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Abdissares of Adiabene and the Batas-Herir Relief

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MACIEJ GRABOWSKI

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Introduction

The ancient region of Adiabene corresponds to the area of the so-called “Assyrian triangle” situated between the Lesser Zab and Tigris rivers. Our knowledge of the history of the kingdom of Adiabene during the Seleucid and Parthian Periods is very limited. Scant information scattered throughout the works of Greek and Latin historians and material brought to light by excavations on the sites within the supposed borders of Adiabene (Assur, Nineveh, Kalhu), are insufficient for a comprehensive reconstruction of its political history, first under Seleucid, and later Parthian, suzerainty.

In its beginnings Adiabene was probably one of the provinces established by Seleukos I in the 290s in the course of the administrative organisation of his newly founded empire (GRAINGER 1990: 134–135). No direct information is available for the 3rd and 2nd c. BC, but already during the 1st c. BC Adiabene apparently held a status of regional kingdom and was considered part of Babylonia, although with its own ruler (Strabo, *Geography* XVI.1.19). In 69 BC, an unknown “king of Adiabeni” was even able to aid Tigranes II against Lucullus (Plutarch, *The Parallel Lives: Lucullus* 26, 27). Unfortunately, neither the approximate date nor general circumstances of the emergence of the Adiabenean royal house are known.

In the present attempt to approach this problem a newly recognised numismatic evidence of Adiabenean kingship will be taken into account. The evidence in question are the copper issues of Abdissares, initially considered as one of the dynasts of Sophene ruling around 210 BC (BEDOUKIAN 1983: 77; ALRAM 1986: 67–68), but later identified as a king of Adiabene, first by E. Lipiński (1982) and later by F. de Callatay (1996). The recognition of the exceptional term “Adiabenean” on a certain type of Abdissares’ coinage, seems to resolve this issue, indicating that the domain of Abdissares was Adiabene (DE CALLATAY 1996). Still, the date, the place, as well as the political circumstances of the above-mentioned emissions are totally obscure.

Considerable uncertainties have also arisen around the so-called Batas-Herir rock relief (**Fig. 1**),¹ depicting a single standing figure, most probably of a local Adiabenean ruler. The monument is situated on a rock cliff in the vicinity of the modern village of Batas on the Arbil-Ravanduz highway, in the centre of the Herir subdistrict in the province of Arbil, therefore in the ancient land of Arbelitis and not far from Arbela itself, which is considered the capital of Adiabene.

In scholarly literature, the Batas-Herir relief is usually thought of as having been discovered in 1899 by C.F. Lehmann-Haupt (1926: 278–281); it is, however, very probable that the first European to record the relief was in fact K. Brzozowski – a Polish traveller and writer – who must have visited the monument during his journey across Kurdistan in 1869 (EDMONDS 1931: 351–354; PRZEWORSKI 1957: 169–172). The itinerary of this journey was originally published in 1892 in the “Bulletin de la Société de Géographie” (BRZOZOWSKI 1892).

Most of the early studies on the Batas-Herir relief give completely incorrect ideas regarding its cultural provenance and date. According to C.F. Lehmann-Haupt, as well as C. J. Edmonds and S. Smith, the relief possesses features characteristic of Hittite art (LEHMANN-HAUPT 1926: 281; EDMONDS 1931: 350–351). Even later on, there were scholars who erroneously perceived the relief as an Urartian monument (BOSSERT 1942: 90; BURNEY, LAWSON 1957: 215). It was not until the study of N.C. Debevoise that the correct attribution of the monument to the Hellenistic cultural sphere was proposed. On the basis of similarity between the Batas-Herir relief and the sculptures of Antiochus I of Commagene, a dating to the late 2nd or 1st c. BC was suggested (DEBEVOISE 1942: 88–89).

Some time later, this general direction was followed by R.M. Boehmer and H. von Gall, authors of the first detailed iconographic analysis of the relief and the first and only historical interpretation. H. von Gall argues that the sculpture depicts Izates II, king of Adiabene (AD 36 – ca. 54), and is a victory monument commissioned by Izates in commemoration of the retreat from Adiabene of the

¹ The figure is 2.4 m high; the frame is approximately 3.3 m high and 2–2.37 m wide; no information on the depth of the niche is

available (BOEHMER, VON GALL 1973: 67).

Parthian king Vologases I (AD ca. 51–76/80) (BOEHMER, VON GALL 1973: 75). Since this event took place around the year AD 52 (OLBRYCHT 1998: 178), the above-mentioned interpretation implies that the relief was carved during the brief period between Vologases' retreat (AD ca. 52) and Izates' demise (AD ca. 54).

However, due to significant ambiguities, the issue of the Batas-Herir relief cannot be considered as definitely resolved in any of the main aspects. For this reason the present paper aims to propose a reattribution of the relief along with an alternative date and historical interpretation. These considerations will base on the very tangible connection that may be drawn between the monument and the copper coinage of Abdissares, king of Adiabene. But first it is necessary to evaluate the key points of the previous interpretation, as well as to substantiate counterarguments that call this interpretation into question.

H. von Gall's interpretation

The historical framework for the interpretation proposed by H. von Gall is shaped by the story of Izates II given by Flavius Josephus in his *Jewish Antiquities* (XX.17–92). It should be noted that even though the story has certain legendary features, it offers a valuable glance into the unstable system of political dependencies between the Arsacid overlords and vassal states such as Adiabene. *Antiquities* is thus a primary textual source for the history of that region in the 1st c. AD. Let us now briefly summarise the passages that, according to H. von Gall, are relevant to the Batas-Herir relief.

Izates II, son of Monobazus I, came to power as a young man and a follower of Judaism, which he had embraced during his stay at the court of Abinerglos of Characene. During his entire reign, Izates was forced to struggle against a party of Adiabene nobles irreconcilably hostile towards him due to his foreign religion and customs. Shortly after his accession there was a *coup d'état* at the Arsacid court so that the overthrown king, Artabanus II, sought refuge in Adiabene. Izates not only treated Artabanus with respect appropriate to the latter's former position but also supported him in regaining the throne (DEBEVOISE 1969: 165–166).

However, in the light of our discussion, the most important aspect of the story, are the tokens of gratitude given to Izates by Artabanus, and described in detail by Josephus:

...he gave him leave to wear his tiara upright, and to sleep on a bed of gold – privileges and symbols that belong only to the kings of the Parthians. He furthermore gave him an extensive and productive territory which he carved from that of the king of Armenia. The district is called Nisibis... (Jewish Antiquities XX.54–66; translated by L.H. FELDMAN, Loeb Classical Library 456, Harvard 1965).

Soon after, Artabanus II died (AD ca. 38), and the subsequent period of internal struggles between Vardanes I and Gotarzes II (AD ca. 39–45), and later between the latter and Meherdates (AD ca. 49), lasted until the accession of Vologases I (AD ca. 51) (DEBEVOISE 1969: 166–174). At the beginning of Vologases I's reign, Adiabene opposition undertook another attempt to overthrow Izates, this time by applying to the Arsacid king with a request for him to appoint a new ruler over them who would be of Parthian descent. Thus around the year AD 52 Vologases I initiated a campaign against Adiabene under the pretext of reclaiming the royal privileges given to Izates by Artabanus II (OLBRYCHT 1998: 177–178 with notes). Izates made immediate preparations for the war and, with a force of six thousand cavalry, met the Parthian army at the banks of the river which "separated Adiabene from Media." According to Josephus, it was then that Vologases I received letters informing him about the invasion of the Dahae and the Scythians on the country of Parthia, so that he was forced to retreat without even giving Izates a battle (XX.82).

It may seem plausible that this extraordinary turn of events was perceived by the ancients in terms of a divine intervention that needed an appropriate commemoration, for instance in the form of a monumental rock sculpture situated somewhere in the vicinity of the venue. In fact, the main feature of the relief, which corresponds to the discussed interpretation, is its localisation. The river at the banks of which Izates met the Parthian army is most probably the Great Zab in its upper course, as it is the only major river which may be thought of as a boundary between Adiabene and Media. Coincidentally, the Batas-Herir relief was carved on a cliff wall situated ca. 15 km from the river to the south-east.

No conclusive information derives from the survey of the Batas-Herir relief's surroundings conducted in 1972 by R.M. Boehmer. Surface pottery from the area of the ruined stone structure, situated close to the relief, contained some Parthian sherds dated by him to the 1st–2nd c. AD (BOEHMER 1974: 101–102). Parthian and perhaps Hellenistic pottery was also found on Tell Tlai, an artificial mound crowned by remains of a stone wall, which lies about 1 km to the south from the relief (BOEHMER 1974: 103–104). Nevertheless, a tentative connection between the relief, the above-mentioned structure, and Tell Tlai cannot be proved, at least for now.

