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Strategic aims of Šāpur II during the campaign in northern Mesopotamia (359-360)

Keywords: Iran, Sasanians, Amida, wars, Šāpur II, Ammianus Marcellinus

Introduction

In 359, Šāpur II (r. 309-379) led his army against Rome. This campaign became a milestone for the balance of power in Romano-Iranian borderlands. After seventy three Šāpur succeeded in breaking through the defenses and in sacking the city of Amida¹. According to Ammianus Marcellinus the primal target of the attack of the Iranian armies were to be the rich cities of Syria however the defensive operations of the Romans in Northern Mesopotamia Šāpur to direct the assault Northward. The Historians testimony concludes that long lasting, heroic defense of Amida saved the Roman cities of Cappadocia from sacking. In the context of military-political actions of Šāpur this interpretation presented by Ammianus Marcellinus becomes less obvious.

I

In 290 Diocletian (r. 284-305) was to introduce Trdat (Tiridates; r. 298?-330?) of the Arsacid dynasty to the Armenian throne². This situation would lead to weakening of the position of Narseh (r. 272-293) the youngest son of Šāpur I (r. 242-272), who ruled Persarmenia (*Armenia Maior*) after his father's death³. Although Agathangelos testified that the Sasanians were forced out of Armenia⁴, however, following the inscription from Pāikūlī describing the events of 293⁵ it must be assumed that Narseh retained the power in Persarmenia⁶.

After the death of Bahrām II a serious crisis of the Iranian empire took place. The coronation of Bahrām III (r. 293)⁷, which, against established rules of succession⁸

* The results of the research carried out under the research theme No. 452/16/S (Army of ancient Iran in comparative background) were financed from the science grant granted by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education; Institute of History and International Relations, Faculty of Humanities; szapur2@poczta.onet.pl, ORCID iD 0000-0001-8709-0333.

¹ BLOCKLEY 1988; FARROKH, MAKSYMIUK, SÁNCHEZ GRACIA 2018.

² Movsēs Khorenats'i, II 82; Agathangelos, III 18; WINTER 1988: 141-142; KETTENHOFEN 1995: 48-55.

³ WEBER 2012.

⁴ Agathangelos, III 21.

⁵ HUMBACH, SKJÆRVØ 1980.

⁶ KETTENHOFEN 2008: 484-490.

⁷ WEBER 2010: 353-394.

⁸ Agathias, IV 24. 6-8.

resulted in the mutiny of the aristocracy in course of which the power in Iran took over Narseh (r. 293-305) who until that time held the office of *šāh Arminān*⁹. In 296, taking advantage of Diocletian's engagement in Egypt, Narseh attacked Roman Armenia and Syria¹⁰. The army dispatched against him, commanded by Galerius, was crushed by the Iranian forces between Carrhae and Callinicum¹¹. After Diocletian's arrival in Antioch, a new campaign began. A part of the army under the command of Diocletian marched into Mesopotamia, while Galerius's main forces struck from Armenia, triumphing over Narseh's army in the battle of Satala in 298¹².

The peace treaty concluded in 298, due to which Narseh withdrew from Armenia and renounced his claim to the Trans-Tigritania and established Roman protectorate in Iberia¹³. Apart from the territorial changes, a decision concerning Nisibis, which turned out to be of paramount importance for the later Roman-Iranian relations, was made. Namely Diocletian made this city the only place for trade exchange between the two countries, putting Rome in the privileged position in relation to Iran¹⁴. The significance of this decision lied in the fact that after the destruction of Ḥaṭrā, Dura Europos and Palmyra the trade routes moved from the Euphrates to the Tigris¹⁵.

Adoption of Christianity in Armenia by Trdat during the early years of Šāpūr II's resulted in closure of the kingdom with Rome¹⁶. Trdat's agreement with Constantine was most probably a result of the ruler's problems with the Armenian opposition strongly associated to the Iranian tradition¹⁷. Internal conflicts in Armenia increased especially after the marriage of prince Wahan Mamikonean with Hormozd-duxtak¹⁸, daughter of Hormozd II. After the death of Trdat a group of Armenian *Naxarars*, in communication with ecclesiastical hierarchy strove to tighten the ties with Rome. Bishop Vrt'anes in his letter addressed to emperor requested military assistance of the Roman armies in Armenia recalling common creed¹⁹. Probably c. 336 Šāpur II intervened in Armenia. He succeeded in capturing Armenian King Tiran (r. 330?-338)²⁰. However, Iranian prince Narseh's capture Amida²¹ and the subsequent loss in the battle of Narasara²² with the Romans turned out to be a true prelude to the real longlasting conflict²³.

