Map of the Achaemenid Empire and the West about 500 BCE

Preface

Just as my previous map of the Roman Empire, this Map was a personal project for me. It was the study of Herodotus' Histories in the hot Olympic summer of 2004 that refueled my love for the ancient world.

Herodotus described, in his meandering, entertaining ways, the confrontation between the expanding Persian Empire and the Greek city states in the Eastern Mediterranean in the decades around 500 BCE. Leading up to this conflict, the 6th century BCE was a fascinating, incredibly colorful era of development, change and progress. During this time, the stage for the classic ancient world of the next 1000 years was set, a world that still influences our present. This era, or at least a small part of it, is what I wanted to bring back to life with this map.

The big inlay map is dedicated to early Rome and surrounding territories, which can only properly be displayed at a larger scale. To most contemporaries of the 6th century BCE, Latium was yet of little significance. Nonetheless, I wanted to also use this opportunity to show the origins of the Roman state that should so decisively influence the further history of ancient world.

While the previously released Roman Empire map depicted a fixed point in time, I followed a broader approach here. It was my intention to make the map represent an entire era, while simultaneously having to cope with less precise and plentiful source material. As an orientation, I used the long reign of Darius I. between 522 and 486 BCE, when his Achaemenid Empire had reached its greatest extent.

Dr. Michael Ditter
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Commentary

The main map has a scale of 1:5 million. An Albers equal-area conic projection was chosen to deal with the large east-to-west extension of the area of interest, which spans from the pillars of Hercules and the Atlantic sea all the way to the Indus river. The reference meridian is 12° East, the standard parallels are 20° and 45° North. Despite these efforts, it became necessary to add two inlay maps for the Western Mediterranean. Just as for the Roman Empire map, the background is composed of land class and bathymetry data from *Natural Earth*[1], with a shaded relief calculated from the 1 km resolution SRTM30 data set provided by the *U.S. Geological Survey*[2]. At some places, the coastline has changed significantly since ancient times. There, the geodata was accordingly modified, just as some relevant rivers have been added or adopted.

Names: The multitude of peoples and cultures that greatly contribute to this epochs fascination can also be a bane for the modern cartographer who wishes to create a consistently labeled and easily understandable map. In the Roman Empire, unified Koine Greek was the dominant language in the East and Latin, which was also used for official purposes in the entire Imperium, in the West . In the early 5th century BCE however, no language had any comparable significance in the displayed area. The Greek world was divided into various quite different dialects. Thus the name of the nymph and city of *Kyrene* becomes *Kurana* in its native Doric. Even the Achaemenid Empire had no single official language. The bureaucracy mainly used Elamite, but also old Persian, while the Royal inscriptions were at least recorded trilingually in Old Persian, Elamite and Akkadian. Aramaic was often utilized for communication, whereas a multitude of local languages were used in daily life.

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1 http://www.naturalearthdata.com
2 http://dds.cr.usgs.gov/srtm/version2_1/SRTM30/, http://www.usgs.gov

Additionally, the names of many settlements are only recorded by much later authors, or in earlier sources such as the Assyrian annals. Even for modern Arabic or Persian names there is no common transliteration into Latin script.

All these issues mean that the reader will find names from many different languages to be used on our map. I attempted to make it as easily comprehensible as possible, thus more common forms of names in Greek or Latin are often preferred to native ones. In some cases, both versions are given. For the great Etruscan metropolises, the local name is used on the main map, while the Latium Vetus inlay map is kept completely in Latin.

Cultures: I used different colors to differentiate the settlements of some of most important cultures on the map. The purpose was to make the widely distributed Greek and Phoenician colonies easily recognizable. However, in many cases, such a simple system is not sufficient to display the complex realities of many cities in cultural border zones. For example, many Carian, Lycian or Pamhylian cities of this time already possessed very strong Greek elements while still keeping their indigenous traditions and languages alive.