Despite the location of the relief, the image in itself does not provide any grounds for associating the monument with Izates II and Vologases I's retreat. The pose and gesture of the depicted figure suggest that the scene is most probably of a religious theme. If so, one would expect that the monument commissioned by such a zealous follower of Judaism as Izates II would contain at least some of the typical Jewish religious symbols such as the menorah, the shewbread table, the Torah shrine, or the Ark of the Covenant. If the scene represents an offering to God, there

Fig. 1. The Batas-Herir relief (Photo courtesy of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut).

Ryc. 1. Relief z Batas-Herir.



ought to be an altar depicted similar to these known from the murals and graffiti of the Dura Europos synagogue (HACHLILI 1998: 161–163). Yet none of these features are present on the Batas-Herir relief.

In terms of iconography the identification of the depicted figure as Izates II arouses further doubts. Since no portraits of Izates II are extant, a comparative study was (and still is) impossible. Under these circumstances, the main iconographic argument for such identification was

the supposed form of the figure's headdress and its correlation with the above-cited account of Josephus (BOEHMER, VON GALL 1973: 75).

However, in the opinion of the present author, it is most probable that the headdress depicted on the Batas-Herir relief represents an entirely different type of Iranian tiara than the one recognised by H. von Gall. If correct, this remark invalidates the basis of the monument's attribution to Izates II.

Tiara apagēs and the numismatic evidence

The relief suffered heavily from erosion and deliberate devastation, and as is shown by some recent photos, its condition is quickly degrading (Fig. 2). Some details of the ruler's head such as the nose, shape of the eyes, and the lips, as well as traces of the short curly beard and short hair visible from under the headdress, have already been noticed by several scholars (LEHMANN-HAUPT 1926: 280; BOEHMER, VON GALL 1973: 69; MATHIESEN 1992: 182), and they are also legible on the photos published by R.M. Boehmer and H. von Gall, which will serve as the basis for the following iconographic study of the sculpture.²

Probably the most curious, but at the same time most significant, trait of the Batas-Herir figure is the elaborate headgear which we will henceforth refer to as a tiara (Figs. 3, 6:f). It seems that its outwardly conical-shaped top was the main reason why it was interpreted by H. von Gall as "die spitze Tiara", i.e. pointed tiara, and compared with the representation on the so-called Satrap Sarcophagus (BOEHMER, VON GALL 1973: 73–74, pl. 32:2).³ Afterwards the headdress was equated with the royal upright tiara (Gr. *tiara orthē*) which, according to Josephus, was worn by Izates II (BOEHMER, VON GALL 1973: 75).

In fact, the peak of the tiara depicted on the Batas-Herir sculpture is elongated much more to the back than vertically. This shape recalls the half-round top bent to one side, with the edge of the fold shown in form of a peak at the back, and sometimes also at the front of the headdress. This particular arrangement of the tiara's top is a distinctive feature of the so-called *tiara apagēs*, i.e. "not stiffened" tiara (WIESEHÖFER 1994: 131, note 209), which is the opposite of the royal upright tiara of Achaemenid kings. As such, *tiara apagēs* was usually associated with the "satrapal tiara" or "Persian tiara" (WIESEHÖFER 1994: 131), and sometimes designated by the general terms such as *kurbasia* (BITTNER 1987: 196) or *bashliq* (PECK 1993: 410).

Furthermore, the headdress on the Batas-Herir relief is worn in a very specific way – its side lappets and possibly neck flap are raised and tucked through a broad fillet or diadem encircling the tiara and the bent top. The

right side lappet may be recognised in the oblong narrowing element below the loop of diadem, which in turn is fastened at the back of the headdress and terminated with long ribbons falling on the ruler's back (BOEHMER, VON GALL 1973: 69, 73).

It should not be doubted that the same arrangement of the top, side lappets, and possibly also neck flap was employed in the so-called "folded tiara" of Abdissares (BEDOUKIAN 1983: 85) as depicted on his coinage (Figs. 4, 6:e). This unequivocal resemblance shows that both headdresses represent the identical type of tiara. In order to prove definitely that, both in character and in form, this type of headdress corresponds to the *tiara apagēs*, a brief overview of similar tiaras will be presented below.

There were several attempts to categorise royal and non-royal headgear of Iranian origin (VON GALL 1972; CALMEYER 1977; TUPLIN 2007), but certain aspects of this issue remain disputable. Apart from some unclear interpretations of the iconographic representations, there are also considerable ambiguities concerning the relevant terminology preserved in Greek sources.

Two most general Greek terms referring to Iranian headdresses: *tiara* and *kurbasia*, which most probably originally derived from Old Persian, are broad concepts covering several types of Achaemenid court and battle headgear known from iconography. Unfortunately, textual sources do not allow to draw a clear distinction between them. For instance Herodotus (*Histories* V.49, VII.61) seems to use them interchangeably (TUPLIN 2007: 69–70). A much younger Byzantine lexicon known as the book of *Suda*⁴ gives a similar impression (WHITEHEAD 2005). However, since Greek and Roman authors often mixed up Eastern terms and concepts with which they were unfamiliar, it is possible that each of the above-mentioned terms denotes a distinct type of headdress.

According to Herodotus (V.49, VII.61), both *kurbasiai* and tiaras were commonly used as a part of Persian battle garment. At the same time a vast amount of iconographic evidence and textual sources prove that these headdresses were also worn by members of the Persian elites: magi, satraps, and courtiers, as well as the Great King himself. We may presume that in reality these tiaras

² The sketch of the Batas-Herir relief (Fig. 2), included in the present article, was prepared using one of the photos published by R.M. Boehmer and H. von Gall (1973: pl. 30). This sketch is not intended to reflect the present state of the monument and should be treated as a tentative reconstruction which attempts to give a notion of the monument's past appearance.

³ The resemblance between the tiara on the discussed sculpture

and the one depicted on the Satrap Sarcophagus has been already questioned by C. Tuplin (2007: 73, note 24).

⁴ The content of the *Suda* recalled in the present paper may be found online as *Suda On Line: Byzantine Lexicography* (<http://www.stoa.org/sol>), an online version, with translations, of A. Adler's edition published originally in 1928–1938 (*Suidae Lexicon*, vols. I–V, Leipzig).

Fig. 2. Recent photo of the upper part of the Batas-Herir relief (source: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cwFoW8JWUNc>).

Ryc. 2. Zdjęcie górnej części reliefu z Batas-Herir, stan obecny.



Fig. 3. Sketch of the Batas-Herir relief (partially reconstructed) (Drawing M. Grabowski).

Ryc. 3. Rysunek reliefu z Batas-Herir (częściowo rekonstruowany).



Fig. 4. Copper coin of Abdissares (Type 1 according to de Callatay) (source: http://coinproject.com/coin_detail.php?coin=269818).
Ryc. 4. Miedziana moneta Abdissaresa (Typ 1 wg de Callatay'a).

differed in such features as material, decoration, and presence of a diadem or a fillet, all of which marked the wearer's status. For instance, Xenophon (*Cyropaedia* 8.3.3) relates that only the high-ranking nobles bearing the title of the royal "kinsmen" adorned their tiaras with a diadem (RITTER 1965: 7).

Another distinctive feature, well documented both in textual sources and in art, is the arrangement of the tiara's top. According to Xenophon, no one but the king was allowed to wear his tiara upright (*Cyropaedia* 8.3.3; *Anabasis* 2.5.23), while according to the *Suda*, tiaras and *kurbasiai* were worn upright by Persian kings but bent over by their generals (MIRHADY 2008). This is furthermore confirmed by a passage in *Birds* by Aristophanes (verse 486), where it is said that, of all birds, a cock alone wears his comb straight, in a way resembling the Great King in his *kurbasia*. From the account of Flavius Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities* XX.54–66) we know that the same custom also applied to the court of the Arsacids, and it must have lasted at least to the lifetime of Izates II, i.e. to the mid-1st c. AD.