⁹ WEBER, WIESEHÖFER 2010: 103-105.

¹⁰ Ammianus Marcellinus, XXIII 5. 11; Movsēs Khorenats'i, II 79-82; Zonaras, XII 31.

¹¹ Orosius, VII 25. 9; Eutropius, IX 24.

¹² Festus, XXV; Eutropius, IX 25; MOSIG-WALBURG 2009, 91-121; MAKSYMIOUK 2015: 48-49.

¹³ Petrus Patricius, frag. 13-14; Ammianus Marcellinus, XXV 7. 9; WINTER 1988, 152-215; DIGNAS, WINTER 2007: 122-130; MOSIG-WALBURG 2009: 122-157.

¹⁴ Petrus Patricius, frag. 14; WINTER 1988: 192-199; The Iranian merchants were forced to pay 25% as opposed to the traditional 12.5% duty of the selling price.

¹⁵ DIGNAS, WINTER 2007: 196.

¹⁶ Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica*, IX 8. 2-4; Sozomen, II 8. 1; Movsēs Khorenats'i, III 5; KETTENHOFEN 2002: 45-104; STOPKA 2016: 25-35.

¹⁷ DIGNAS, WINTER 2007: 180.

¹⁸ P'awstos Buzandac'i IV 50.

¹⁹ Movsēs Khorenats'i, III 5.

²⁰ P'awstos Buzandac'i III 20.

²¹ Theophanes, A.M. 5815.

²² Festus, XXVII.

²³ Caesar Constantius was sent to take command of the Eastern frontier; Julian, *Orationes*, I 9.

In 337, Iranian army invaded north Mesopotamia²⁴. The diplomatic negotiations were installed²⁵. Constantine then resolved to campaign against Šāpur himself, but the emperor became sick and death (22 May, 337)²⁶. Despite numerous individual victories of the Iranian army in Mesopotamia, Rome was successful in sustaining Nisibis, the main aim of Šāpur's attacks²⁷. At the break of 337/338 Constantius II (r. 337-361) arrived to Mesopotamia, already abandoned by the Iranian armies²⁸. In 338, however, Šāpūr agreed to the release of the royal family of Armenia and to the enthronement of Aršak II (r. 350-367)²⁹. The Roman at that time launched limited, singular raids aimed in devastation of the territories on the left bank of Tigris³⁰.

The first phase of it, was not particularly fruitful for the Iranians operating in Mesopotamia. Even though they defeated the Roman army in the vicinity of Singara (344, 348) twice³¹, despite several attempts Šāpur was not able to achieve the main goal of his expedition, namely Nisibis (337, 346, 350)³², which still remained under the Roman control³³. The encroachment of the nomadic invaders from Central Asia forced Šāpur to turn his attention to the East³⁴. In 350, Magnentius had rebelled and killed the emperor Constans, claiming the purple. Constantius prepared to move against the usurper, and because of that Gallus (r. 351-354) was made Caesar of the Roman Empire and placed in charge of the defense of the East. For few coming years the military Operations in Mesopotamia were stuck in stelmate³⁵. Šāpur pacified the threat from the East by setting an Alliance with the king Grumbates³⁶.

In the winter of 357/358, Constantius received embassy from the *Šāhānšāh* who demanded that Rome restore the lands surrendered by Narseh. Despite the attempts to instigate negotiations by the diplomats of Constantius it was clear that demanding the conditions impossible for the emperor to fulfill was in fact renewal of the war by Šāpur³⁷. Warfare was resumed in the spring of the year 359.

²⁴ MOSIG-WALBURG 2002: 329-347.

²⁵ Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, IV 8-13.

²⁶ Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, IV 56; Eutropius, X 8. 2; Orosius, VII 28. 31.

²⁷ Hieronymus, a. 338, p. 234, 17-18; Theodoret, *Historia religiosa*, I 11-12; Mika'el Rabo, VII 3; MAKSYMUK 2015: 50-54.

