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POMPEY'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST MITHRADATES.

By J. G. C. ANDERSON.

When Dr. Rice Holmes' *Roman Republic* came to hand and I began to turn over at random the pages of vol. i, the first passage which caught my eye was the discussion of Pompey's short campaign against Mithradates. It occurs in one of those numerous and lengthy appendices, attached to each of the three volumes, which the author calls 'Part II,' and in which, with regal disregard of the prices and prejudices of publishers, he seeks to probe to the bottom every difficulty that arises in the course of his investigations. This Second Part, which the author hopes some may not find tedious, is, I think, the section to which most scholars will turn first. The discussion of the campaign (p. 428 ff.) revived memories of old studies of my own in which I seemed to have reached somewhat more definite conclusions, at any rate on some points, than Dr. Holmes offers to his readers. In the description of the campaign which he gives in the narrative portion of his work (p. 206 f.) he takes, in my opinion, the correct view about its general course, but the discussion of details does not seem to me to be quite satisfying nor to dispose of the main difficulty which arises out of Strabo's localization of one of the places concerned. Dr. Holmes remarks that in the records of the conquests which dazzled the contemporaries of Pompey this is the only one that enables us to get even a glimmering of the manœuvres by which he conquered. For this reason, and because the geographical points have an interest of their own—while one of them at any rate has an historical interest apart from this particular context and involves the question whether Strabo is always trustworthy in details—it is worth while to review the problems as briefly as possible.

The materials out of which the campaign has to be pieced together are indeed, as our author says, very imperfect. They consist of the three narratives of Plutarch (*Pomp.* 32 ff.), Appian (*Mithr.* 98 ff.), and Dio (36, 46 ff.), a brief summary in Orosius¹ (vi, 4, 3 ff.), references in Strabo's account of Little Armenia to two of the localities, viz. Dasteira and Sinoria (xii, 3, 28), and descriptions by Frontinus of stratagems practised on both sides. Of the narratives Plutarch's agrees in most essentials with that of Dio and, while less detailed, gives one or two facts not mentioned by

¹ Cp. also Livy, *Epit.* 100-1, Florus i, 40, 22 ff. and Eutropius, vi, 12.

him. Appian disagrees in several points, but he is a careless writer, and it is clear that Dr. Holmes is right in thinking that where he differs from others he is not to be trusted. Orosius gives one or two useful pieces of information, probably following Livy, Book 101, which was also perhaps used by Dio, as we shall see. There can be little doubt that the ultimate source of all our materials was Theophanes of Mytilene.

We must begin by sketching the course of the campaign. In the year 66 B.C. Pompey advanced from eastern Galatia, and Mithradates fell back, devastating the country as he went. When the armies entered Armenia Minor, the king took up a strong position on a well-watered hill near Dasteira, hoping to starve out his enemy. Here he was besieged by Pompey, who succeeded in destroying part of his superior cavalry force by a stratagem described by Frontinus (ii, 5, 33). When the siege had lasted 45 days (or more), the king learned that Pompey had obtained supplies, that he had secured control of Anaïtis [Akilisene] by means of some men—whatever that may signify (διὰ τινῶν ἐχειρώσατο, Dio)—and that he had received reinforcements from Cilicia. So he decided to retire, and by a stratagem (described by Frontinus i, 1, 7) he escaped with his forces *praeter ipsa hostium castra* and marched towards the Euphrates ('to the Armenia of Tigranes,' Dio). Next morning, says Appian, Pompey followed and in the daytime he came up with and attacked the enemy's rear-guard; but Mithradates repelled the attack with his horse, bivouacked for the night in a dense forest, and next day took up a position on a precipitous rocky hill, accessible only by one path. These details are not mentioned by Plutarch and Dio, but the former states that Pompey overtook the king in the region of (περὶ) the Euphrates and encamped opposite to him, while Dio indicates that they were now getting close to the frontier,¹ i.e. the frontier between Little and Great Armenia (or more specifically Akilisene). Eutropius also places the ensuing battle in Armenia Minor.

