



## Summary :

City of Pontus, on the site of modern-day Turkhal. The earliest mention to the city is dated to the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> c. BC, when Gazioura was probably included in the realm of Ariarathes I. Part of its population was already Hellenised in the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. BC. The city was one of the treasuries of Mithridates VI, king of Pontus. Remains of the ancient fortress have survived.

## Other Names

Gazziura, Gazur, Gaziura, Gazouron, Zagoron

## Geographical Location

Northern Turkey

## Historical Region

Pontus

## Administrative Dependence

Kingdom of Pontus

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## 1. Location and Name of the Ancient City

Gazioura was in Zelitis of [Pontus](#), SE of [Amaseia](#), in the valley of the Iris River. The city has been located on the site of modern Turkhal.<sup>1</sup> The place name is probably of Hittite origin, as concluded by a settlement Gazziura reported in cuneiform inscriptions. However, according to a different version, the name comes from the Persian word gaz meaning “treasure”. Persian coins of the 4<sup>th</sup> c. BC bear the name Gazur in the Aramaic language. [Strabo](#) believes Gazioura was an “ancient kingdom”. It is identified with the Byzantine city of Gaziura, a city that shrank into a small town, or even with Gazouron or Zagoron reported in the *Periplus Ponti Euxini* by Anonymous. A number of researchers consider Gazioura as the forerunner of the Byzantine bishopric of Ibora, supporting that this place name is a short form of the name Gazioura. However, according to another version, this identification is rejected.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. History

About the third quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> c. BC, Gazioura was possibly included in the realm of the ruler [Ariarathes I](#) (c. 333-322 BC), founder of the Cappadocian Ariarathid dynasty, and could have been even the capital. This is at least the conclusion of modern researchers when they combine the coins issued by Ariarathes with the place name Gazur and Strabo’s evidence concerning the existence of an ancient royal capital there.<sup>3</sup>

The earliest epigraphic evidence on the use of the Greek language and the Hellenisation of at least part of the population is dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. BC. It is handed down that at the beginning of the 2nd century a local athlete, whose father had a Greek name, won a torch race for children in Byzantium.

When [Mithridates VI](#) was king of Pontus (120-63 BC), Gazioura was one of his treasuries, where, according to a surviving inscription, access was forbidden to foreigners without the permission of the *acrophylax* (commander of the acropolis).<sup>4</sup> The bronze



coins minted by the city in its name during Mithridates' reign are similar to the coins issued by other cities of Pontus and [Paphlagonia](#) in the same period as regards the types, the weight standard and the metal used. In particular, apart from Gazioura, the same types, with Zeus on the [obverse](#) and the eagle riding a thunderbolt on [reverse](#), were also used by [Amastris](#), Abonuteichos, [Sinope](#), [Amisos](#), Pharnacea, Amaseia, Kabeira, Taulara and Pemolissa. Their issues possibly indicate some local autonomy and lead to the conclusion that the philhellene Mithridates wanted to pass himself off as a city founder.<sup>5</sup>

During the Mithridatic wars, in 67 BC, Triarius, the aide to the Roman general [Lucullus](#), was defeated by Mithridates near Gazioura. In Strabo's years, the city was deserted, although it appears to have been inhabited again in the Byzantine period.<sup>6</sup>

### 3. Religion – Economy – Buildings

The depiction of the "Baal of Gazioura" on coins minted by Ariarathes I indicates that the Semitic god Baal was worshipped in Gazioura in the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> c. BC. Coins issued in the years of Mithridates evidence the cult of [Zeus](#), who was possibly worshipped as Zeus Stratius.<sup>7</sup>

The settlement of Gazioura extends between the Iris River and the foot of a conical hill. Away from the main road arteries, the city became prosperous in the Byzantine period thanks to the fertile plain of Dazimonitis.<sup>8</sup>

The top of the hill accommodated the ancient fortress, where two inscriptions from the years of Mithridates VI were found. On the N-NW side of the fortress, an underground tunnel with approximately 230 steps led deep into the rock. The tunnel is possibly identified with a *hydreion* (water reservoir) and is dated to the Achaemenid or the Hellenistic period. Similar underground tunnels have also been located in several other fortresses of eastern Asia Minor, as it happens in Amaseia.<sup>9</sup> The gates of the fortress were constructed of large monoliths not surviving today. It has been supported that the lower layers of the fortification belong to an early period, although other researchers believe that the fortress was possibly built in the Byzantine period. Early pottery has also been found in the area.