The visual arts of the Greco-Roman world also provide some illustration for these accounts. The most explicit example is the "Alexander Mosaic" from the House of the Faun in Pompeii, where Darius III is depicted in the upright tiara with erect top, and with side lappets tied on

his chin, whereas his retainers are wearing tiaras in form of a cap covered with what appears to be a loose folded cloth falling to one side (DUNBABIN 1999: fig. 41). In this respect the scene decorating the so-called Darius Vase follows the same scheme. It seems, though, that in terms of garments this particular scene was to a much greater extent adjusted to Greek tastes and imagination, especially the representation of royal headgear whose peculiar elongated shape with a series of small projections has no parallel in Achaemenid art (ALLEN 2005: 55, fig. 8).⁵

During the Achaemenid Period, Persian tiaras were depicted in abundance in various branches of art in many different regions of the Near East. Nevertheless, our main ground of discussion will be numismatics, where forms of the discussed headdress can be easily recognised and compared. In addition, the conventional term "satrapal tiara" – frequently applied to *tiara apagēs* – has its roots in the images of Persian satraps portrayed in this type of head-dress on the obverses of Achaemenid coinage spanning from ca. 420 BC till ca. 320 BC (CALMEYER 1977: 177).

There is no doubt that already during the Achaemenid Period tiaras occurred in art in various shapes, probably due to the various materials from which they were made, but also because of different artistic styles. We may suppose that on the coins of Tissaphernes (Fig. 5:a),

⁵ Regarding this particular representation, C. Tuplin suggested that it may have been inspired by the above-mentioned passage in *Birds* by Aristophanes (verse 486), and the comparison between

a cock's comb and the royal upright tiara of Achaemenid kings (TUPLIN 2007: 75).

Fig. 5. Various forms of *tiara apagēs* (a–h) and *tiara orthē* (i) (Drawing M. Grabowski).

Ryc. 5. Formy *tiara apagēs* (a–h) i *tiara orthē* (i).

ca. 420–395 BC (MEADOWS 2005: 203, Cat. 332–333), Pharnabazos (Fig. 5:b), early 4th c. BC (ALRAM 1986: 107, pl. 10:325–326), and Spithridates (Fig. 5:c), before 334 BC (ALRAM 1986: pl. 10:309–313), the image imitated a fabric of soft cloth tied around the head and on the chin, with folds gathered at the top of the tiara. The same stylistic features are recognisable on a sculpted stone slab from Daskyleion, dated to ca. 500 BC, depicting two magi in the scene of offering (BOYCE 1982: 117–118), whose tiaras closely resemble those of the above-mentioned satraps (Fig. 7).

On the other hand, on the obverses of the coins of Sabakes (ca. 333 BC) and Mazakes (ca. 333/332 BC), the two last Achaemenid satraps of Egypt, the top folds of headdress are replaced by a top of a regular half-round shape, bent to a side (Fig. 5:d). It forms a peak protruding above the forehead and another peak at the back of the headdress, thus giving the impression of a much stiffer material than cloth, perhaps leather or felt (ALRAM 1986: 117–119, pl. 12:374,377). This type of tiara may be also recognised on several “Greco-Persian” gems from Anatolia depicting a Persian nobleman on horseback in a hunting scene (RICHTER 1949: pls. 31:4, 32:3, 34:2,4).

It is not clear whether a typological distinction should be made between the above-mentioned form of tiara and the one represented on tetradrachms of certain Waxšwar (Fig. 5:e), an enigmatic local ruler or satrap probably of the 3rd c. BC, whose domain remains undetermined (ALRAM 1986: 120, pl. 12:383; WIESEHÖFER 1994: 131–132).

This tiara is also surmounted by a bent top, but the peak at its back is either completely missing or only slightly outlined. We may thus consider it as basically the same type of tiara as the previous one, but with a supposedly different arrangement of the top, which is bent more to the front than to a side. The identical tiara adorns the head of a sup-

posed magus depicted on the post-Achaemenid rock relief Kel-e Dāwūd carved beside the tomb of Dokkân-e Dāwūd in Iranian Kurdistan (VON GALL 1974: fig. 2). Moreover, it seems that this form precedes the one worn somewhat later by several early *fratarakā* dynasts of Persis, who will be discussed later.

a		Tissaphernes, satrap of Ionia and Karia (ca. 420–395 BC) (after MEADOWS 2005: 203, Cat. 332)
b		Pharnabazos, satrap of Hellespontine Phrygia (ca. 395–394 BC) (after ALRAM 1986: 107, pl. 10:325)
c		Spithridates, satrap of Lydia and Ionia (before 334 BC) (after ALRAM 1986: 103, pl. 10:310)
d		Mazakes, satrap of Egypt (ca. 333/332 BC) (after ALRAM 1986: 118, pl. 12:377)
e		Waxšwar, local ruler or satrap (?) (beginning of the 3 rd c. BC ?) (after ALRAM 1986: 120, pl. 12:383)
f		Ariaramnes, king of Cappadocia (ca. 280–230 BC) (after ALRAM 1986: 58, pl. 5:129)
g		Ariarathes III, king of Cappadocia (ca. 230–220 BC) (after ALRAM 1986: 60, pl. 5:136)
h		Ariarathes IV, king of Cappadocia (between ca. 230 and 164 BC) (after ALRAM 1986: 61, pl. 5:142,146)
i		

The “satrapal tiaras” made of stiff material must have been continuously considered as one of the insignia of power even after the fall of the Achaemenid Empire, and were worn for instance by the Hellenistic kings of Cappadocia. Bronze coinage of the first of these rulers, Ariaramnes (ca. 280–230 BC), shows the tiara with its side lappets tied on the ruler’s chin and its half-round top bent to a side, forming peaks at its front and back (Fig. 5:f) (ALRAM 1986: 58, pl. 5:127–131). These features are also clearly recognisable on the coins of Ariarathes III (ca. 230–220 BC), where the top forms a slightly elongated and raised peak at the back (Fig. 5:g) (ALRAM 1986: 58–60, pl. 5:132–137). The peak at the back of the headdress is even longer on the tiara depicted on the coins of the subsequent ruler, Ariarathes IV (Fig. 5:h), between ca. 230 and 164 BC (ALRAM 1986: 60–61, pl. 5:142–146), but the character and general shape of *tiara apagēs* is undoubtedly retained. Of note is the fact that the same ruler also wore the upright tiara with an apparently erect top bound at its base with a diadem (Fig. 5:i) (ALRAM 1986: 60–61, pl. 5:139–141, 146–147); the political context of this change is, however, unknown.

Obviously, the *tiara apagēs* as a traditional Iranian headdress was not forgotten in Iran itself and on its eastern fringes. It was in the “satrapal tiara” that the first ruler and founder of the Arsacid kingdom in Parthia, Arsaces I (247 – after 217 BC) was portrayed both on obverses and reverses of his silver issues (Fig. 6:a) (SELLWOOD 1971: 16–20, Types 1–4). Due to the striking similarity between the early Arsacid tiara and those of the Cappadocian rulers, we may assume that the former was not merely “die Lederkappe des Steppenkriegers,” as described by M. Alram (1986: 122), but a symbol of power which recalled the traditional headdress of Achaemenid satraps. It was the main headgear of Arsacid monarchs until the time of Mithradates I (ca. 171–139/138 BC), whose early silver issues struck in Ecbatana depicted him as a beardless young man in a diademed tiara on his head (SELLWOOD 1971: 29–31, Types 9–10; ASSAR 2005: 45, figs. 14, 15). Soon this royal image was abandoned for a Hellenised portrait of the king in diadem only (SELLWOOD 1971: 32–39, Types 11–13).

However, the closest analogies to the tiaras depicted on the Batas-Herir relief and on the coins of Abdissares may be found on the copper issues of a certain Xerxes, presumably a king of Arsamosata in Sophene (Fig. 6:d) and on the roughly contemporary silver coinage of Baydād, a *fratarakā* ruler of Persis (early 2nd c. BC). The former will be discussed in detail later along with the historical context of Abdissares’ emissions, whereas at this point we will focus on the issues of Baydād of Persis.

The perspicuous similarity between the tiara of Baydād and that of Abdissares has been already observed by F. de Callatay (1996: 141–142). Apart from the bent top, Baydād’s tiara also has raised side lappets tucked through a diadem or a broad band that encircles the whole cap in its

middle part. The actual diadem adorned perhaps the ruler’s forehead; its fastening with a loop at the back of the tiara terminates in two thin ribbons (Fig. 6:b) (ALRAM 1986: pl. 17:511–519).

