



## Summary :

Commercial centre in the Cilician plain. It was renamed Antioch on the Sarus in the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. BC and thrived particularly after Pompey settled Cilician pirates, who became farmers. Evidence concerning the religious life of the city and important building remains have survived.

## Other Names

Adena, Athena, Azara, Antioch on the Sarus

## Geographical Location

Cilician plain (Cilicia Campestris)

## Historical Region

Cilicia

## 1. Description

The modern capital of the administrative district with the same name and a hub of Çukurova, the Cilician city of Adana was situated at the centre of the province of the Cilician plain. The city was built in a particularly fertile and commercially important area, on the left bank of the Sarus River (modern Seyhan), whose flow is quite wide in Adana, and along the road to Issus, within about 32 km to the east of Tarsus, halfway between Tarsus and [Mopsuestia](#).

The fact that the Hittites named the Cilician plain “Adaniya” after the city of Adana reveals the importance of the city in the wider region.<sup>1</sup> The Hittite written evidence concerning this region compensates for the lack of prehistoric finds, while the Persian period has left no evidence behind either. However, it is believed that Xenophon’s Ten Thousand went through the city while crossing the Sarus.

The first Greek literary reference to the city dates back to [Alexander the Great](#). According to numismatic evidence, when Cilicia was under [Antiochus IV Epiphanes](#) (175-164 BC), the city was known as Antioch on the Sarus.<sup>2</sup> Besides, it must have become extremely prosperous particularly after [Pompey](#) (106-48 BC) settled [Cilician pirates](#) in the area.<sup>3</sup> There is also evidence that the city was drawn into dispute with neighbouring [Tarsus](#).<sup>4</sup>

Adana was captured by the Parthians in 260 AD before it became famous as a bishopric of Cilicia I. As a [bishopric](#) it was initially under the patriarchate of Antioch, while from the 11<sup>th</sup> c. onwards the city became an independent metropolis. In his Synekdemosis (5<sup>th</sup> c.), Hierocles describes Adana as a communication hub along the road from Constantinople to Syria and Jerusalem.<sup>5</sup> The city was captured by the Arabs in the 7<sup>th</sup> c., but was recaptured by Nikephoros Phokas in 964 and was included in travel accounts.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. Economy – Coinage – Religion

The economic prosperity of the city throughout its history was actually achieved due to both the fertile area and its key position in the communications network. More specifically, the former Cilician pirates Pompey had settled in the city after his victory at Coracesium proved so efficient farmers that in Roman times the city participated in the celebration of special games, the sacred ecumenical Dionysia, and became a really important commercial centre.<sup>7</sup> Besides, the increase in the agricultural production of the city is possibly connected with the cult of Dionysus Kallikarpos, a god particularly popular with the cities of the Cilician plain.<sup>8</sup>

The city minted exclusively bronze coins perhaps intended for local use and, as a result, any involvement of the city in macroeconomic transactions cannot be verified. The earliest coins carry the phrase ANTIOXEΩΝ ΤΩΝ ΠΡΟΣ ΤΩΙ ΣΑΡΩΙ (Antiochians on the Sarus) and are dated to the years of Antiochus IV (175-164 BC). They were followed by autonomous (from circa 164 BC



onwards), “pseudo-autonomous” and imperial coins carrying the word ΑΔΑΝΕΩΝ (of Adana), minted between the reigns of [Hadrian](#) (117-138) and [Gallienus](#) (253-268), with the addition of supplementary expressions honouring some emperors from Hadrian to Maximus (383-388). According to numismatic iconography, Zeus, Artemis, Apollo, the [personified city](#) wearing a crown shaped like a wall, Hermes and Nike are among the gods worshipped in Adana. The personified Sarus River, Dionysus, Hermes, Sarapis and goddess [Tyche](#) were added in Hadrian’s years. In particular, the representation of Dionysus on coins minted in the years of Julia Domna is apparently connected with the celebration of the sacred ecumenical Dionysia.