²⁸ Libanius, *Orationes*, LIX 76; WARMINGTON 1977.

²⁹ Tiran lost his life to Šāpūr.

³⁰ Julian, *Orationes*, I 17. DODGEON, LIEU 1992: 329, n. 18

³¹ Ammianus Marcellinus, XVIII 5. 7; XVIII 9. 3; Libanius, *Orationes*, LIX 99-120; Festus, XXVII; MOSIG-WALBURG 1999: 330-384; DMITRIEV 2015.

³² Hieronymus, s. a. 346, p. 236, 19; Theophanes, A.M. 5837; A.M. 5841; Zosimos, III 8. 2; *Chronichon Paschale*, p. 536-539; LIGHTFOOT 1988: 105-125.

³³ About 345/6.-350 Constantius carried intensive construction works in Mesopotamia, strengthening the defenses of the main Roman fortresses (Jacob of Edessa, 21).

³⁴ Ammianus Marcellinus, XIV 3. 1; XVI 9. 3; HOWARD-JOHNSON 2010; JACKSON BONNER 2017: 98-99.

³⁵ There was only a failed attempt of capturing the town of Batnae, in 353; Ammianus Marcellinus, XIV 3. 1-4.

³⁶ Ammianus Marcellinus, XVII 5. 1; FELIX 1991.

³⁷ Ammianus Marcellinus, XVII 5. 7; Zonaras, XII 9. 25-27; DIGNAS, WINTER 2007: 233.

II

The reign of Diocletian (r. 284-305) turned out to be decisive for the distribution of power in the Near East. The emperor modernized the defence system by creating limes named *Strata Diocletiana*³⁸. The emperor created of a two-tiered military force: the *Comitatenses* and the *Limitanei*³⁹. Constantine continued Diocletian's strategy for the defense of the Roman Empire⁴⁰. The legions were stationed in fortress cities, the cavalry was stationed along road lines.

In the early 4th century CE, the main defensive point in North Mesopotamia was Nisibis (Greek: Νίσιβις). The system of the Roman defensive strategy was constituted by Nisibis accompanied by Bezabde (Greek: Βηζάβδη) on Western Tigris⁴¹ and Singara (Greek: τὰ Σίγγαρα) on the Southern slope of Jebel Sinjar mountain. The system was supplemented by Amida (Greek: Ἀμιδα) located North-West from Nisibis.

During Diocletian's administrative reorganization of the border territories, Nisibis became a capital of newly constituted province of Mesopotamia and the headquarters of the *dux Mesopotamiae*. Furthermore Nisibis was gathering point for the field army of the *magister militum per Orientem*, being the main mobile force used to support the troops located in the border fortresses⁴². City was described by Ammianus as "the strongest bulwark of the Orient"⁴³. The main military unit stationing in Nisibis was the the *Legio I Parthica*⁴⁴.

Bezabde was to control the region of Zabdicene. It seems that from strategical perspective, the more important goal was, on one hand, blocking the road to Arzanene and Greater Sophene, on the other hand, securing of the strategic passes leading through the Taurus mountains into central Armenia⁴⁵. The *Legio II Flavia* stationed in the city⁴⁶. Perhaps also the *Legio III Parthica*⁴⁷. Probably Bezabde was the third stronghold (together with Amida and Cepha) rebuilt by Constantius II, still during Constantine lifespan, mentioned by Jacob the Recluse⁴⁸.

Singara controlled crossing points of the Tigris River from Adiabene direction⁴⁹. The permanent garrisons of the city was the *Legio I Flavia*⁵⁰. Ammianus

³⁸ EADIE 1996: 72-82; LEWIN 2002: 91-101.

³⁹ SOUTHERN, DIXON 1996: 36-37.

⁴⁰ WHEELER 1993: 7-41; KAGAN 2006; LUTTWAK 2009.

⁴¹ Discussion on the location of Bezabde in LIGHTFOOT 1981: 86-92.

⁴² Ammianus Marcellinus, XIX 9. 6.

⁴³ Ammianus Marcellinus, XXV 8. 14.

⁴⁴ The content of min garrison force in Nisibis is unknown as *Notitia Dignitatum*, was created after 363 when the city was transferred to Iran. However the *Legio I Parthica* at Constantina has in *Notitia Dignitatum* cognomen "Nisibena" (Or. XXXVI 29) suggesting association with the city, perhaps its heroic defense in 350.