Pompey now decided to attack by night, and (according to Dio), while the king's troops were resting at midday, he marched unobserved ahead of them and occupied the hilly ground commanding a defile through which they would pass. At night the king fell unsuspectingly into the trap and his army was destroyed, the Romans being aided in the later stages of the battle by the rising of the moon behind them.

Dio alone mentions this stratagem. Plutarch describes the battle as being fought in moonlight but apparently conceives it as an attack on the king's second entrenched position. This is a serious discrepancy, but Plutarch is a biographer and he may have

¹ Ch. 48, 3: Pompey did not venture to attack by night (owing to his own ignorance of the country) by day (for the king did not leave his camp) nor πρὶν σφας πρὸς τῇ μεθορίᾳ γενέσθαι.

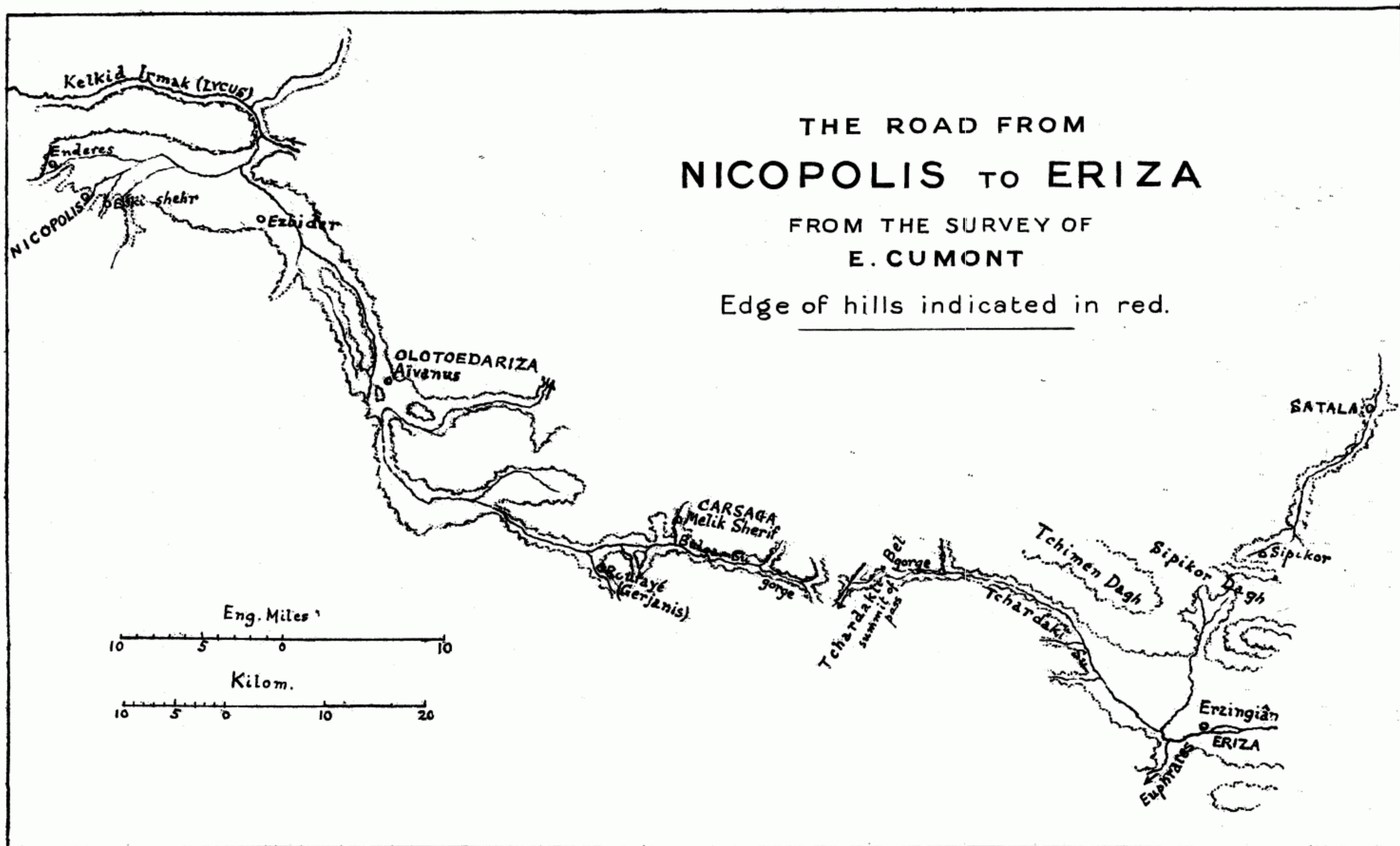


FIG. 7.