Quality of Sources: Compared to its at least equally important central Asiatic parts, the Western half of the Achaemenid Empire is much better accounted for, both through ancient (Greek) sources and more intense archaeological research in these parts of the world. Only with the campaigns of Alexander the Great in the late 4th century BCE, full accounts became available that allowed us to get a clear picture of the Eastern satrapies at a specific point in time. Data quality is also very uneven for the satrapy capitals. For Dahan-i Ghulāmān or Daskyleion, we have unequivocal archaeological or literal evidence, while for Arachosia just a single Elamite tablet from the town walls of Kandahar hints at its importance in the Achaemenid era. For Damascus, a note from the geographer Strabo (Book 16.2.20), written during the age of Augustus, makes us assume that the city served once as the capital of Ebir-Nari.

Royal Roads: Regarding the Persian Royal Roads, i.e. the routes served by the royal postal service (Pirradaziš), it has to be said that even for the better-known segments, the exact route often can only be estimated. Generally, the available evidence, such as the Persepolis tablets, allows us only to firmly reconstruct their origin and destination. The exact path, however, can only ever be speculative.

Satrapies: During the early expansive phase of the Persian Empire, annexed states were directly incorporated and preserved as primary administrative units, including their internal system of governance. The grand combined satrapy of Athura and Ebir-Nari, with its capital Babylon that still existed during Darius' reign, essentially was the former Babylonian Empire minus its Arabian territories, which had been quasi-independent allies during that time. As the Empire grew older, the large satrapies were further divided into smaller units.

The map shows two sets of provinces for the Achaemenid Empire. The first one is Herodotus' classical list of 20 satrapies (Hist. 3.89) whose creation was attributed by him to Darius. Their numbers on the map are directly taken from Herodotus. The accuracy and general credibility is quite often doubted by modern scholars, but since this division is often quoted and discussed, I considered it essential.

The second, more pronounced set, is based on Darius' dahyâva[3] lists from his Royal Inscriptions. Their exact composition is not uniform. The Greeks, for example, are sometimes subdivided into various categories, like those who dwell on the islands/the sea, or Greeks who wore sun hats (Macedonians). Often the dahyâva lists are called lists of satrapies in literature, but it should be kept in mind that their purpose was to transmit an idealistic image of the Empire for propaganda purposes, not administrative details to later generations.

Borders: Because of the scarcity of sources some scholars question the usefulness of the very attempt to draw boundaries of Achaemenid administrative units. Also, the inherent flexibility of the empire's organization should be taken into account, with overlapping spheres of influence for persons and levels of bureaucracy, not always bound to fixed territorial units.

The same can be said about the outer borders of Achaemenid Persia, which reflect the limits of the king's direct influence. For the numerous tribes of horse or camel herding nomads along the fringes of settled land especially, the perception of their formal incorporation into the Achaemenid realm, manifested by offered gifts and demonstrations of loyalty, could be quite different on both sides.

Despite these points, in some cases borders can be drawn with some confidence. The limits of Ebir-Nari are quite well-defined by the Euphrates river, the mountains to Cilicia and archaeological research about the most likely extension of Qedarite rule in the south. To help the reader to get a quick and easily interpretable overview of the Achaemenid Empire and its countries, I added the boundaries described above. All borders are intentionally kept in a diffuse style. One should always be aware that they do not have the same absoluteness as the borders of the Roman Empire or modern states.

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3   Ancient Persian, singular dahyu. It can be translated as "people" or "country".

List of Persian Administrative Units

I generally used Persian or local names for Persian administrative units on the map. In this list you will find either the more common Graeco-Roman variants of these names or an English translation along with some comments.