⁴⁵ LIGHTFOOT 1983.

⁴⁶ Ammianus Marcellinus, XX 7. 1; Their title indicates that they may have been created in the last years of Constantine's reign and was related to reconstruction of the three strongholds. LIGHTFOOT 1981: 104, n. 12.

⁴⁷ Dio Cassius LV 24. 4; ISAAC 1990: 42, n. 150.

⁴⁸ Jacob the Recluse, 7.

⁴⁹ READE 1999: 286-288,

⁵⁰ Ammianus Marcellinus, XX 6. 8.

Marcelinus in context of the events of 360 lists also the *Legio I Parthica*⁵¹, however the presence of the legion in the city is confirmed only at the beginning of 3rd century⁵². The strategic goal of Singara garrison was warning about possible movements of Iranian armies crossing Tigris.

Amida was the city situated on the west bank of the upper Tigris, which was to protect for Greater Sophene⁵³. In 336, Constantius initiated a major refortification of the city, enhancing the city's circuit stout walls and constructing strong towers⁵⁴. The *Legio V Parthica* stationed in the city⁵⁵.

It cannot be determined if the *Legio VI Parthica* stationed at the time in *Castra Maurorum*⁵⁶.

Probably only one of the legio was the regular garrison of the city. Other units were the forces strengthening the garrison during the threat of invasions. Such situation happened in case of Amida in 359 or presence of the *Legio I Parthica* in Singara; or the *Legiones I and II Armeniaca*⁵⁷ in Bezabde one year later.

Roman defensive system was completed by the *equites* units, relocated alongside strategic roads. They, together with the legions constituted the core of the field armies. In Mesopotamia the examples of such units was the troop described by Ammianus Marcellinus as “seven hundred horsemen... from Illyricum”, which operated in vicinity of Amida in 359⁵⁸ or *Cohors quartadecima Valeria Zabdenorum*⁵⁹ participating in the defense of Bezabde in 360.

III

In 359, Constantius realizing the threat, made decisions about the personnel changes at the staff. He moved some experienced commanders to the East with intention to lead operations against the army of Šāpur. To Euphratensis and Mesopotamia was sent Domitius Modestus⁶⁰. Ursicinus (*magister peditum*) replace Barbatio, as second-in-command under Sabinianus (*magister equitum per Orientem*)⁶¹. Ursicinus with the army marched out of Thrace and directed to Nisibis, where intensive construction works were carried in preparation to expected siege⁶². According to Ammianus Marcellinus the division of the command and the lack of cooperation of Sabinianus with Ursicinus was one of the main reasons of Roman defeat in 359⁶³.

⁵¹ Ammianus Marcellinus, XX 6. 8.

⁵² ILS 9477.

⁵³ Jacob the Recluse, 7.

⁵⁴ Ammianus Marcellinus, XVIII 9. 1; According to Jacob of Edessa the city was rebuilt in 348: “This year Constantius built the city of Amida between the rivers; and the same year the Romans fought a battle with the Persians by night” Jacob of Edessa, 21.

⁵⁵ Ammianus Marcellinus, XVIII 9. 3-4.

⁵⁶ As suggested by LIGHTFOOT 1981: 75.

⁵⁷ This legions could initially be designated for intervention in Anzitene and Lesser Sophene.

LIGHTFOOT 1981: 104-105: n. 16.

⁵⁸ Ammianus Marcellinus, XVIII 8. 2.

⁵⁹ Or. XXXVI 36.

⁶⁰ Libanius, *Epistulae*, 46, 367, 383 and 388.

⁶¹ LENSSEN 1999; OLSZANIEC 2013: 191, 284, 333.

⁶² Ammianus Marcellinus, XVIII 6. 5; 5. 8-9.

⁶³ Ammianus Marcellinus, XIX 3. 1-3.

The Romans, expecting the attack directed against Zeugma (crossing on Euphrates leading to Syria) left weakly fortified city of Carrhae. Cassianus, the *dux* of Mesopotamia employed scorched earth tactics⁶⁴. The Roman army focused on securing the crossings on Euphrates⁶⁵, while Sabinianus was preparing the defense of Edessa⁶⁶.

