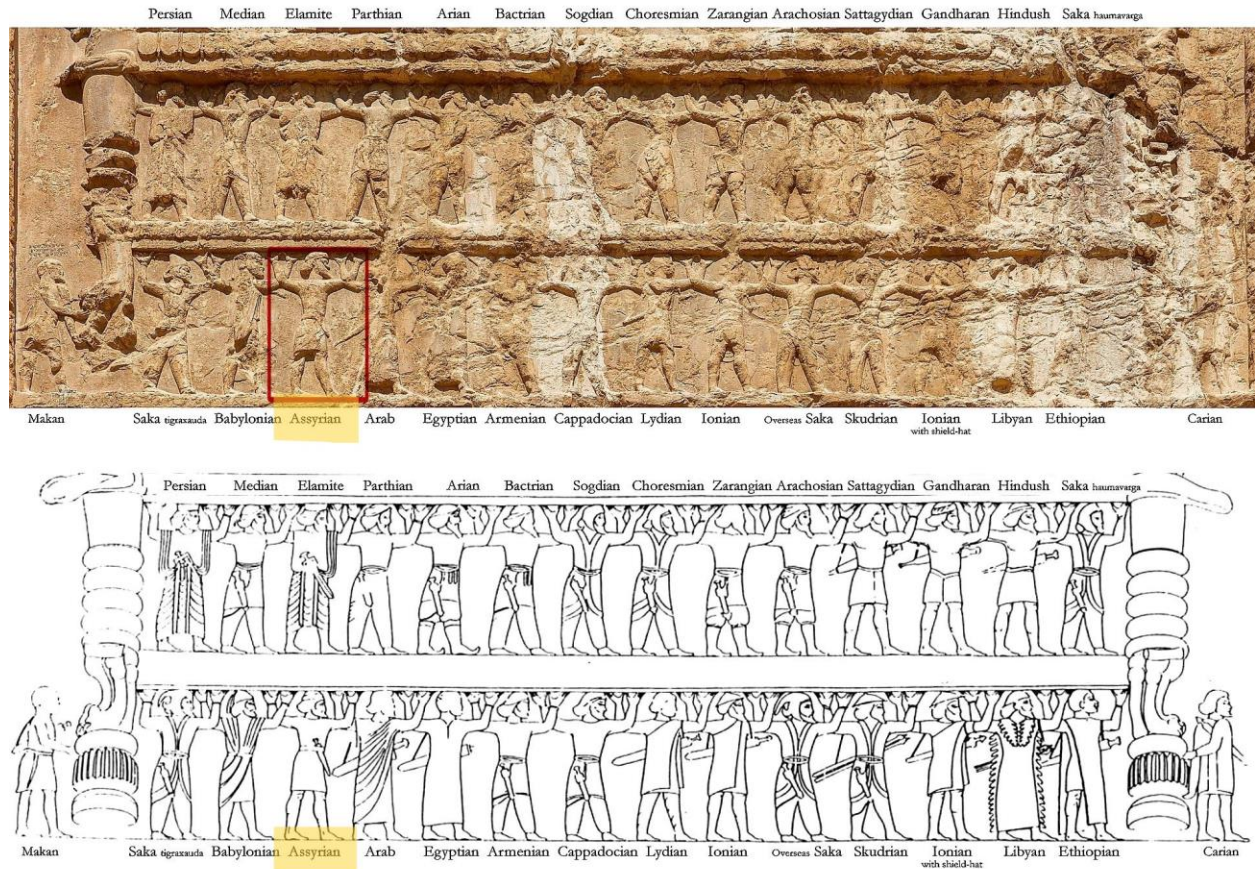
The Persian Empire and the West

16. Furthermore, military records show Assyrians serving alongside other people in key expeditions, including the campaign of Xerxes.

<sup>25</sup> Frye, Richard, N. Assyria and Syria: Synonyms. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (Oct., 1992), pp. 281-285.

<sup>26</sup> Yamauchi, Edwin, M. & Elaine Phillips. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Revised Edition): Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*. Tremper Longman III & David E. Garland, General Editors. 2017.