There have been serious controversies regarding the character of Baydād’s headdress. It was recognised as *kurbasia* by G.F. Hill (1965: 195–196), which is a term corresponding to the “satrapal tiara,” initially designated as Baydād’s tiara by H. von Gall as well (VON GALL 1972: 278). However, since the publication of the article about the Batas-Herir relief, in which the same scholar defines the discussed headdress as “die spitze Tiara” (BOEHMER, VON GALL 1973: 73), the idea of identification of Baydād’s head-dress with *kurbasia* or “satrapal tiara” (i.e. *tiara apagēs*) has been gradually abandoned (e.g. CALMEYER 1977: 178). Thus M. Alram instead of using the term “Baschlyk,” which also implies “satrapal tiara,” cautiously describes Baydād’s cap as “die Lederhaube” (ALRAM 1986: 165), whereas that of Abdissares he defines simply as “Tiara” (ALRAM 1986: 67), completely disregarding the fact that they are both almost identical and at the same time very similar to the caps worn by Cappadocian rulers and early Arsacid kings. In one of his publications, J. Wiesehöfer may have also misinterpreted the form and character of the headdress shown on the obverses of Baydād’s coins by defining it as “die spitze ‘Königs’ Tiara,” in opposition to “die vorkragende Tiara” or “Satrapentiara” in which the ruler is depicted on the reverses of the later type of his coinage (WIESEHÖFER 1994: 103). Interestingly, the latter served as a headdress for Baydād’s immediate successor, Ardaxšīr I (Fig. 6:c), and two subsequent *fratarakā* dynasts Vahbarz and Vādfirādād (ALRAM 1986: 166–169, pls. 17:520–18:545). It was also recognised on the relief from the so-called Fratarakā-Temple in Persepolis which depicted an unidentified local ruler in a *kandys* and holding a *barsom* (Fig. 8) (VON GALL 1972: 278; WIESEHÖFER 1994: 131), and may be considered as a close counterpart of the tiara of Waxšwar and the one depicted on the Kel-e Dāwūd relief.

There is one previously disregarded iconographic detail that may definitely prove that the tiara with raised side lappets in which Baydād is portrayed on the obverses of his coins does not terminate with a pointed apex but is surmounted by a bent top. This is what one may infer from the curved ridge clearly visible at the back of the tiara, which in all probability marks the edge of its top that falls on the right side. This remark meets an opinion just recently expressed by J. Wiesehöfer that the headdress under discussion cannot be perceived as the royal upright tiara, the *tiara orthē* of the Achaemenid kings (WIESEHÖFER 2007: 47).

Remarkably, the hem of headgear’s bent top of the discussed type of headdress, which is so clearly recognisable in the representations of Baydād’s tiara, is also evident on the coins of the above-mentioned Xerxes, king of Arsamosata, and Abdissares. Furthermore, this particular feature must have also been noticed by H. von Gall on the Batas-Herir

Fig. 6. Various forms of *tiara apagēs* (Drawing M. Grabowski).

Ryc. 6. Formy *tiara apagēs*.








relief since it was included in his sketch of the monument (BOEHMER, VON GALL 1973: fig. 2). Even though the sculpture's photos fail to give any unambiguous confirmation of this observation, it seems to be highly probable.

Finally, one should not attach much importance to the ostensibly conical shape of all the four tiaras in question (i.e. Baydād's, Xerxes's, Abdissares's and the one depicted on the Batas-Herir relief). Suffice it to recall the form of "satrapal tiara" worn by two of the ancestors of Antiochus I of Commagene, who were portrayed on the fragmentarily preserved steles from Nemrud Dağ (YOUNG 1964: 30, fig. 1). Despite its apparent conical and elongated shape, the headdress must be considered as a variation of the *tiara apagēs* (probably the last known example of this type of headdress), due to the clearly recognisable hem of its bent top, which is decorated with a row of circular elements, possibly pearls (Fig. 6:g).

If the line of reasoning presented above is cogent enough to warrant rejection of the representation of the royal upright tiara on the Batas-Herir relief, we should conclude that the image contradicts the literary evidence of Izates' royal headgear, and thus invalidates the identification of the depicted ruler as Izates II.

The stance and gesture of the ruler

The general similarity of the Batas-Herir relief to the sculptures of Commagene of the 1st c. BC turns out to be a delusion if we consider several significant stylistic features. The mode of representation of the human silhouette is the most noticeable difference. The figure on the Batas-Herir relief is shown in full profile with foreshortened chest and abdomen, unlike the figures of the Commagenian

a		Arsaces I, king of Parthia (247 – after 217 BC) (after ALRAM1986: 123, pl. 13:391)
b		Baydād, fratarakā ruler of Persis (beginning of the 2 nd c. BC) (after ALRAM1986: 165, pl. 17:511)
c		Ardaxšīr I, fratarakā ruler of Persis (first half of the 2 nd c. BC) (after ALRAM1986: 166, pl. 17:520)
d		Xerxes, king of Arsamosata in Sophene (ca. 220 – beginning of the 2 nd c. BC ?) (after ALRAM1986: 68–69, pl. 6:182)
e		Abdissares, king of Adiabene (ca. 164 BC ?) (after DE CALLATAY 1996: fig. 1:1.1d)
f		Ruler depicted on the Batas-Herir (Abdissares ?) (ca. 164 BC ?) (after BOEHMER, VON GALL 1973: pl. 20)
g		Unknown ancestor of Antiochos I of Commagene (ca. 69–34 BC), depicted on one of the stelae from Nemrud Dağ (after YOUNG 1964: fig. 1)

reliefs, which were presented frontally with only their heads and one of the legs turned to the side. The left shoulder of the Batas-Herir ruler is thus invisible, and only a fragment of the left hand grasping the staff is seen from behind the abdomen.

Another significant stylistic trait of the relief is the arrangement of the figure's legs, which are both turned to the right, and even though the right foot might seem slightly turned out, it is certainly not the pose with "Standbein" and "Spielbein" characteristic of the reliefs of Commagene.



Fig. 7. Sculpted stone slab from Daskyleion, depicting two magi in the scene of offering (ca. 500 BC) (source: <http://www.livius.org/da-dd/dascylium/dascylium.html>).

Ryc. 7. Plaskorzeźba z Daskylejonu ukazująca dwóch magów podczas składania ofiary (ok. 500 p.n.e.).

Fig. 8. Relief on the door jamb from the so-called Fratarakā-Temple in Persepolis (Photo M. Grabowski).

Ryc. 8. Relief na odrzwiach w tzw. Świątyni Fratarakā w Persepolis.



The manner of a full profile representation of a silhouette, with both feet placed in a line, is very common in ancient Near Eastern figurative art. Needless to say, it was also present in the Neo-Assyrian as well as the Achaemenid and post-Achaemenid rock sculptures, for instance in the Bisutun relief of Darius or in the later reliefs by the rock tombs of Qizqapan and the Kel-e Dāwūd (VON GALL 1974: figs. 2, 8). This trend probably prevailed in figurative art until the Middle Parthian Period; its latest examples are most likely two steles from Assur dated by inscriptions to the year AD 12/13 (MATHIESEN 1992: 23).

It is therefore necessary to point out that the profile representation of the Batas-Herir figure suggests

a much earlier date than the one resulting from the interpretation proposed by H. von Gall, i.e. AD ca. 52–54. On this basis we may even suppose that the relief is also significantly earlier than the sculptures of Commagene (ca. 69–36 BC), which show a tendency toward frontal representation. In this context, H.E. Mathiesen made an interesting remark about the apparent stylistic similarity in the treatment of figures between the Batas-Herir relief and the so-called Mithridates relief at Bisutun (late 2nd or the early 1st c. BC), thus suggesting their approximate contemporaneity (MATHIESEN 1992: 23–24). As will be seen below, this supposition may not be far from the truth, although the Batas-Herir relief may be several decades earlier than the sculpture of Bisutun.



a Fig 9. Layout of the palm of figure on the Batas-Herir relief: a – detail of the original photo (BOEHMER, VON GALL 1973: pl. 30); b – detail of the same photo overlaid with the fragment of H. von Gall's sketch (after BOEHMER, VON GALL 1973: fig. 2); c – detail of the same photo overlaid with the fragment of sketch by the author.

Ryc. 9. Układ dłoni postaci na reliefie z Batas-Herir: a – detal fotografii; b – detal fotografii z nałożonym fragmentem rysunku H. von Galla; c – detal fotografii z nałożonym fragmentem rysunku autora.



b



c

Another significant feature of the pose of the Batas-Herir figure is the arrangement of the right arm and hand. The arm is extended with only slightly bent elbow so that the hand is raised to eye level. The layout of palm itself (Fig. 9:a) is, however, largely unclear, and was described in various ways. Due to misleading cracks in the surface of the relief, C.F. Lehmann-Haupt was of the opinion that, in his right hand, the ruler holds an unidentified object terminating with a triangle at the bottom and surmounted with an oval (LEHMANN-HAUPT 1926: 281; PRZEWORSKI 1957: 170). This observation has been treated with scepticism by R.M. Boehmer, but he did not entirely exclude a possibility that the ruler holds an object of an undetermined shape (BOEHMER, VON GALL 1973: 70). Still H. von Gall retained much caution in his sketch of the relief by leaving parts of the right hand blank (Fig. 9:b).