IV

The Iranian army crossed the Greater Zab and next the Tigris north of Singara⁶⁷. The plans of invasion routes of Šāpur against Rome were consulted with the traitor Antoninus⁶⁸. Then the Iranian army conducted false attack head straight for the Euphrates, bypassing Nisibis⁶⁹. As communicated by Ammianus Marcellinus the Romans believed that the initial target of the Iranian army could be Nisibis⁷⁰. After twelve days of march, the army of Šāpur reached Bebase (about 150 km from Constantina, west of Nisibis)⁷¹. And unexpeditly he did not attack Nisibis from the West (what could be explained be the fact that the Romans destroyed all crops in the region⁷²). Ursicinus expected that once Šāpur had passed Nisibis, than the Iranian army would attempt to cross Euphtates. When he moved West to assure the destruction of the crossings in Zeugma and Capersana, he was taken by surprise by 20.000 strong Iranian army heading not to Euphratus but to Amida⁷³.

Ursicinus hurried to Amida⁷⁴. Aelianus *comes* of the city had at disposal the *Legio V Parthica*, *Praeventores* and *Superventores*⁷⁵. The garrison was strengthened by additional units:⁷⁶ the Gallic legions Magnentius, Decentius⁷⁷, *Vexillationes of Legio XXX Ulpia Victrix*, *Decumani of Legio X Fortensis* (Decimani Fretensis?), *Equites Illyrian* regiments with a combined strength of 700⁷⁸, and the *comites sagittarii* cavalry regiment⁷⁹. The soldiers together with refugee farmers from the neighboring countryside was about 20,000 (7-10,000 of soldiers and 10-13,000 civilians⁸⁰). According to Ammianus, the army of Šāpur numbered about 100,000

⁶⁴ Ammianus Marcellinus, XVIII 7. 3-5.

⁶⁵ Ammianus Marcellinus, XVIII 7. 6.

⁶⁶ Ammianus Marcellinus, XVIII 7. 7.

⁶⁷ Ammianus Marcellinus, XVIII 6. 19.

⁶⁸ Ammianus Marcellinus, XVIII 6. 3; (The defection of Antoninus to Šāpur in 357/358 FARROKH, MAKSYMIUK, SÁNCHEZ GRACIA 2018: 102.

⁶⁹ Ammianus Marcellinus, XVIII 7. 8.

⁷⁰ Ammianus Marcellinus, XVIII.6.8.

⁷¹ Ammianus Marcellinus, XVIII 7. 9.

⁷² Ammianus Marcellinus, XVIII 7. 8.

⁷³ Ammianus Marcellinus, XVIII, 8, 1-7; SEAGER 2010: 160-172; under the command of Tamsapor (*Tahm-Šāpur?) and Nohodares: Errorously Ammianus gives Nohodares as the name of teh commander instead of the title. In reality it was the title of a high rank official (M. Pers. *naxvadār).

⁷⁴ Ammianus Marcellinus, XVIII 6. 17.

⁷⁵ The light-armed horsemen; Ammianus Marcellinus, XVIII 9. 1-9.

⁷⁶ Ammianus Marcellinus, XVIII 9. 3-4.

⁷⁷ The legions of the usurpers Magnentius and Decentius had been post to the East after the civil war.

⁷⁸ Ammianus Marcellinus, XVIII 8. 2.

⁷⁹ The *comites sagittarii* cavalry regiment could be the cavalry sent by Julian to the East prior to his rebellion.

⁸⁰ Ammianus Marcellinus, XVII 2. 13; XIX 2. 14; LENSKI 2007: 224-226.

soldiers⁸¹. Busa and Rema were captured en-route by Sasanian forces as they advanced towards Amida⁸². The city was captured after 73 days long siege, on October 4, 359⁸³. The Roman commanders of the city were executed⁸⁴, captured civilians were deported to Xuzestān⁸⁵. Large losses (30,000 troops⁸⁶) and late season forced Šāpur to return to Iran⁸⁷.