omitted¹ Pompey's forward movement, made as a result of his decision to attack at night. Dio's version is perhaps supported by Frontinus²: 'Pompeius, fugientem Mithridatem cupiens ad proelium compellere, elegit tempus dimicationi nocturnum, ut *abeunti se opponeret*: atque ita praeparatus subitam hostibus necessitatem decernendi iniecit,' etc. Appian also locates the battle round the king's second position, which (as we have seen) he calls a precipitous hill, but against all the other evidence³ he turns it into a battle fought by day, and his description of it differs so utterly from those of Dio and Plutarch that it must be put aside. It is not the only important point in which his discrepant narrative must be rejected.⁴

From this disastrous battle Mithradates contrived to escape, and he diverged (*devertit*, Orosius) to a fortress which was one of his chief treasures. It is called by Plutarch *Σίνωρα*, by Appian *Σινόρηγα* (accus.), and by Strabo *Σινόρια*. According to the last-named, who is following Theophanes, it lay on the outskirts of the Pontic kingdom in the mountainous region of Paryadres, close to the border of Great Armenia. Here the king rewarded his followers, and then set out 'towards Armenia to Tigranes' (Plutarch), but learning that the latter had arrested his envoys, he made for the sources (*πηγαί*) of the Euphrates (which Appian says he crossed on about the fourth day) and fled to Colchis by way of the river Apsaros, i.e. the Tchorok.

It remains to add that the city of Nicopolis, which Pompey founded to commemorate his victory, is stated by Appian and by Dio to have been founded on the field of his victory.⁵ This statement is certainly false. The city was situated at the village of Purkh, 3 miles or 5 kilometres SE. of Enderes and 6 miles south of the river Lycus, on the foothills of the mountains that form the southern limit of the fertile plain of Ashkar (i.e. Akshahr) Ova. That is a long way from the scene of the victory, which lay near the eastern frontier of Armenia Minor. Strabo says the city was founded in the neighbourhood of (*περὶ*) Dasteira.

Such is the outline of the campaign. We are now in a position to consider the localities. It is perfectly plain that Mithradates' ultimate objective was Great Armenia and that he intended to enter it by way of Akilisene. It follows that his line of retreat was up the valley of the Lycus, the only artery of communication running through Little Armenia from the west into Great Armenia.

¹ He omits the cavalry action at Dasteira recorded by Dio, Appian (below), Livy, and Frontinus.

² ii, 1, 12.

³ Dio, Plutarch, Livy (epit. 101), Frontinus (l.c.), Orosius, Florus, Eutropius.

⁴ The cavalry combat mentioned above (p. 100, and p. 101, n. 1) is placed by him before Armenia Minor was entered and the siege at Dasteira began,

wrongly. Dio is supported by Frontinus ii, 5, 33 in Armenia.

⁵ Appian 105: *ἐνθα τὴν μάχην ἐνέκα Μιθριδάτην* (a statement which Dr. Holmes thinks 'must evidently be taken in an extended sense': it is simply inaccurate, and is doubtless an inference from the name Nicopolis). Dio 36, 50, 3 (not mentioned by Dr. Holmes): *ἐν τῷ χωρίῳ ἐν ᾧ ἐνευικήκει*.

Pompey's object was to bring him to action before he reached the frontier of Akilisene, and finding him determined to avoid action, he took the precaution of securing some control¹ of Akilisene so as to bar the crossing of the Euphrates at that point. Clearly, then, the campaign moved up the Lycus valley and towards the watershed of Tchardakli Bel and Erzingiân. Now the king's first position after entering Little Armenia was on a hill near (κατὰ) Dasteira. Manifestly Dasteira was in Little Armenia; the accounts of the campaign leave no shadow of doubt about it, and Orosius definitely says 'Pompeius . . . in minore Armenia iuxta montem Dastracum castra regis obsidione conclusit.'