Arabaya	Arabia
Armina	Armenia
Athura	Assyria
Babiruš	Babylon / Babylonia, part of Athura
Baxtriš	Bactria
Draya	Persian "The Sea"
Ebir-Nari	Beyond the river, Trans-Euphrates. During Darius reign sub-satrapy of Athura, later separate.
Elam / Uvja	Elam, also Susiana
Gandâra	Gandhara
Harauvati	Arachosia, not featured in Herodotus' list.
Hareiva	Areia
Hinduš	India
Karkâ	Caria, later a separate satrapy in the 4th century BCE with Halicarnassus as its capital.
Karmanâ	Carmania, probably administrated directly from Persepolis.
Katpatuka	Cappadocia
Kûšiyâ	Aithiopia, Kush. The relations between the kingdom of Kush and the Achaemenid Empire are not well understood. However, the term most likely refers to the thinly inhabited border lands in Nubia, part of the Egyptian satrapy.
Mada	Media
Maka	The land of the Mycians, sometimes localized in south eastern Iran, but most likely on the Oman peninsula in eastern Arabia. The name might be derived from the Bronze Age toponym "Magan" for this region
Mat Tamtim	Akkadian, Sea Land, province of Athura
Mudraya	Aigyptos, Egypt
Parsa	Persis, Persia
Parthyaia	Parthia
Puruš	Gedrosia
Putâyâ	Lybia and Cyrenaica, part of the Egyptian satrapy
Šamaryn	Samaria, province of Ebir-Nari
Skudra	Thracia
Sparda	Sardes, Lydia and the main parts of the former Lydian empire. Later subdivided by creating a separate satrapy of Greater Phrygia with Celaenae as its capital.
Sugudu	Sogdia, at least partially controlled by the satrap in Baktra.
Tayaiy Drayahyâ	Persian "Those on the sea", probably the Daskyleion satrapy, Hellespontine Phrygia.
Thataguš	Sattagydia, location uncertain.
Uvârazmiya	Chorasmia, it probably became a separate satrapy during the 5th century BCE with the newly built capital Kalaly-gyr.
Varkâna	Hyrcania
Vautiya	Probably the land of Herodotus' "Utioi"
Yaunâ	Ionia, Greece, placed under the satrap of Sardis.
Yehud	Judea, province of Ebir-Nari
Zranka	Drangiana, also Zrangiana. The inhabitants are also known as Zarangai, Zarangaioi or Sarangai.
Asagarta	Sagartia, Sagartioi, nomadic Iranian tribe living somewhere to the northeast of Persia.
Paritakanu	Paraetaceni, Paretakenoi, Inhabitants of Paraetacene a mountainous border region between Media and Persia. The name is probably derived from Persian *Paruta* - mountain. Analog Herodotus Parikanioi.
Sakā haumavargā	"Sakae who drink Haoma"
Sakâ tigrakhaudâ	"Sakae with pointed hats"

Sakâ paradrayâ	"Sakae beyond the sea"
Sakâ para sugdam	"Sakae beyond Sogdia"

Commentary Latium Vetus

Due to the later dominance of Rome, even this early era of Roman history is well-covered by ancient sources. However, these accounts were all composed several centuries after the described events. The early historians of the Rome and their Greek counterparts tried to reconstruct a coherent narrative of Rome's first centuries out of the evidence still available to them. For the modern historians, which have much less material to work with, it has become nearly possible in many ways to judge the accuracy of their ancient predecessors.

Archaeology too can only partially help to unravel the first centuries of the Roman state. Excavations did show that archaic Rome was a wealthy city state which could afford to construct numerous monumental public buildings. Its limits, however, are revealed if we look for the boundaries of Rome's power and her internal organization.

An important document in relation to this question is the first treaty between Rome and Carthage, which was only passed to us in Greek translation by Polybios (Book 3.22), a historian writing in the mid 2nd century BCE. Polybios dates the treaty to the first years of the Republic, for many a doubtful date. A crucial argument for the authenticity of this document is Polybios' remark that the archaic Latin could barely be understood by contemporary Romans, which fits well into what we know of archaic Latin and its development in the first centuries of the Republic.
The boundaries of Roman hegemony, as described in the Roman-Carthaginian treaty is practically identical to the image given by the ancient historians for the last years of the regal era. Thus, I also have drawn them onto the map.

Bibliography

The limited space of this booklet does not allow us to include any meaningful bibliography. A full list of all literature consulted in compiling is map can be found online on our homepage at:

https://www.tabulae-geographicae.de/english/dawn-of-the-classical-world/

Contact Us:

maps@Tabulae-Geographicae.de

www.Tabulae-Geographicae.de
Landkartenversand Michael Ditter
Zeller Straße 8
64720 Michelstadt
Germany