Conclusion

It might seem that stopping of the invasion of the Iranian forces at Amida disabled the grand western campaign of Šāpur. Iranian armies did not attack in 359 any other border cities. The above conclusion is founded first of all on the testimony of Ammianus Marcellinus who was personally involved in heroic defense of the city⁸⁸. Another argument supporting this idea are the earlier campaigns, for instance Šāpur I in 3rd century. Obviously Šāpur II truly intended to plunder Cappadocia, leaving Amida aside would leave Iranian forces in unfavorable situation allowing Roman army attack to the back of the forces operating on the enemy territory. It could be concerned whether the real aim of Šāpur was indeed only plundering of the borderlands. From political perspective and in context of later military operations this is doubtful.

According to Ammianus Marcellinus crossing Euphrates was impossible due to the flood⁸⁹ and scorched ground tactics applied by the Romans which enforced changing of the direction of Iranian thrust northwards. However in the context of skill of the Iranian engineers in solving hydrological issues (exemplified in the operations during the siege of Nisibis in 350) it can be assumed that the main target of Šāpur were Northern Mesopotamia and Amida⁹⁰, and not Syria.

The events of 359 and 360 should not be perceived as isolated. They should be observed just in light of a single campaign of 359-360. In 360 Šāpur captured two Roman strongholds: Singara⁹¹ and Bezabde⁹². If in 359 the target of the Iranian armies were Syria and/or Cappadocia, there was no obstacle to attack them the following year. In 360 Šāpur campaigned in Northern Mesopotamia because his strategic aim was capturing Nisibis and political – regaining control over Armenia and Iberia.

Amida was, at one hand, a Gateway to Roman Armenia and at the other, it secured province Mesopotamia from the attacks from the North. Šāpur realized well its significance, it must be pointed out that already at the beginning of the war, in 336, Iranian prince Narseh's capture Amida. Destruction of Amida was of utmost significance for controlling the route leading to Armenia. The political program of Šāpur was cancellation of 298 treaty and moving the frontier westward. This was

⁸¹ Ammianus Marcellinus, XVIII 6. 22; LENSKI 2007: 222.

⁸² Ammianus Marcellinus, XVIII 10.

⁸³ FARROKH, MAKSYMCIUK, SÁNCHEZ GRACIA 2018.

⁸⁴ Ammianus Marcellinus, XIX 9. 2.

⁸⁵ KETTENHOFEN 1996: 299.

⁸⁶ Ammianus Marcellinus, XIX 9. 9; LENSKI 2007: 222.

⁸⁷ Ammianus Marcellinus, XIX 9. 1.

⁸⁸ For instance Warmington argues, that the target of Šāpur was Syria and facing the army of Constantius (1977: 515).

⁸⁹ Ammianus Marcellinus, XVIII 7. 8-11 and Zonaras, XIII 9. 30-31; WARMINGTON 1977: 515.

⁹⁰ JACKSON BONNER 2017: 100.

⁹¹ Ammianus Marcellinus, XX 6. 1-9.

⁹² Ammianus Marcellinus, XX 7. 1-15.

impossible without taking Nisibis. Destruction of Amida, taking over Singara and Bezabde in 360, isolated the eastern Trans-Tigritania region and what is more important enabled attacking Nisibis also from the North, simultaneously blocking communication routs of the Roman armies. This was a crucial part of the masterplan of capturing Nisibis. Reinforcing the fortifications and Bezabde also proves that the aim of Šāpur was not mere plundering of the Roman cities but setting steady control over North-Eastern Mesopotamia achieved by capturing Nisibis.

The fall of Amida not only humiliated the Romans but had also wide consequences for the Roman positions in the East. Roman administrative-military machine had been thrown into confusion⁹³. What is more important the loyalty of Armenii⁹⁴ and Iberia⁹⁵ was questioned.

The campaign of Šāpur was not finalized. He did not capture Nisibis and not achieved cancellation of the 298 treaty. These goals were achieved by the *Šāhānšāh* 3 years later with the 363 treaty. According to the subsequent peace treaty Jovian (r. 363-364) renounced his rights to the Trans-Tigritania, Singara, Castra Maurorum, Nisibis and fifteen other fortresses⁹⁶. The treaty was perceived in the Empire as humiliating⁹⁷, it had a vast importance from the military infrastructure perspective. Transfer of the fortresses of Singara and Nisibis destroyed Roman defensive system in North-Eastern Mesopotamia⁹⁸. The sack of Amida and the peace agreements of 363 had important ramifications for the position in the Caucasian region. The treaty demanded the withdrawal of Rome's backing for Armenian rulers⁹⁹. Acquisition of four-fifths of South Caucasus region to Iranian sphere of influence gave Iran clear strategic advantage¹⁰⁰.

