



## Summary :

Key Roman fortress and road station on the eastern border of the Euphrates. It was near modern Atlıntaş and served as a post of the Roman equites.

## Geographical Location

eastern Turkey

## Historical Region

Cappadocia

## Administrative Dependence

province of Cappadocia, Armenia Lesser

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## 1. Location – Name

Zimara was a fortress and road station along the border between [Armenia](#) Lesser and Armenia Major, on the western bank of the Euphrates, at the point where the river abandons its course to the west and turns south to cross the Anti-Taurus Mountains.

According to [Pliny](#),<sup>1</sup> Zimara was 12 Roman miles to the south of the Euphrates' source and 75 Roman miles to the north of [Daskousa](#). It is also reported by [Ptolemy](#),<sup>2</sup> who locates the fortress in the southernmost part of Armenia Lesser, along the upper course of the Euphrates, while according to the *Itinerarium Antonini*<sup>3</sup> and *Tabula Peutingeriana*,<sup>4</sup> it was along the road [Satala-Melitene-Samosata](#), between the regions of Analibla (modern Boyalık) and Sabus (modern Çit Harabe). Zimara was the first fortified site exactly on the western bank on the Euphrates on the way from [Trapezus](#).

The place name Zimara may be connected with names starting with Mara-, which are frequently found in Asia Minor.<sup>5</sup> A corrupted form of the name Zimara is probably the place name Sismara, which is also reported by Ptolemy.<sup>6</sup> The Arab version of the place name is either Zamra or Zimara.<sup>7</sup>

The ancient place name was preserved until recently in the name of the Turkish village of Zimara (modern Atlıntaş), 11 km to the north of the big bend of the Euphrates to the south as well as in the stream today crossing the village.<sup>8</sup> However, the exact position of the ancient fortress of Zimara has not been safely identified, although significant remains from various periods have been traced both at Atlıntaş (former Zimara) and south-southeast of it, near the Euphrates, at Bağlıca, Şekerhan and Adatepe, which has attracted the interest of modern travellers and researchers since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>9</sup>

Specifically, there are four assumptions about the identification of ancient Zimara. According to the first, ancient Zimara is identified with modern Atlıntaş (former Zimara), where the medieval castle of Kale and some ancient ruins have survived.<sup>10</sup> A different version suggests that the ancient fortress of Zimara is located about 3.5 km to the east of Atlıntaş, at Bağlıca (former Zinekar), where the medieval castle Zengibar Kalesi and significant ancient ruins have also been found.<sup>11</sup> It has also been suggested that the ancient fortress of Zimara was at Şekerhan, about 2.5 km to the southeast of Bağlıca, where pottery, prehistoric and historic building remains have been brought to light.<sup>12</sup> This assumption is supported by the fact that the current distance between Şekerhan and Boyalık [ancient Analibla] corresponds exactly with the ancient information provided about the road connecting Zimara with Analibla.<sup>13</sup> Finally, according to another view, ancient Zimara was on the site of modern Adatepe (former Pingan), about 8.5 km to the southeast of Atlıntaş, on the western bank of the Euphrates, where three Latin inscriptions and numerous roughly made pottery and building blocks have been revealed.<sup>14</sup> A Roman bridge was traced about 15 km to the northeast of Adatepe and about 3.5 km to the



southeast of Dostal. The bridge crosses the Sabrina River (modern Karabudak Çayı), a tributary of the Euphrates, while sections of the frontier military road, which probably ran at least a mile behind the fortress of Zimara, have survived to the east and west of the tributary and the bridge.<sup>15</sup>