But a mountain of trouble has arisen from Strabo's statement about Dasteira. He is explaining that Mithradates had established his hold on Little Armenia and the country on its north by erecting 75 forts, in which he deposited the greater part of his treasures. One of the most important of them was Sinoria. 'For,' he proceeds, 'the whole range of Paryadres offers many suitable conditions for such a purpose, since it is well watered and wooded and is in many parts intersected by steep ravines and precipices. And at the last Mithradates fled to these outskirts of the Pontic kingdom before the attack of Pompey, and occupying a well-watered hill near Dasteira in Akilisene (near at hand also was the Euphrates, which separates Akilisene from Little Armenia), he stayed there till he was besieged and forced to flee over the mountains to Colchis and thence to Bosporos'—καὶ τῆς Ἀκιλισσηνῆς κατὰ Δάστειρα εὐδρον ὄρος καταλαβόμενος (πλησίον δ' ἦν καὶ ὁ Εὐφράτης ὁ διορίζων τὴν Ἀκιλισσηνὴν ἀπὸ τῆς μικρᾶς Ἀρμενίας), κτλ. Near (περὶ) this place, adds Strabo, Pompey founded Nicopolis in Little Armenia.

Relying on this passage, Mommsen and Drumann produced narratives of the campaign which Dr. Holmes has no difficulty in showing to be absurd. His own argument, however, I find myself unable to follow. He sees that Strabo appears to mean that Dasteira was on the east bank of the Euphrates, and that this is irreconcilable with the accounts of the campaign. He sees that if (as every one admits) the battlefield was on the western bank, so also *a fortiori* was Dasteira. But he seems to think that the difficulty disappears if we suppose that Akilisene lay partly on the west bank of the Euphrates, as is indicated on Kiepert's map and on my own. This supposition would, of course, enable us to transfer the battlefield to the right, or west, bank, but it would still leave Dasteira and the whole scene of the campaign within Akilisene, that is, within Great Armenia. Yet Dr. Holmes decides that Dasteira

¹ Dio's vague words do not seem necessarily to mean that Pompey 'sent a detachment into the district of Akilisene by the nearer bank of the Euphrates,' as Dr. Holmes says, modifying a sug-

gestion of M. Th. Reinach. A detachment could not stop Mithradates' army and might find itself in a very perilous position.

lay in Lesser Armenia, not far from Purkh (Nicopolis), and criticizes M. Th. Reinach for bracketing *καὶ τῆς Ἀκιλισσηνῆς*, which he rightly recognized to be erroneous.

To begin with, we have to note that all the MSS. except two very minor ones¹ read not *Ἀκιλισσηνῆς* but *Ἀγγολισσηνῆς*, a name elsewhere unattested. We might suppose that *Ἀγγολισσηνή* is, or conceals, the name of a district of Lesser Armenia; but no name like it occurs in Ptolemy, who gives to the most northerly of the districts of Little Armenia the name of Orbalisene² (v, 6, 18). Moreover, although the correction *Akilisene* is not perhaps (given Strabo's defects of style) absolutely imposed by the following parenthesis, yet it is almost inevitable and it seems to be supported by the words 'in Little Armenia' which Strabo adds to define the position of Nicopolis and which appear to imply a contrast. This last point would also tell against the rejection of *τῆς Ἀγγολισσηνῆς* (or *Ἀκιλισσηνῆς*) as an interpolation, though one feels that the genitive is awkwardly placed in the sentence. The most probable supposition is that *Ἀκιλισσηνῆς* is what Strabo wrote, and that he made a mistake. The prevalent belief in his infallibility is a relic from the time when it was thought that classical writers never made mistakes. Elsewhere I have pointed out errors in Strabo's historical statements about his own native region of Pontus and indicated that there are geographical errors to be found by those who study his narrative closely.³ In many places, too, the extreme vagueness of his statements is very marked and is, I have little doubt, attributable to lack of precise knowledge and dependence on books, especially historical books (like that of Theophanes), which were sure to be vague on matters of geography. Here (the textual question apart) Strabo makes one statement that is, at best, open to the charge of excessive vagueness, and one that is positively false. (1) He says that Dasteira was near the Euphrates. It was not Dasteira but the final battlefield that lay near the river. Dasteira was about two days' march further west. His later statement that Dasteira was in the neighbourhood of Nicopolis is more like the truth, and we may suggest that the actual site may have been the dominating hill of Eski-shehr, about 2 kilometres east of Nicopolis, which M. Cumont describes as a rocky ridge almost entirely surrounded by a deep ravine and not easily accessible except from the south-east.⁴ From there to the Euphrates at Erzingiân is a distance of about 81 miles or 130 kilometres by road. (2) Strabo is absolutely wrong about the northern and north-western boundary of Akilisene.⁵ The