A close examination of the photos published by the above-mentioned scholars (BOEHMER, VON GALL 1973: pls. 28, 30) shows that despite the heavy damage of the relief's surface in the area of the ruler's right hand, the layout of palm is more recognisable than it was previously considered. The thumb appears to be extended; the forefinger, as already observed by C.F. Lehmann-Haupt (1926: 281), is extended, although it is not clear if it is entirely straight or slightly bent. Both middle finger and the so-called ring finger are presumably bent to the inside of the palm and thus only partially visible. The little finger is quite well distinguishable and appears to be bent along the outer edge of the hand (Fig. 9:c).

This description, if correct, justifies the assumption that instead of holding an object, the palm of the ruler's right hand is arranged in a specific gesture of the



Fig. 10. Silver stater from Tarsus, issued by Datames, satrap of Cappadocia (378–372 BC) (Arthur S. Dewing Collection, photo M. Daniels, source: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/artifact?name=Dewing%202505&object=Coin>).

Ryc. 10. Srebrny stater z Tarsu wybity przez Datamesa, satrapę Kapadocji (378–372 p.n.e.).

“bent forefinger” that usually indicates an act of worship. It is most probable that the gesture has its roots in the Mesopotamian art prior to the Achaemenids, especially Neo-Assyrian.⁶ Despite the fact that Achaemenid art was to a great extent inspired by Neo-Assyrian monuments, representations of this particular gesture were then extremely rare, and remained uncommon during Hellenistic and Parthian times. On a greater scale this motif was reinvented only in the art of Sasanian Iran, undoubtedly resembling this gesture’s presence in the Sasanian court etiquette (CHOKSY 1990: 204–205).

One of the few examples deriving from the Achaemenid period is depicted on reverses of the silver staters struck in Tarsus by Datames, satrap of Cappadocia (378–372 BC). Curiously the gesture, which is considered to express adoration, in this case, is performed by a nude male identified as a deity named Ana. He stands in front of a *thymiaterion* together with another male figure who may represent Datames.⁷ Furthermore, the scene is

placed within a rectangular border that may indicate a temple interior (Fig. 10) (ALRAM 1986: 110, pl. 11: 341–343).

In ancient Mesopotamian figurative art, as well as in Sasanian iconography, the “bent forefinger” gesture was commonly depicted with the arm bent inwards, with the hand close to the worshipper’s mouth. A common feature of the representations on the issue of Datames and the Batas-Herir relief is that the arm of the figure performing the gesture is extended with only slightly bent elbow. Another similarity is the overall stance of both figures (the deity Ana and the Batas-Herir ruler), i.e. with feet placed in line, left hand lowered, and only partially seen from behind the abdomen, as well as the full profile representation of the whole silhouette. Yet, despite these similarities it would be unreasonable to suggest a direct connection between the Batas-Herir relief and the Achaemenid coins of Tarsus. Nonetheless, these observations suggest that the relief was executed earlier than it was hitherto believed.

⁶ In the art of the Neo-Assyrian Period, we may encounter numerous representations of this gesture performed by a king toward a statue of deity or divine symbols. The fact that the contemporary textual sources describe this gesture as *ubāna tarāsu*, which means “to extend a finger” (MAGEN 1986: 45–55), does not exclude its association with the “bent forefinger” gesture, since

the latter is only a conventional designation used in scholarly literature, and does not appear in any of the available textual sources.

⁷ It is possible that the discussed gesture when performed by a divine figure signifies a blessing bestowed upon a ruler (CHOKSY 1990: 204).

The garment and remaining features

The garment of the depicted ruler is a long tunic with its lower part or skirt pulled up in the middle by a band suspended from the belt, closely resembling the royal costume of Antiochus I of Commagene. The folds of the tunic are depicted in the form of parallel notches running outwards from the band. Even the belt knot, with two symmetrical loops tucked through the belt, closely resembles the Commagenian costume. Below the belt R.M. Boehmer recognised a supposed sword belt but no sword itself (BOEHMER, VON GALL 1973: 70).

Since the lower parts of the ruler's legs are heavily eroded, we may only suppose that beneath the tunic he was depicted wearing tight trousers like those of Antiochus I of Commagene. The boots are also badly preserved, although in the relief's background one may recognise that they were decorated with pairs of short ribbons or straps.

The ruler's shoulders, back, and a considerable part of the right side of his body are covered with a cape, most probably a Greek *chlamys* clasped somewhere above the right arm, although the clasp itself is not recognisable. The cape reaches at least to the mid-thigh, and its folds are represented in the form of several long vertical notches. The hem of the cape's left tail is partially visible in front of the ruler's left leg.

Resting on his left shoulder is a long staff that terminates in three or four small knobs. Some traces of the ruler's left hand, most probably grasping the staff in its middle portion, are also preserved, although the reconstruction of the grasp presented in the sketch in Fig. 3 is largely hypothetical. What is noticeable, furthermore, is the considerable inconsistency between the angle of the staff's lower and upper portions, which suggests a significant lack in the sculptor's skill.

Both in the image of the Batas-Herir ruler and the image of Antiochus I of Commagene the staffs and tiaras represent two indigenously Oriental types of insignia, although both headgears are quite different (as Antiochus wears the so-called Armenian tiara, whereas the one on the Batas-Herir relief may be referred to as the "satrapal tiara"). With the exception of the *chlamys*, which is a single Hellenistic trait, in both cases the royal garment also belongs to the Iranian cultural sphere. Although it is probably not the "Persian costume," which, according to the

inscription from Arsameia on the Nymphaios, Antiochus I ordered priests to wear on the occasion of his and his father's birthday (DÖRNER, GOELL 1963: 40), its most characteristic trait – the skirt raised in the middle by a band or sash – may be found in abundance in the art of the Achaemenid Period (JAMZADEH 1987: 267–269).

The coinage of Abdissares and the problem of the dating of his reign

The name Abdissares was considered by some early scholars to be of Semitic origin (DE SAULCY 1855: 101; LANGLOIS 1859: 15–20), but it was also mentioned in F. Justi's *Iranisches Namenbuch* as presumably Iranian (JUSTI 1885: xiv). The issue of its etymology was resolved definitely by E. Lipiński who recognised several versions of the name including Aramaic *'bd'šr* and Neo-Babylonian *mAb-di-šr*.⁸ The name was thus translated as "Servant of Ištar," with the theophoric element *Iššar* referring to the goddess *Iššarbēl* (= *Ištarbēl*) i.e. Ištar of Arbela. On this basis E. Lipiński suggested that the name Abdissares may have been likely borne by a ruler of Adiabene, where Arbela, the sacred city of Ištar, was located (LIPIŃSKI 1982: 120). Although this view did not receive full acknowledgment (e.g. CHAUMONT 1995), the findings made by F. de Callatay may be considered as a reliable validation of E. Lipiński's proposition.

Thus the final identification of Abdissares as king of Adiabene is based on the exceptional example of Abdissares' copper coinage, which was purchased some time ago by *Cabinet des Médailles de Bruxelles* (Fig. 11). The reverse of this particular coin shows an almost complete and clearly legible legend: [BAΣ]IAE[ΩΣ] [AB]ΔΙΣΣΑΡΟΥ [A]ΔΙΑΒΗΝΟΥ, meaning "of the king Abdissares, Adiabenean" (DE CALLATAY 1996: 138, fig. 2:2.1b). The addition of the term "Adiabenean" is an unprecedented act of displaying ethnic affiliation of a ruler in coinage legends, a practice otherwise unparalleled in the Hellenistic Near East, here undoubtedly having a significant ideological meaning that will be discussed in the final part of this paper.

According to F. de Callatay, the coin in question belongs to Type 2 of Abdissares' coinage whose obverse bears a portrait of the king turned to the right, with a short

⁸ The form *'bd'šr* may be found in the inscription no. 181 from Hatra, whereas the Neo-Babylonian form *mAb-di-šr* comes

from one of the texts of Murashu archive (LIPIŃSKI 1982: 119 with notes).



Fig. 11. Copper coin of Abdissares (Type 2.1b) (after DE CALLATAY 1996: fig. 2:2.1b).