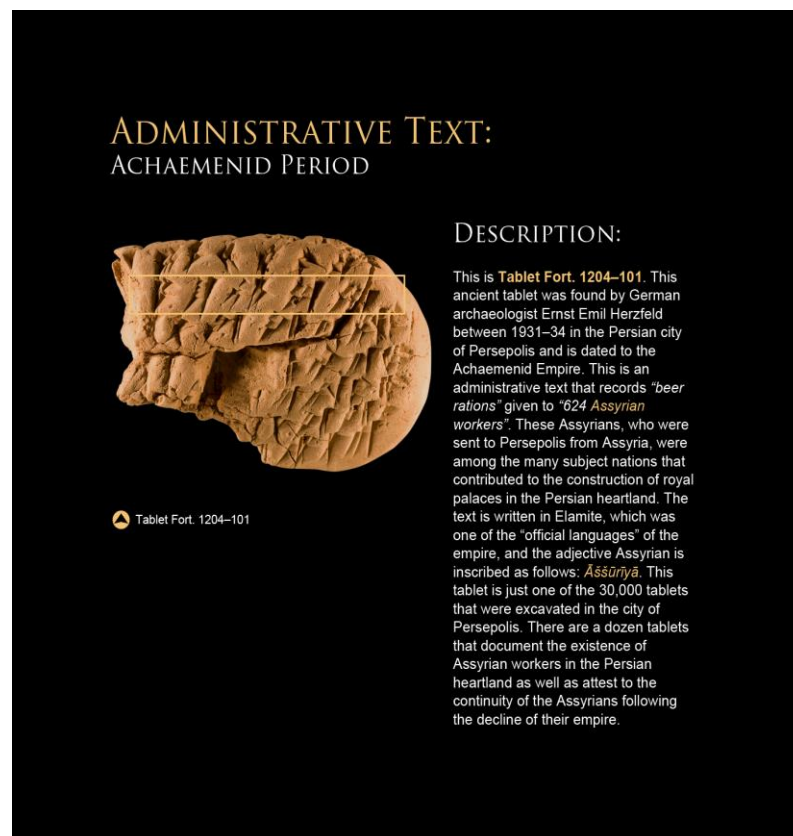
An Assyrian soldier in the Xerxes II Tomb, Naqsh-E Rustam 424 BC

17. The Daiva Inscription of Xerxes was discovered in 1935 in seven slabs – three in Old Persian and one in Babylonian – and another fragmented slab in Elamite in the southeast corner of the Persepolis terrace. It tells us that the Achaemenid king Xerxes mentioned Athura (Assyria).

§3 (13-28) Proclaims Xerxes, the king: By the favor of Ahuramazda these (are) the countries of which I was king outside of Persia; I ruled them; to me they brought tribute. What was said to them by me, that they did. The law that (was) mine, that held them (stable): Media, Elam, Arachosia, Armenia, Drangiana, Parthia, Aria, Bactria, Sogdiana, Chorasmia, Babylonia, Assyria, Sattagydia, Sardis, Egypt, the Ionians who dwell by the sea and (those) who dwell beyond the sea, the Makran people, Arabia, Gandara, the Indus province, Cappadocia, Dahae, the Amyrgian Scythians, the Scythians with pointed caps, Thracia, the Ākaufaka people, Libyans, Carians, Nubians.

18. The Assyrians are mentioned in the Persepolis Archive. Elamite documents mentions Athuriya (Assyrians). In one instance, the Old Persian royal inscriptions mention “Assyrians” bringing the Lebanon cedar trees to Babylonia. In the parallel Akkadian text, the term

“Assyrians” is replaced by the more general designation “People from Across the River” (Ebīr-Nāri). Ebīr-Nāri was the Akkadian term used for the area of Syria and the Southern Levant. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the term “Assyrians” in the Old Persian and Elamite versions of this text was used for the entire area. As in the case of Babylonian groups, we see “Assyrians” traveling to the area of Persepolis and receiving rations from the administration during their journey. There is one travel document that mentions a group of 37 free Assyrian men who were traveling together with a man called Šadašba, who carried a sealed travel document from the Persian king. Or Beer rations given to 624 Assyrians, Sesame rations were given to 560 Assyrians under the authority of Pišā, Sesame rations for 207 Assyrian workers [kurtas] under the authority of Pišā who carried a sealed document of the king, Grain rations supplied for 167 Assyrian workers including men, boys, women, and girls, Grain rations for 224 Assyrian workers at Persepolis, Grain rations for 49 Assyrian workers at Persepolis, Grain rations for 29 Assyrian workers at Nušaya and Antarrantiš in the Persepolis region, Grain rations for 247 Assyrian workers at Karakušan in the Persepolis region, Grain rations for 169 Assyrian workers at Rakkan in the Persepolis region, and Grain rations for 55 Assyrian workers.<sup>27</sup>