¹ Kramer's note runs: *Ἀγγολισσηνῆς* codd. exc. xx (?), Xyl(ander) corr.

² Müller regards his whole account as extraordinarily confused and badly compiled from various sources.

³ See *Anatolian Studies presented to Sir W. M. Ramsay* (to be published shortly).

⁴ *Stud. Pont.* ii, p. 313. His suggestion that this was Appian's precipitous hill, where Mithradates took up his final position, is possible only if Appian has transferred the description to the wrong site—which indeed a careless writer might do.

⁵ Cp. also xi. 12, 3. The source followed by Pliny v, 83 also made the Euphrates the boundary.

name, which appears in Procopius as Ekelesene, is the Graecized form of the Armenian Ekeleats : in Byzantine times it was abbreviated to Keltzene (or Kelsene¹). The region designated by this name was called Anaïtis or Anaëtica,² because its territory belonged to the Persian goddess Anâhita, whose cult was widespread in Armenia.³ Now the evidence of Armenian writers⁴ proves that the great sanctuary of Anaïtis in Akilisene was at Erez or Eriza, later called Erznkay, the modern Erzingiân on the western (or rather northern) bank of the Euphrates. The fertile plain of Erzingiân was always the fairest part of Akilisene, and in later centuries it monopolized the name, while the mountainous portion south of the river⁵ was distinguished by the (Armenian) name Mouzouron, whence the modern Munzur or Mezur Dagh. From the tenth century Eriza itself bore the name of Keltzene; by that time it had developed from a *komopolis* into an important town and military fortress.⁶ It is clear, therefore, that the boundary of Lesser Armenia towards Erzingiân was not the Euphrates but the watershed of Tchardakli Bel, over which the road from Nicopolis passes to descend into the Euphrates valley. Here, too, Vespasian fixed the frontier of the Roman Empire. 'Ce rempart naturel,' says M. Cumont,⁷ 'était une protection bien plus efficace que ne l'eût été le fossé du fleuve, qui à cette hauteur n'est plus qu'un cours d'eau de mediocre importance.'

Near this boundary lay the defile which proved the death-trap of Mithradates' army. We may identify it with the defile of the Bulgar Su on the west of the watershed rather than with the gorge of the Tchardakli Su on the east of the pass. The distance of the former from Eski-Shehr, which we have suggested as the site of Dasteira, is less than 50 miles or 80 kilometres, not too great a distance for a retreating army to cover in the time. The valley of the Bulgar Su is described by M. Cumont.⁸ 'Au delà de Carsaga [Melik-Sherif], qui était la dernière station romaine, la vallée du Boulgar-Sou se resserre, et devient par endroits un véritable défilé, serpentant entre de hautes montagnes pauvrement boisées de conifères. La pente s'accroît, et le ruisseau franchit parfois avec fracas des seuils de rochers. La route est déserte . . . A deux heures de Mélik-Sherif, on aperçoit cependant à gauche un pauvre hameau caché dans un vallon latéral. Une lieue plus loin se détache à droite un chemin menant à Kémakh par les hauteurs, puis une montée assez

¹ Eustathius on Dionysios, *Perieg.*, 765 (Müller).

² Dio 36, 48; Pliny, *N.H.*, 33, 82 and 5, 83.

³ Strabo xi, 14, 16; H. Gelzer, *Ber. d. sächs. Ges. d. Wiss. zu Leipzig*, 1896, p. 111 ff.