Ryc. 11. Miedziana moneta Abdissaresa (Typ 2.1b).

curly beard and short hair seen from under the headdress (DE CALLATAY 1996: 135, 137, figs. 1:1.1a,b,d, 1:1.2a, 1:2.2a, 1:3a, 2:2.1b). The latter we may call the *tiara apagēs* or “satrapal tiara,” and – as was stressed above – it is identical to the headdress depicted on the Batas-Herir relief. The reverse of the coin depicts an eagle with closed wings, turned to the right, standing on a support in the form of a plain horizontal line. The eagle is flanked by the above-mentioned inscription, which is arranged vertically.

The whole bulk of this ruler’s coinage also includes another type of reverse (Type 3) that depicts a horse’s head between the legend, arranged horizontally and giving only the title and the name of the king. The iconography of Type 1 is basically the same as that of Type 2, with the only difference being the legend, which in the case of Type 1 does not include the term “Adiabenean” (Figs. 4, 11) (DE CALLATAY 1996: 135–137, figs. 1:1.1a,b,d, 1:1.2a, 3a).

Apart from the issue of the term mentioned above, the main problem regarding the historical context of the reign of Abdissares is the fact that he does not appear in any of the available textual sources, being known solely from the discussed coin series. Furthermore, none of his coins

comes from the proper archaeological investigations, as they were all acquired in unknown circumstances, probably in the area of Mosul, and consequently brought to the attention of European scholars (DE CALLATAY 1996: 138).

There are, however, some indications which may allow us to determine at least an approximate date of Abdissares’ reign. A striking similarity of his portrait to that of Xerxes, a local Sophenean ruler, indisputably implies a chronological correlation. The similarity obviously includes the presence of the identical type of *tiara apagēs* worn in the specific way of raised side lappets and possibly a neck flap, and encircled with a broad diadem. The same headdress also appears on a single copper coin of another ruler of this region – “der unbekannte König I,” perhaps a successor of Xerxes, whose name is only fragmentarily preserved and may be read as [---]ΑΣΑΝΟΥ (ALRAM 1986: 68–69, pl. 6:183).

On the other hand, Xerxes may be identified with his namesake who, according to Polybius (*Histories* VIII. 23), was besieged around 212 BC by Antiochus III⁹ in Armosata (i.e. Arsamosata in Sophene) that lies near the “Fair Plain” between the Euphrates and the Tigris. The

⁹ It is not entirely clear whether the account of Polybius refers to Antiochus III or Antiochus IV, though it seems that other available evidence points to Antiochus III (for Antiochus III see:

BLAU 1880: 33–39; BEVAN 1902: 15–16; for Antiochus IV see: VISCONTI 1825: 332–339; BABELON 1890: cxciv–cxvii).

extent of Xerxes' power is unclear, and since Polybius does not refer to him as the king of Sophene but the ruler of Armosata, it is probable that he ruled only over a part of this country (BABELON 1890: cxcvii). Apart from the district of Arsamosata his dominion may have also included the country of Xerxene, mentioned by Strabo (*Geography* XI.14.5) as one of the regions of Lesser Armenia.

Polybius (*Histories* VIII.23) claims that in the end, in order to preserve his kingdom, Xerxes was forced to submit to the Seleucid monarch. In return, he was allowed to retain his position and was even granted the hand of the king's sister, Antiochis, in marriage. Because of this generosity, Antiochus gained the affection and support of the "inhabitants of that part of the country." This account may be supplemented by a somewhat unclear notice by John of Antioch. According to this source, Antiochus wed his sister to Xerxes, "tyrant of Armenians," and, with her help, either killed or used Xerxes to reclaim "the kingdom of Persians" (presumably Armenian lands of the former Achaemenid Empire) (MÜLLER 1868: 557, fr. 53).¹⁰

Since sources do not provide any indication of the time of Xerxes' death, his reign may have extended into the beginning of the 2nd c. BC. This supposition may also be inferred from the remarks made by F. de Callatay who observed that the reverse types of Xerxes' issues depicting a standing or seated Athena Nikephoros or Nike advancing towards the left, closely resemble the iconography of the coins of the Cappadocian kings of the 2nd c. BC: Ariarathes IV, Ariarathes V and Orophernes (DE CALLATAY 1996: 141). Notably, one of these motifs, a seated Athena Nikephoros, also appears on the coin of the "Unknown King I" (ALRAM 1986: 68–69, pl. 6:183).

The exact chronological relation between Abdissares and Xerxes, as well as their supposed affinity, is an obscure issue. It was even suggested that Abdissares may have been Xerxes' son (VISCONTI 1825: 332–339) or father (BABELON 1890: 212). However, the one thing that is certain is that if they were not contemporaneous, the chronological gap between them must not have been long, with Abdissares being probably younger than Xerxes and the "Unknown King I." If so, it would be reasonable to propose that Abdissares ruled around the second quarter of the 2nd c. BC. This proposition can be supported by the

figure of the standing eagle depicted on the reverses of his coins, a motif probably derived from the iconography of the coinage of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 BC).

The eagle standing on a thunderbolt was the most common type of reverse of Ptolemaic coins, but it also appeared, though extremely rarely, on Seleucid coinage. Before Antiochus IV, it was employed only by Achaeus (220–215 BC) and Seleukos IV (187–175 BC), in both cases on a very limited scale (HOUGHTON 1983: nos. 117–123, 609–610). The vast occurrence of the same motif of the standing eagle with closed wings on the reverses of Antiochus IV's silver and bronze denominations was undoubtedly related to his campaigns against Egypt in 170–169 and in 168 BC (MITTAG 2006: 191–198). The adoption of the image by the Seleucid monarch was interpreted as a symbolic proclamation of his victory over the Ptolemies (NEWELL 1917: 26).

Consequently, Types 1 and 2 of Abdissares' coinage bearing the image of the standing eagle with closed wings, which were probably inspired by the issues of Antiochus IV, may be tentatively dated to the years after 170 BC.

Conclusions: An attempt at historical re-interpretation

The iconographic analysis of the Batas-Herir relief reveals that the portrait of the depicted ruler with the characteristic headdress, short hair, and beard is closely similar to the image of Abdissares represented on the obverses of his coins. Assuming that the royal figure depicted on the relief is in fact Abdissares, it is necessary to explore the meaning of the monument, as well as the unusual case of the term "Adiabenean" found in the legend of Type 2 of this ruler's coinage.

In order to propose a hypothetical solution of these issues one should examine the entire chain of political events that took place during the first half of the 2nd c. BC. The most significant turning point of that period was Antiochus III's defeat by the Romans (189 BC), and the subsequent treaty of Apamea (188 BC), which forced him to surrender territories west of the Taurus Mountains. According to Strabo (*Geography* XI.14.5), it was then that two Armenian *stratēgoi*, Artaxias and Zariadris,¹¹

¹⁰ I would like to express my gratitude to prof. T. Derda of the Department of Papyrology, Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw, for providing me with a translation of the discussed fragment.

¹¹ There are only few copper coins attributed to Zariadris, whose obverses depict a portrait of a ruler beardless and in the identical

type of tiara as the one worn by Ariarathes III and IV of Cappadocia (Fig. 5:g,h); reverses bear an image of a goddess standing on sphinxes and a legend with a name ΔΣΑΠΙ interpreted as a shortening of Δεαπιδρις (=Zariadris) and another word, presumably a patronymic (BABELON 1890: cxcviii, fig. 40).

proclaimed themselves kings in Greater Armenia and Sophene respectively (SYME 1995: 51). Rock inscriptions on boundary stones found in the vicinity of Lake Sevan suggest that both of them belonged to the former royal house of Orontids or, more probably, to its side line, and moreover that Zariadris may have been Artaxias' close relative or even father (CHAUMONT 1986).

A question arises about the chronological relation of Zariadris to Xerxes, ruler of Arsamosata, and to the "Unknown King I" who is supposed to be the latter's successor, as well as about the actual political situation in Sophene during the first decades of the 2nd c. BC. Hypothetically, Xerxes and Zariadris may have ruled Sophene simultaneously for several years, the latter initially as a *stratēgos* and after the defeat of Antiochus III at Magnesia (189 BC) as a king. We cannot be sure whether Xerxes by that time had already been succeeded by the "Unknown King I," nor do we know the time-span of the latter's reign during which he minted coins resembling those of his alleged predecessor.

Nevertheless, the expansive politics of Artaxias and Zariadris, who, according to Strabo, subjugated several neighbouring regions, including the one called Xerxene (Strabo, *Geography* XI.14.5), may lead to the assumption that the dynasty of Xerxes of Arsamosata was overthrown at some point during the second or even third decade of the 2nd c. BC.