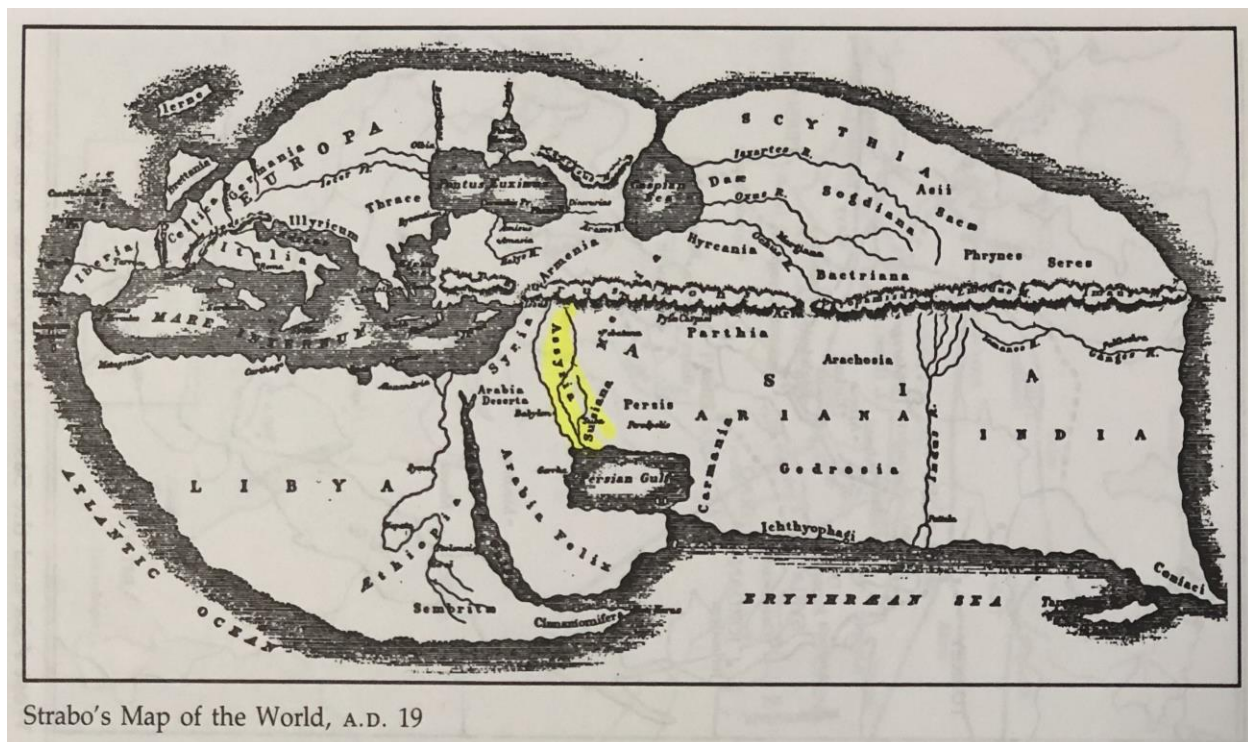
Pix courtesy Mark Gewargis and “History in Assyrians”. <https://www.atour.com/history/continuity/20210129a.html>

<sup>27</sup> Zilberg, Peter. “In His Majesty's Service: Semites in the Achaemenid Heartland”. In *A Question of Identity- Social, Political, and Historical Aspects of Identity Dynamics in Jewish and other contexts*. 2019.



19. The role of the ancient Assyrian city of Arbela mentioned above is emphasized by A.T. Olmstead, an American historian and an academic specializing in Assyriology. He writes that Arbela became the capital of the Achaemenid province of Athura (Assyria), following the decline of Ashur and Nineveh. He noted that Arbela, which had long been overshadowed by the former Assyrian capitals, regained its prominence and was elevated as the new political center of Assyria under Persian rule. Later, Arbela would again serve as a central city in the Assyrian kingdom of Adiabene, continuing its role as a key center of the Assyrian cultural and religious life well into the early Christian period.<sup>28</sup>

20. From the beginning of the Christian history of Adiabene or Athura (Assyria), Samuel Moffett, an American Christian missionary and academic who served as professor emeritus at the Princeton Theological Seminary and is considered as the leading scholar on Christianity in Asia, tells us that we cannot deny the unshakable conviction of the Mesopotamia Christianity that had roots back to the apostolic age, to a Thomas of India, or an Addai of Edessa, “the blessed city” that became the center of Christianity in Asia. From Edessa and Adiabene the churches began to take form in the writing of the Assyrians’ historical figures, such as Addai of Edessa (Urfa), Tatian the ascetic and Bardaisan the hedonist. Envision Tatian declaring proudly, “I am an Assyrian” during his address to the Greeks.<sup>29</sup>



“Strabo’s Map of the World in AD 19”. From Samuel Moffett’s “A History of Christianity in Asia: Vol. I.”.