⁴ Moses of Chorene ii, 60, tr. Langlois in *F.H.G.* v, p. 393; Agathangelos, tr. Gelzer, *op. cit.*, pp. 114, 116 (tr. Langlois, *op. cit.*, pp. 125, 167) and in the Greek version, ed. de Lagarde, pp. 14, 67.

⁵ Strabo makes Akilisene march on the south with Sophene, and in this he is borne out by c. 24 of Plutarch's *Lucullus* (cp. Cumont in *Revue Arch.* 1905, p. 26 f.)

⁶ Cp. H. Gelzer, *Notitiae Episcop.* in *Bayer. Abhandl.*, 1900, p. 580, and *Georgius Cyprius*, p. 183 f.; Cumont, *Stud. Pont.* ii, p. 337 ff.

⁷ *Stud. Pont.* ii, p. 331.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 330.

douce conduit au col du Tchardaklu-Bel (2,060 mètres) qui sépare le dernier sous-affluent du Lycus de ceux de l'Euphrate et le bassin de la Mer Noire de celui du Golfe Persique.¹

Nothing definite can be said about the fort of Sinoria, the richest of the king's treasures, which the fancy of Theophanes dubbed *Συνορία* because it lay on 'the borderland' between the two Armenias and which (accordingly) Ammianus Marcellinus calls *Sinhorium* (in one MS. *Synorium*). It was the fort with the secret underground chambers, containing iron-bound bronze vessels stored with money, which was surrendered to Pompey in 65-4 by Stratonike, one of the wives of Mithradates.¹ Its name is mentioned only by Dio and under the form *Symphorion*, which is clearly a misreading of *Synhorium* and indicates that he used a Latin source, probably Livy.²

To reach this fort, Mithradates diverged (*devertit*) from the road to Erzingiân. He might diverge either to the north-east in the direction of Satala or to the south into the mountainous region of Kemakh. If he took the latter route, Sinoria might be identified (as has been suggested) with *Sinervae*, which the Antonine Itinerary places on the road from Zimara to Satala at a point 28 miles south of Carsaga, a station situated probably at Melik Sherif,³ a little to the west of the Bulgar Su gorge. But *Sinervae* would not be quite close to the frontier, and it did not lie near any direct route into Great Armenia, which was the king's objective. We must conclude, therefore, that he diverged in the other direction and that Sinoria lay in the region of Satala. This position accords with Strabo's localization of the fort in the range of Paryadres and with the subsequent movements of the king, who proceeded first to join Tigranes and then diverged to the head waters of the Euphrates, whence he crossed the watershed to the valley of the Tchorok. Tigranes was at Artaxata, and Mithradates would take the road thither from Satala. On that road, before the crossing of the Euphrates, the Peutinger Table places a station called *Sinara*, which may be identical with Ptolemy's *Sinera*, the most northerly of the towns of Lesser Armenia along the Euphrates. Some day perhaps exploration may yield a more definite result.

¹ Plutarch, c. 36; Appian, 107; Dio 37-7, 5.

² This was pointed out by A. von Gutschmid in a lecture delivered in 1877 and printed in his *Kleine Schriften*, i, p. 18. He says: 'Auf dem Wege der griechischen Schrift lässt sich die Verwechslung nicht erklären, sondern einzig und allein daraus, dass Dio das *Synhorion* einer lateinischen Quelle [note: Die Form *Sinhorion* hat Amm. Marc. xvi, 7, 10] für *Symphorion* nahm. Dieser Orthographie liegt die thörichte Ableitung des barbarischen Namens vom griechischen *συνορία*, *συνορίον* zu

Grunde, weil der Ort an der Grenze von Armenien lag, eine Ableitung von der wir aus Strabon wissen, dass sie auf einen Einfall des Theophanes zurückgeht. Folglich ist damit erwiesen, dass Dio hier aus einem lateinischen, von Theophanes abhängenden Historiker geschöpft hat, und der Schluss, dass es kein anderer als Livius sein werde, liegt nahe genug.' Cp. also Niese, *Hermes*, 1878, p. 39.

³ Cp. Cumont, *op. cit.*, p. 327.