This supposed scenario impinges on the issue of the striking similarity of Abdissares' portrait to that of Xerxes and the "Unknown King I." Such resemblance may be simply explained by a usage of similar iconographic pattern for the royal portraiture (a common practice in the Hellenistic kingdoms of the East), but it may also indicate that Abdissares was somehow related to the local Sopenian dynasty of Arsamosata. Yet the legends of Type 1 of Abdissares' coinage emphasize the idea that he was of indigenous Adiabenean origin. In order to explain this inconsistency, F. de Callatay suggested that Abdissares may have ruled over both areas – parts of Sophene and Adiabene (DE CALLATAY 1996: 140), but it is equally plausible to regard him as one of the descendants of the house of Xerxes who, some time after Zariadris' rise to power, was forced to seek refuge abroad, perhaps at the Seleucid court.

Unfortunately the sources do not offer any information about the political situation in Adiabene during the last years of the reign of Antiochus III. Even though one may presume that the weakness of the Seleucid state created convenient circumstances for all independence movements, the omission of Adiabene in the account of Strabo relating to the rebellion of Artaxias and Zariadris, suggests that the kingdom of Adiabene must have been proclaimed later, although probably not under Seleukos IV, whose reign was marked mainly by turmoil in Asia Minor (183–179 BC), i.e. the war between the allies of Rome (Pergamum, Cappadocia, and Bithynia) and Pharnakes of

Pontus assisted by the enigmatic figure of "the satrap of Lesser Armenia" (BEVAN 1902: 122–125).

Much more plausible is the connection of Abdissares' rule with the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the subsequent Seleucid monarch, who in his attempts to restore the prestige of the empire was much more successful than his brother and predecessor, Seleukos IV. After the victorious campaigns against Ptolemaic Egypt (170–169 and 168 BC), Antiochus attacked Artaxias of Armenia in 165 BC. The latter was forced into submission, but was also allowed to retain his position as a vassal ruler of Armenia. Fragments of the *Babylonian Astronomical Diaries* suggest that afterwards Antiochus IV marched through the basin of Lake Van to the Great Zab, and further south, passing through Adiabene (GERA, HOROWITZ 1997: 247).

The situation met by Antiochus IV in northern Mesopotamia may have called for strong political measures, as the region was probably already occupied by the Arabic "Scenitae" tribes of which we hear from Strabo (*Geography* XVI.1.8). The presence of these restless nomads undoubtedly disturbed the important trade route traversing Adiabene along the Tigris, linking Seleucia on the Tigris and Antiochia in Mygdonia (Nisibis) (MITTAG 2006: 299). Antiochus, whose goal was to restore the economic and administrative viability of the state, may have then appointed Abdissares as *stratēgos* or as a vassal ruler of Adiabene in order to fill the political void in the region, and thus to ensure a steady flow of goods through that part of Mesopotamia. This supposed act might be compared to the installation of Hyspaosines in Characene, whom Antiochus IV appointed as a governor (*eparch*) of the district of Antiochia on the Tigris (Charax Spasinu) after his arrival at the Persian Gulf coast (SCHUOL 2000: 267).

After the death of Antiochus IV in 164 BC, when the empire plunged into another period of deterioration and internal struggles, Hyspaosines belonged to the group of governors and high state officials, who remained loyal to the Seleucid authority, but there were some who seized the opportunity to establish their own independent domains.

One of them was Timarchus, advisor to the late Antiochus IV, who proclaimed himself king ca. 161 BC, at the time when Demetrius (II) escaped from Rome and contested the rule of Antiochus IV's young son, Antiochus V Eupator. Timarchus' main seat was Media, and most of his coins were minted in Ecbatana, but some specimens derive most probably from Seleucia on the Tigris, indicating that for a brief period of time he was recognised as king in Babylonia (HOUGHTON 1979).

However, in some provinces the turmoil started as early as ca. 163 BC. According to Diodorus Siculus (*Library of History* XXXI.19a), approximately at that time the governor of Commagene, Ptolemaeus, also managed to broke away from Seleucid suzerainty (SULLIVAN 1977: 742–748). It seems that independence would have been even easier to obtain for the governor of Adiabene, a region

located much further east from the Seleucid centre of power in Syria. The time and political milieu were undoubtedly most advantageous for Abdissares to proclaim himself king of Adiabene.

If indeed he had done so, his next steps were probably the commencement of minting of the copper coinage and taking propaganda measures aimed at legitimisation of his power and royal status. Hence the year of Antiochus IV's death, i.e. 164 BC, should be considered a terminus post quem not only for the foundation of the kingdom of Adiabene, but also for the first series of coins of Abdissares,¹² as well as for the execution of the Batas-Herir relief.

Although we do not know which groups of Adiabenean population supported Abdissares or if there was any resistance against the new ruler, Greek communities in the cities such as Nineveh (READE 1998: 65–83; 2001: 187–199) and most likely Arbela, as well as in towns such as Kalchu (OATES 1968: 63–66), did not necessarily find themselves in opposition to Abdissares. On the contrary, his rise to power was certainly not a violent rebellion inspired by a strong reluctance towards the Seleucid dynasty and the Greeks. It is enough to say that reverses of his coinage depicting the motif of the standing eagle with closed wings may have intentionally recalled the memory of the late Antiochus IV, whose reign was probably associated with a period of relative stability.

On the other hand, obverse designs closely resembling those of earlier Sophenean rulers (to whom Abdissares was apparently related) may have been perceived by indigenous Adiabenean nobility as foreign and thus difficult to accept. Hence the introduction of the term "Adiabenean" to the coinage legends, which should be considered as a propaganda measure aiming to counter-balance the portrait of the ruler represented according to the foreign fashion. This term would thus be an important (though in reality false) evidence of the ruler's ethnic origin and cultural affiliation, which were usually the most crucial aspects of legitimisation of a newly acquired royal status.

It is possible that the idea of the legitimisation of Abdissares' rule, not only in the eyes of Adiabenean people but also in the eyes of gods, was carried out in the rock sculpture of Batas-Herir. Thus the act of proclamation of Abdissares' authority would be a political aspect of what may have been a religious scene portraying the king in reverence toward local deities. That the relief shows only the

figure of the ruler does not exclude such interpretation. In the scenes of worship in Mesopotamian, and especially in Neo-Assyrian art, the lack of a proper cult object (e.g. a statue of deity), was usually compensated for by the presence of divine symbols (SEIDL 1971: 483–495). The problem is that in the case of the Batas-Herir relief, the field in front of the ruler's right hand, where one would expect divine symbols, is either entirely eroded or originally blank. It should be noted that there is a slight possibility that the last traces of these alleged symbols vanished completely during the last century due to the weathering of the rock and intentional devastation. The basis for this supposition is a short reference to "Hittite hieroglyphs" observed by H.T. Bossert in the area of the ruler's hand (BOSSERT 1942: 90), as the scholar may have confused the divine symbols with pictographic signs of the Luwian script.

Despite the tentative character of these considerations, we should not exclude the possibility that two or three divine symbols were once depicted near Abdissares' right hand as an object of the act of adoration performed by him. Countless examples of such emblems may be found in the art of ancient Mesopotamia, but they also occurred in the iconography of Achaemenid period, as well as later, and this applies especially to astral symbols such as the sun-disk, the star and the crescent.

The fragmentarily preserved stele from Babylon bearing a simplified copy of the Bisutun relief and inscription shows Darius' triumph under the aegis of deities represented by the symbol of the eight-pointed star, and according to the graphic reconstruction, a sun-disk and a crescent (SEIDL 1999: fig. 4). Elaborate devices of the post-Achaemenid tomb of Qizqapan, namely a circle symbolising the moon orb with a divine figure inside and a star may also be considered as a relevant analogy, being also an evidence of the Iranian-Semitic syncretism in religious iconography (VON GALL 1974: 142; BOYCE, GRENET 1991: 103–105).

There would be no point in recalling all the abundant representations of astral symbols in the so-called Parthian world (e.g. COLLEDGE 1986: 1, 5–6, 19–20; TANABE 1988–89: 77, 80–81), but it should be mentioned that the deities symbolised by the star and crescent motifs were continually worshipped in northern Mesopotamia throughout the Parthian Period. A testimony of these beliefs may be found for instance in the two honorary steles from Assur of the beginning of the 1st c. AD, which depict local

¹² There is no possibility to determine whether Abdissares' coinage was minted in Arbela or in one of other cities of the region, such as Natunia on the Kapros (Lesser Zab) (MILIK 1962:

51–58; CHAUMONT 1982: 155–157) or Nineveh (LE RIDER 1967: 13), where mints were located during the Parthian Period.

dignitaries in attitudes of reverence toward deities indicated solely by the two above-mentioned symbols (MATHIESEN 1992: 190–191, Cat. nos. 158, 159, figs. 41, 42).