In summary of the above, the thesis must be put forward that Amida was initial and primary target of Šāpur's campaign of 359 and the siege was not a result of coincidence of various events, factors and intentions not, as it is suggested by Ammianus Marcellinus¹⁰¹.

⁹³ JACKSON BONNER 2017: 101.

⁹⁴ Ammianus Marcellinus, XX 11. 1.

⁹⁵ Ammianus Marcellinus, XXI, 6. 7-8.

⁹⁶ Ammianus Marcellinus, XXV 7. 9-14.

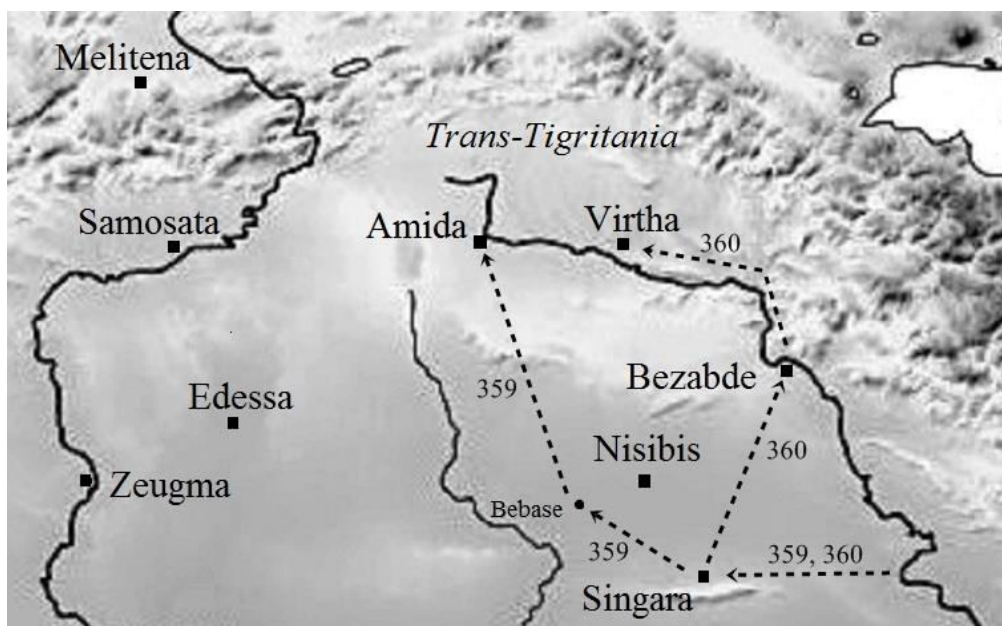
⁹⁷ Ammianus Marcellinus, XXV 7. 13; Eutropius, X 17; Festus, XXIX; Agathias, IV 26. 7; BLOCKLEY 1984: 34-37.

⁹⁸ BLOCKLEY 1984: 35.

⁹⁹ Festus, XXIX; Agathias, IV 26. 6-7; Ammianus Marcellinus, XXV 7.

¹⁰⁰ HOWARD-JOHNSTON 2013: 872.

¹⁰¹ According to Ammianus, Šāpur did not intend to besiege Amida but to bypass it. The decision to lay the siege was made after the death of the son of the king of the Chionites under the walls of the city (Ammianus Marcellinus, XIX, 1. 1- 2.12).



Military operations of Iranian armies in 359-360, (drawing by K. Maksymiuk).

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Summary

Strategic aims of Šāpur II during the campaign in northern Mesopotamia (359-360)

In 359, Šāpur II (r. 309-379) led his army against Rome. This campaign became a milestone for the balance of power in Romano-Iranian borderlands. After seventy three Šāpur succeeded in breaking through the defenses and in sacking the city of Amida . According to Ammianus Marcellinus long lasting, heroic defense of Amida saved the Roman cities of Cappadocia from sacking. The author of the article believes that Amida was initial and primary target of Šāpur's campaign of 359 and the siege was not a result of coincidence of various events, factors and intentions not, as it is suggested by Ammianus Marcellinus.

Keywords: Iran, Sasanians, Amida, wars, Šāpur II, Ammianus Marcellinus