## 2. History – Religion

Any activities in the area of Zimara are confined to the Roman period and indicated the Roman interest in the eastern border of the empire along the Euphrates. When the Roman general [Corbulo](#) was fighting in Armenia (55/58-63 AD), Zimara was a point of reference for the ships sailing along the Euphrates.<sup>16</sup> The place has also been connected with the building project carried out by the Flavian dynasty (69-96), who turned it into an auxiliary fortress-base of a small military force in order to reinforce the Euphrates border.<sup>17</sup> However, there is no information confirming the existence of a fortress at Zimara in that period.<sup>18</sup> Quite the opposite, any activities at Zimara towards the last years of [Trajan](#)'s reign are concluded thanks to an inscription dedicated to L. Catilius Severus, the governor of the wider province of Cappadocia-Armenia (114-117).<sup>19</sup> The inscription is probably related to building activities at the fortress in a period when the eastern border of the Roman Empire was transferred several hundreds of kilometres to the east of the Euphrates after Trajan annexed Armenia. In the late 2<sup>nd</sup> or in the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. the ala (cavalry unit) II Ulpia Auriana was stationed at Zimara, as inferred by an inscription found on a funeral stele dedicated to a Roman decurion.<sup>20</sup> Towards the late 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD the same military corps was stationed at Daskousa.<sup>21</sup> The bridge on the Sabrina River was restored in 249-251, which indicates activities at Zimara in the years of Emperor Decius.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, a votive inscription found in an altar certifies the cult of [Zeus](#) at Zimara.<sup>23</sup>

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1. Plin., *HN* 5.83.

2. Ptol., *Geogr.* 5.6.19.

3. *Itin. Anton.* 208.5.

4. *Tab. Peut.* 11.7.

5. Zgusta, L., *Kleinasiatische Ortsnamen* (Heidelberg 1984), pp. 180-181.

6. Ptol., *Geogr.* 5.7.19. See also the place name Eusimara (Εοσιμύρα) also reported by Ptolemy, *Geogr.* 5.7.21.

7. Georgacas, D., *The names for the Asia Minor Peninsula and a register of surviving Anatolian pre-Turkish placenames* (Beiträge zur Namenforschung 8, Heidelberg 1971), p. 121.

8. Mitford, T.B., *The Roman Frontier on the Upper Euphrates* 1 (Diss. Oxford University 1972), p. 207; Mitford, T.B., "Some Inscriptions from the Cappadocian Limes", *JRS* 64 (1974), p. 172; Mitford, T.B., "The Euphrates Frontier in Cappadocia", in Haupt, D. – Horn, H.G. (ed), *Studien zu den Militärgrenzen Roms* 2 (Köln – Bonn 1977), p. 508; Mitford, T.B., "Cappadocia and Armenia Minor: Historical Setting of the Limes", *ANRW* 2.7.2 (Berlin 1980), p. 1189.

9. Wunsch, J., "Inscripfen aus Armenien", *AEM* 8 (1884), pp. 238-241; Yorke, V.W., "A Journey in the Valley of the Upper Euphrates", *GJ* 8 (1896), p. 454; Hogarth, D.G., *A Wandering Scholar in the Levant*<sup>2</sup> (London 1896), pp. 102-111.

10. Miller, K., *Itineraria Romana* (Stuttgart 1916), pp. 679, 682; Georgacas, D., *The names for the Asia Minor Peninsula and a register of surviving Anatolian pre-Turkish placenames* (Beiträge zur Namenforschung 8, Heidelberg 1971), p. 121; *PECS*, p. 1000; see entry "Zimara" (R.P. Harper).

11. French, D., "New Research on the Euphrates Frontier: Supplementary Notes 1 and 2", in Mitchell, S. (ed), *Armies and Frontiers in Roman and Byzantine Anatolia* (*BAR-IS* 156, Oxford 1983), pp. 84-85.