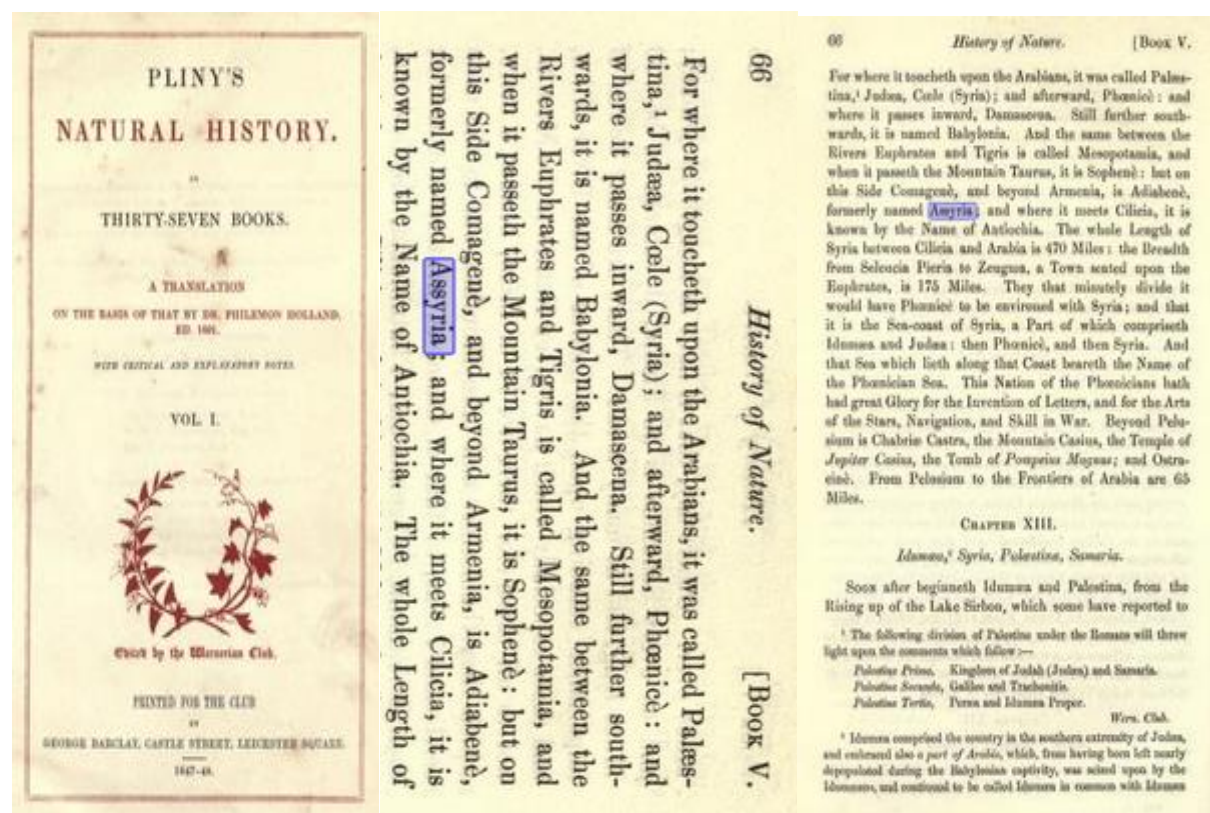
<sup>28</sup> A.T. Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire*, University of Chicago Press, 1948, p. 39.

<sup>29</sup> Moffett, Samuel Hugh. *A History of Christianity in Asia. Vol. I: Beginning to 1500*. Orbis Books, New York. 1998. Pp. 56-75.