### 3. Archaeology

The unchanged land features of the region and its long habitation have eliminated any evidence concerning the historical development of the ancient settlement in the course of time.<sup>9</sup> The prehistoric settlement was on the right bank of the Sarus, only a few metres above Tepebag Hoyugu, and was at some moment transferred to the left bank of the river. Excavations conducted by the Archaeological Museum of Adana in the area of Tepebag in the 1930s brought to light Hellenistic and Roman ruins together with numismatic and other evidence.<sup>10</sup> In Roman times Adana must have been a fortified city with streets flanked by columns, a temple, an odeum, a theatre and baths while in the Early Byzantine period with churches and so forth. The bridge constructed by the architect Auxentius in the area of Adana before 384 AD, at the point where the Sarus was quite wide, was very important. The bridge was restored in Justinian’s years (527-565), was broadened in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> c. by the Turkish authorities and has been in use until today. Finally, a stadium dated to the early 7<sup>th</sup> c. AD is reported by literary sources.<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that the local masonry still retains Roman features.<sup>12</sup>

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1. Garstang, J., Gurney, O.R., *The Geography of the Hittite Empire* (Occasional Publications of the British Institute of Archaeology in Ankara 5, London 1959 [republished Ann Arbor 1979]), pp. 59-61.
  2. Head, B.V., *Historia Numorum, A Manual of Greek Numismatics* (Oxford 1911), pp. 715-716.
  3. Appian, *Mithrid.* 96. This is actually the first reference to the city, for the reference included in Scylax (101-2) is unverified: Hirschfeld, G., “Adana”, *RE* 1.1 (1893), p. 344. Other references to the city: Ptol. 5.8.7, 5.8.17, 5.8.46; Pliny 5.92, for the location: Στέφ. Βυζ., see entry “Αδανα”; Procop., *Aed.* 5.5; Hierocl. Geogr., *Synekd.*, p. 704; Conc. Chalced., in J. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum Concilliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, V. VII, 2 Paris 1901, p. 660; Ritter, C., *Die Erdkunde im Verhältnis zur Natur und zur Geschichte des Menschen, 18. Theil: Klein-Asien*<sup>2</sup> (Berlin 1858-1859), p. 167; Davis, E.L., *Life in Asiatic Turkey. A Journal of Travel in Cilicia Pedias and Trachaea, Isauria, and parts of Lycaonia and Cappadocia* (London 1879), p. 60; *CIG* 4440; Hild, F. - Hellenkemper, H., *Kilikien und Isaurien TIB* 5.1 (Wien 1990), p. 154.
  4. For the dispute between the citizens of Adana and Tarsus, see Dio C. 47.26.
  5. *Itin. Burdig.* 580,3; Theodosius, *De Situ* 125.
  6. For references in travel accounts, see Ritter, C., *Die Erdkunde im Verhältnis zur Natur und zur Geschichte des Menschen. 18. Theil: Klein-Asien*<sup>2</sup> (Berlin 1858-1859), pp. 168-181.
  7. Gough, M., “Adana”, *PECS* (1976), p. 8. For the importance of Adana as a commercial centre, see Reinaud, M. et al. (ed.), *Geographie d’Abulfeda* (Paris 1840), p. 134. For the sacred, ecumenical Dionysia, see Head, B.V., *Historia Numorum* (Oxford 1911), p. 716.
  8. Gough, M., “Adana”, *PECS* (1976), p. 8.
  9. Rother, L., *Die Städte der Cukurova: Adana, Mersin, Tarsus. Ein Beitrag zum Gestalt-, Struktur- und Funktionswandel türkischer Städte* (Tübinger Geographische Studien 42, Tübingen 1971), pp. 53-64.
  10. Seton-Williams, M.V., “Cilician Survey”, *AS* 4 (1954), pp. 121-174, particul. p. 148; *SNG Switzerland* 1 (Bern 1986), pp. 81-83; Ritter, C., *Die*



*Erdkunde im Verhältnis zur Natur und zur Geschichte des Menschen. 18. Theil: Klein-Asien*<sup>2</sup>(Berlin 1858-1859), pp. 168-181.

11. Dagon, G. - Feissel, D., *Inscriptions de Cilicie* (TM Monographies 4, Paris 1987), p. 95.

12. Gough, M., "Adana", *PECS* (1976), p. 8.

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	<b>Barnett R.</b> , "Mopsus", <i>JHS</i> , 83, 1953, 140-143
	<b>Gough M.</b> , "Adana", <i>PECS</i> , 1976, 8
	<b>Hirschfeld G.</b> , "Adana", <i>RE I.1.</i> , 1893, 344