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1. Bryer, A. – Winfield, D., *Byzantine Monuments and Topography of the Pontos* (Birmingham 1985), p. 13; *RE* 7 (1912), column 891, see entry "Gaziura" (W. Ruge).

2. Name Gazur: Simonetta, B., *The Coins of the Cappadocian Kings* (Typos. Monographien zur antiken Numismatik 2, Friburg 1977), p. 15, no. 1a-1f; *BMC Cappadocia*, p. 29, no. 1-4. Identification with Gaziora: Bryer, A. – Winfield, D., *Byzantine Monuments and Topography of the Pontos* (Birmingham 1985), p. 13. For the possible identification with Gazouron or Zagoron, see Zgusta, L., *Kleinasiatische Ortsnamen. Beiträge zur Namensforschung*, Beiheft 21 (Heidelberg 1984), p. 527, no. 1147; Ptol., *Geogr.* 5.2.17, ed. Müller C., *Claudii Ptolemaei Geographia* (Paris 1901), p. 847.

3. Relevant views and the respective bibliography are included in Harrison, C.M., *Coins of the persian satraps* (Pennsylvania 1982), p. 288.

4. Inscription from the early 2<sup>nd</sup> c. BC: Bean, G.E., "Inscriptions from Pontus", *Belleten* 17 (1953), from p. 171 onwards. Inscription from the years of Mithridates VI: Anderson, J.G.C., *A Journey of Exploration in Pontus* (Studia Pontica 1, Brussels 1903), from p. 70 onwards, no. 4; Grégoire, H., "Rapport sur un voyage d'exploration dans le Pont et en Cappadoce", *BCH* 23 (1909), no. 9.

5. *BMC Pontus*, p. 30, no.1-2; Jones, A.H.M., *CERP<sup>2</sup>* (Oxford 1971), p. 156.

6. Strabo, 12.3.15; Dio C., 36.12; Munro, J.A.R., "Roads in Pontus, Royal and Roman", *JHS* 21 (1901), p. 58.

7. Cult of Baal: Simonetta, B., *The Coins of the Cappadocian Kings* (Typos. Monographien zur antiken Numismatik 2, Friburg 1977), p. 15, no. 1a-1f; *BMC Cappadocia*, p. 29, no. 1-4. Cult of Zeus: *BMC Pontus*, p. 30, no. 1; McGing, B.C., *The Foreign Policy of Mithridates VI Eupator King of Pontus* (Leiden 1986), p. 96.



8. For information about the location and economy of the settlement, see Bryer A. – Winfield. D., *Byzantine Monuments and Topography of the Pontos* (Birmingham 1985), p. 13; Anderson J.G.C., *A Journey of Exploration in Pontus* (Studia Pontica 1, Brussels 1903), p. 69. Dazimonitis: valley of the Iris River under the modern name Kaz Ova.
9. For the reservoir, see Gall, H. Von, "Zu den Kleinasiatischen Treppentunneln" AA 82 (1967), p. 515, no. 38.

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	<b>Winfield D., Bryer A.</b> , <i>The Byzantine Monuments and Topography of the Pontos, 1 (With Maps and Plans by R. Anderson, and Drawings by J. Winfield)</i> , Birmingham 1985, Dumbarton Oaks Studies 20
	<b>Zgusta L.</b> , <i>Kleinasiatische Ortsnamen</i> , Heidelberg 1984, BN 21
	<b>Harrison C.M.</b> , <i>Coins of the Persian Satraps</i> , Philadelphia 1982
	<b>Grégoire H.</b> , "Rapport sur un voyage d'exploration dans le Pont et en Cappadoce", <i>Bulletin de Correspondance Hellenique</i> , 33, 1909, 3-169
	<b>Bean G.E.</b> , "Inscriptions from Pontus", <i>Bellethen</i> , 17, 1953, 151-78
	<b>Anderson J.G.C.</b> , <i>A Journey of Exploration in Pontus</i> , Brussels 1903, Studia Pontica 1
	<b>Anderson J.G.C.</b> , <i>Recueil des Inscriptions Grecques et Latines du Pont et de l'Arménie</i> , Brussels 1910, Studia Pontica 3
	<b>Gall H. Von</b> , "Zu den Kleinasiatischen Treppentunneln", AA, 82, 1967, 504-527
	<b>Ruge W.</b> , "Γαζίουρα", <i>RE</i> 7, 1912, 891

### Glossary :

	<b>obverse</b>
The face of the coin which bears the more important device. Due to ambiguities that sometimes exist, many numismatists prefer to use the term for the side struck by the lower (anvil) die.	
	<b>reverse</b>
The back view of a coin where the issuing authority is usually inscribed.	