These roots of Assyrian or Syriac Christianity in Assyria's cities of Edessa (Osrhoene) and Erbil (Adiabene) have been uninterrupted until modern times.<sup>30</sup>

21. Lastly, but not least, I wanted to save this important source for the end. Pliny the Elder, born Gaius Plinius Secundus in AD 23/24, was a Roman author, naturalist, philosopher, and military commander. He is remembered as one of the most important figures of ancient Rome. His works, particularly *Naturalis Historia*, continue to be studied not only as historical documents but also as reflections of the intellectual and cultural milieu of the Roman Empire. Through his life, writings, and legacy, Pliny the Elder remains a symbol of intellectual curiosity, dedication to knowledge, and the quest to understand the world in all its complexity.<sup>31</sup> Pliny mentions Assyria several times. In his "Pliny's Natural History" he states, "Adiabene, formerly named Assyria".<sup>32</sup>



Adiabene has never been associated with people known as Kurds, or with a region known as Kurdistan, as there is no record of people known as Kurds before the 7<sup>th</sup> century birth of Islam. Furthermore, Kurdistan (land of Kurds) was never a politically recognized and defined country, state or kingdom called Kurdistan. It was always a superficial region, superimposed on the Middle East maps. Furthermore, there is no archeological or historical evidence that a homogenous group of people known as Kurds lived in Mesopotamia in ancient times. The fact is

<sup>30</sup> Gewargis, Mark. "Assyrians in History". Accessed 6/25/2025.

<https://www.atour.com/history/continuity/20210129a.html#550-330%20BC:%20Assyrian%20Sales%20Contract>

<sup>31</sup> Accessed 6/25/2025 <https://worldhistoryedu.com/who-was-pliny-the-elder/>

<sup>32</sup> Pliny the Elder. "Pliny's Natural History". Wernerian Club, Holland. England, G. Barclay. 1847/49.

that there is not a single “Kurdish” literature document that dates back to the first half of the first millennia. In fact, many consider the 1597 *Sharafnamah* by Sharaf al-Din Bitlisi as the first Kurdish literature publication. Interestingly, it was published in Persian and not Kurdish language. Kurdish historian Mehrdad Izady corrupted this publication,<sup>33</sup> and inaccurately represent it by entering personal nationalistic interpretations on the original publication, including, for example, changing its title from a simple *Sharafnamah* to *The Sharafnama: Or the History of the Kurdish Nation*.<sup>34</sup>

Politicizing history has become a modern trend. Kurdish history, as we all know, is very vague, and it is well known among many serious historians that Kurdish writers endeavor to construct a history that never existed. In an effort to cover everything, Kurdish writers foolishly link their history to all the peoples and civilizations of antiquity that lived in the regions of modern Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Syria and even parts of Russia. Kurdish writers associate their history with the early dynasties of the Halaf and Ubaid, with Hurrians, Hittites, Mitanni, Medes<sup>35</sup> and more recently with Sumerians<sup>36</sup>. Or they link the term Kurd to specific ancient terms of kardū, kardukh, and carduni, which have been challenged repeatedly.<sup>37</sup> However, we know that the term Kurd originates from the Middle Persian (Sassanid period from the 3rd to 7th century) *kwrt*, which means tent-dweller nomad.<sup>38</sup> The Sassanids applied the name *kwrt* to all the nomads of the Zagros Mountains. Over time, *kwrt* developed into Kurt and Kurd. Islam conquered the region, and when the Arab Muslims encountered these Iranian tribal nomads of the Zagros Mountains, they adopted the terms Kurd (کرد) and plural Akrad (اکراد) to refer to these Iranian nomads.

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<sup>33</sup> Aprim, Fred. “Prof. Mehrdad Izady and the Politicization of Sharaf Khan’s 1597 Sharafnama”.

<https://www.atour.com/media/files/forums/20250401100533.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> Bajalan, Djene Rhys. “Sheref Khan's Sharafnama: Kurdish Ethno-Politics in the Early Modern World, Its Meaning and Its Legacy”. *Iranian Studies*, volume 45, number 6, November 2012.

<sup>35</sup> Aprim, Fred. “Kurds Are Not Related to Medes”.

<https://www.fredaprim.com/pdfs/2024/Kurds%20Are%20Not%20Related%20to%20Medes.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> Aprim, Fred. “Kurds and Kurdish Language Not Related to Sumerians: A Response to Soran Hamarash”.

<https://www.fredaprim.com/pdfs/2024/Kurds%20are%20not%20Sumerians.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> Aprim, Fred. “Kurd is Not Related to Qardu, Kardū, Kardukh, Carduni, etc.”

<https://www.fredaprim.com/pdfs/2024/Kurd%20and%20Ancient%20words.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> Asatrian, Garnik. “Prolegomena to the Study of the Kurds”, *Iran and the Caucasus* Vol 13, No. 1. Yerevan State University. Brill, 2009.