12. French, D., "New Research on the Euphrates Frontier: Supplementary Notes 1 and 2", in Mitchell, S. (ed), *Armies and Frontiers in Roman and Byzantine Anatolia* (BAR-IS 156, Oxford 1983), p. 85.
13. The distance between the two places is exactly 16 Roman miles, as reported by *Itin. Anton.* 208.5, while *Tab. Peut.* 11.7 reports 15 Roman miles. Miller, K., *Itineraria Romana* (Stuttgart 1916), pp. 679, 682.
14. Wünsch, J., "Inschriften aus Armenien", *AEM* 8 (1884), pp. 238-241; Mitford, T.B., *The Roman Frontier on the Upper Euphrates* 1 (Diss. Oxford University 1972), from p. 207 onwards; Mitford, T.B., "Some Inscriptions from the Cappadocian Limes", *JRS* 64 (1974), p. 172; Mitford, T.B., "The Euphrates Frontier in Cappadocia", in Haupt, D. – Horn, H.G., (ed), *Studien zu den Militärgrenzen Roms 2* (Köln – Bonn 1977) p. 508; Hild, F., *Das byzantinische Strassensystem in Kappadokien* (DAW 131, Wien 1977), p. 142 (map), 143; Mitford, T.B., "Cappadocia and Armenia Minor: Historical Setting of the Limes", *ANRW* 2.7.2 (Berlin 1980), p. 1189.
15. Mitford, T.B., *The Roman Frontier on the Upper Euphrates* 2 (Diss. Oxford University 1972), p. 397; Mitford, T.B., "Cappadocia and Armenia Minor: Historical Setting of the Limes", *ANRW* 2.7.2 (Berlin 1980), p. 1185, pl. 11, fig. 3; French, D., "New Research on the Euphrates Frontier: Supplementary Notes 1 and 2", in Mitchell, S. (ed), *Armies and Frontiers in Roman and Byzantine Anatolia* (BAR-IS 156, Oxford 1983), p. 84.
16. Plin., *HN* 5.83.
17. Mitford, T.B., "Cappadocia and Armenia Minor: Historical Setting of the Limes", *ANRW* 2.7.2 (Berlin 1980), p. 1189.
18. For objections to the existence of a fortress in Zimara, see Crow, J., "A Review of the Physical Remains of the Frontier of Cappadocia", in Freeman, P. – Kennedy, D. (ed), *The Defence of the Roman and Byzantine East* (BAR-IS 297, Oxford 1986), pp. 80, 83.
19. Mitford, T.B., "Some Inscriptions from the Cappadocian Limes", *JRS* 64 (1974), pp. 171-172, no. 7; *AEpigr* (1975), pp. 222-223, no. 820; *Dizionario epigraphico di Antihità Romane* 4.41 (1982), p. 1316, see entry "Zimara" (M. Malavolta); Crow, J., "A Review of the Physical Remains of the Frontier of Cappadocia", in Freeman, P. – Kennedy, D. (ed), *The Defence of the Roman and Byzantine East* (BAR-IS 297, Oxford 1986), p. 80.
20. *CIL* 3, Suppl. 1. 6743; *Dizionario epigraphico di Antihità Romane* 4.41 (1982), p. 1316, see entry "Zimara" (M. Malavolta); Crow, J., "A Review of the Physical Remains of the Frontier of Cappadocia", in Freeman, P. – Kennedy, D. (ed), *The Defence of the Roman and Byzantine East* (BAR-IS 297, Oxford 1986), p. 80.
21. Not. Dign. Or. 38.22 (ala Auriana).
22. *CIL* 3, Suppl. 2. 13644 and 1418415. It is an inscription carved onto the rock above the east prop of the bridge.
23. *CIL* 3, Suppl. 2. 141841; *Dizionario epigraphico di Antihità Romane* 4.41 (1982), p. 1316, see entry "Zimara" (M. Malavolta).

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	<b>Mitford T.B.</b> , <i>The Roman Frontier on the Upper Euphrates</i> 2, Oxford 1972, Diss. Oxford University
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	<b>Wünsch J.</b> , "Inscripfen aus Armenien", <i>AEM</i> , 8, 1884, 238-242
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## Glossary :

	<b>Roman mile</b>
1480 metres.	

## Sources

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*Itinerarium Antonini* 208.5

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