Finally, the Batas-Herir relief may, to a certain extent, 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. Scenes with only a single figure of ruler may be found for example in the Khinnis/Bavian rock complex associated with the canal system of Sennacherib (BÖRKER-KLÄHN 1982: 207, nos. 189–199), located 60 km north-east of Nineveh, therefore most probably still within the borders of the Hellenistic kingdom of Adiabene.

However, unlike the Neo-Assyrian sculptures, the actual function of the Batas-Herir relief in relation to its

immediate surroundings is an issue which currently alludes any attempts of analysis and interpretation. One of the reasons is the complete lack of archaeological research in the proximity of the relief, at the foot of the rock wall on which it is carved, as well as at the nearby site of Tell Tlai, where only a survey was conducted. It is possible that extensive excavations in these areas would shed some more light on both practical role (e.g. in the ritual connected with royal cult, very common in Hellenistic monarchies) and ideological significance of the Batas-Herir relief.

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MACIEJ GRABOWSKI

ABDISSARES Z ADIABENE I RELIEF Z BATAS-HERIR

Adiabene to kraina w północnej Mezopotamii, obejmująca przede wszystkim obszar tzw. trójkąta asyryjskiego, czyli tereny położone między rzekami Tygrys i Mały Zab. Korzenie politycznej historii tej krainy sięgają z pewnością początków imperium seleukidzkiego. Z nielicznych wzmianek w dziełach historiografii klasycznej sądzić można, że Adiabene było początkowo jedną z seleukidzkich prowincji, lecz już w I wieku p.n.e. posiadało status regionalnego królestwa rządzonego przez lokalną dynastię.

Mimo iż w historycznych granicach tej krainy mieszczą się tak ważne i dobrze rozpoznane stanowiska jak Aszur, Niniwa czy Kalchu, w materiale archeologicznym brak jednoznacznych świadectw historii politycznej Adiabene. Tak wąski zakres dostępnych źródeł powoduje, iż znane nam są jedynie pojedyncze epizody z dziejów tej krainy. Nie wiemy natomiast, kiedy dokładnie i w jakich okolicznościach Adiabene uzyskała niezależność od Seleukidów. Całkowicie niejasna jest także geneza lokalnej dynastii. Artykuł ten ma na celu zaproponowanie odpowiedzi na powyższe pytania.

Podstawę dla tych rozważań stanowi unikalny egzemplarz miedzianej monety Abdissaresa (Ryc. 4), uznanego dotychczas za jednego z dynastów Sofene. Według F. de Callaraya (1996), niemal kompletnie zachowana grecka legenda na rewersie tej monety, obok tytułu królewskiego i imienia Abdissaresa, zawiera termin „Adiabeńczyk”, wskazujący, iż był on władcą Adiabene. Odkrycie to potwierdza wcześniejsze przypuszczenia E. Lipińskiego (1982), który sugerował, że Abdissares pochodził z Adiabene.

Innym materialnym świadectwem adiabeńskiej monarchii, szeroko omówionym w artykule, jest płaskorzeźba skalna znajdująca się nieopodal miejscowości Batas w prowincji Arbil w dzisiejszym Iraku, zwana reliefem z Batas-Herir (Ryc. 1–3). Płaskorzeźba ta przedstawia postać stojącego władcy z uniesioną prawą ręką. Jak dotąd jej jedyna rzetelna analiza ikonograficzna przeprowadzona została przez R. M. Boehmera i H. von Galla (1973). Drugi z tych

badaczy zaproponował także pierwszą historyczną interpretację tej płaskorzeźby, zgodnie z którą przedstawia ona władcę Adiabene, Izatesa II (36 – ok. 54 n.e.), i upamiętnia jego triumf nad królem partyjskim, Wologazesem I.

Wiele wskazuje jednak na to, iż powyższy pogląd jest błędny, zaś w przedstawionym na płaskorzeźbie władcy należy raczej widzieć innego króla Adiabene – Abdissaresa. Głównym argumentem jest w tym przypadku kształt nakrycia głowy, które postrzegane było dotychczas jako tiara wyprostowana (gr. *tiara orthē* lub *kidaris*). Przywilej noszenia tego nakrycia został według Józefa Flawiusza nadany Izatesowi II przez partyjskiego monarchę, Artabana II. Szczegółowa analiza fotografii reliefu pozwala jednak stwierdzić, że ukazane na nim nakrycie głowy to tzw. tiara nieuszywniona lub zgięta (gr. *tiara apagēs*), zwana niekiedy także tiarą perską lub satrapalną, będąca zarówno pod względem formy, jak i znaczenia ideologicznego, dokładnym przeciwieństwem tiary wyprostowanej (por. Ryc. 5–8). Specyficzny sposób, w jaki została ona przedstawiona – z podniesionymi kłapkami bocznymi, przewiązanymi diademem, który okala całe nakrycie głowy – ściśle koresponduje z tiarą Baydada, władcy Persydy z początku II w. p.n.e.

Nie ulega wątpliwości, iż Abdissares został sportretowany w identycznym nakryciu głowy na awersie bitych w jego imieniu monet, co w oczywisty sposób wskazuje na tożsamość władcy przedstawionego na reliefie z Batas-Herir. Ze względu na ogromne znaczenie tego elementu ikonograficznego dla identyfikacji wspomnianej postaci, w artykule omówione zostały pokrewne rodzaje nakryć głowy, począwszy od okresu achemenidzkiego, aż do I wieku p.n.e.

Dalsza analiza ikonograficzna ujawniła, że – pomimo podobieństwa do reliefów z Kommagene z I wieku p.n.e. – relief powstał najprawdopodobniej w II wieku p.n.e., za czym przemawia sposób przedstawienia sylwetki władcy w pełnym profilu. Omówiony został także strój oraz gest, który władca czyni wyciągniętą przed siebie prawą ręką.

Mimo znaczących zniszczeń powierzchni płaskorzeźby, układ prawej dłoni pozostaje do pewnego stopnia nadal czytelny. Pięść wydaje się zaciśnięta, z wyciągniętym palcem wskazującym i najpewniej kciukiem, co interpretować można jako popularny w ikonografii starożytnego Bliskiego Wschodu tzw. „gest zgiętego palca”, oznaczający modlitwę oraz adorację bóstwa lub przedmiotu kultu (**Ryc. 9, 10**).

Po ustaleniu tożsamości przedstawionego na płaskorzeźbie z Batas-Herir władcy i określeniu jej ogólnej tematyki, podjęta została próba historycznej reinterpretacji tego monumentu w odniesieniu do miedzianych monet Abdissaresa (**Ryc. 4, 11**) i na podstawie źródeł tekstowych.

Podobieństwo jego portretu do wizerunków dwóch władców Sofene z przełomu III i II wieku p.n.e. sugeruje, iż mógł on być z nimi w jakimś stopniu spokrewniony, a dystans chronologiczny między nimi nie mógł być duży. Natomiast w oparciu o motyw „kroczącego orła” na rewersie monet tego władcy przypuszczać można, że emisja ta pochodzi z czasów zbliżonych do panowania Antiocha IV

Epifanesa (175–164 p.n.e.). Obecność tego motywu na monetach Antiocha IV jest z reguły wiązana z jego zwycięskimi wojnami z ptolemejskim Egiptem.

Przypuszczalnie to właśnie Antioch IV pod koniec swego panowania osadził Abdissaresa w Adiabene jako stratega lub lokalnego władcę, wypełniając tym samym polityczną pustkę w regionie, który przecinały ważne szlaki handlowe. Być może tuż po rychłej śmierci Antiocha IV, kiedy imperium seleukidzkie pogrążone było w kolejnym kryzysie, Abdissares zdołał poszerzyć zakres swojej władzy i przyjąć tytuł królewski. Płaskorzeźba z Batas-Herir, na której król przedstawiony jest w pełnym majestacie, tj. w tiarze, diademie i z laską w dłoni, powstała być może jako wizualny środek proklamacji nowej władzy w obliczu lokalnych bóstw. Natomiast termin „Adiabeńczyk”, umieszczany na monetach Abdissaresa, wskazuje z jednej strony na próbę legitymizacji władzy przez manifestację kulturowej więzi z mieszkańcami Adiabene, z drugiej zaś sugeruje, iż w rzeczywistości był on najpewniej człowiekiem obcego pochodzenia.