



Satrapy, Sedition and Sacralization: A Historiographic Analysis of Egyptian Society Under Imperial Rule and Its Lessons for the Future

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Pergyptians?

- The following is an encapsulation of both my completed and ongoing research in the social history of the Ancient Near East. In particular, I am interested in the **relationships between the Achaemenid Empire and its vassal states**. This project examines the impacts of Persian imperial rule on **Egyptian society**.
- In researching this topic I asked the following questions:
 - Do we have an accurate picture of Egyptian society before and after imperial rule?
 - What sources do we rely on to justify our current understanding of the Egypt-Persia relationship?
 - Are there modern-day correlates that could benefit from an understanding of these ancient states?
 - What gaps exist in this niche of research?
- Below, I argue that this state relationship and its widespread impacts across the Ancient Near East is often overlooked by social historians; additional research **redefining the social picture of Late Dynastic Egypt is crucial**.

Achaemenid Sphere of Influence c.525 BCE

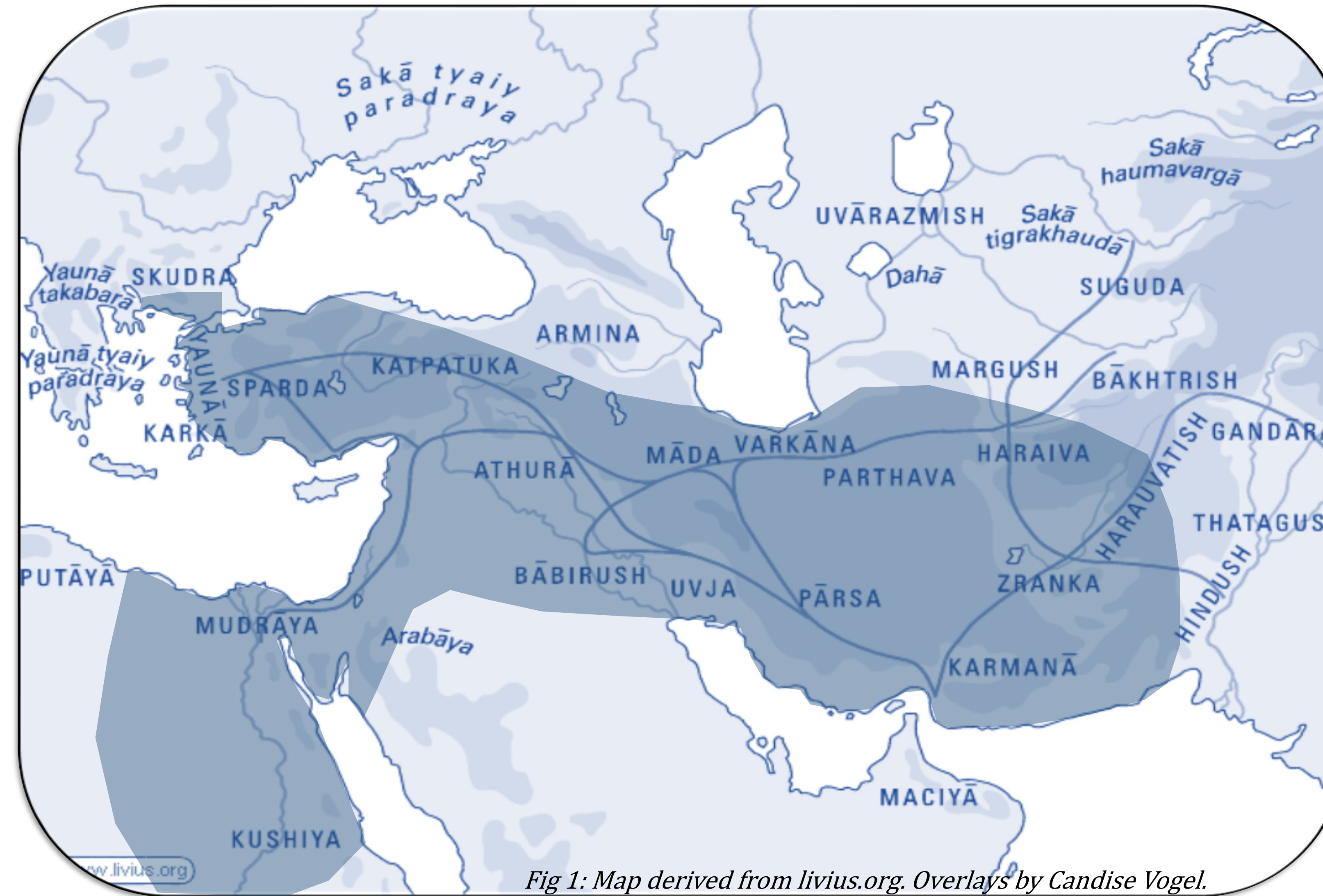


Fig 1: Map derived from livius.org. Overlays by Candise Vogel.

Modern Considerations

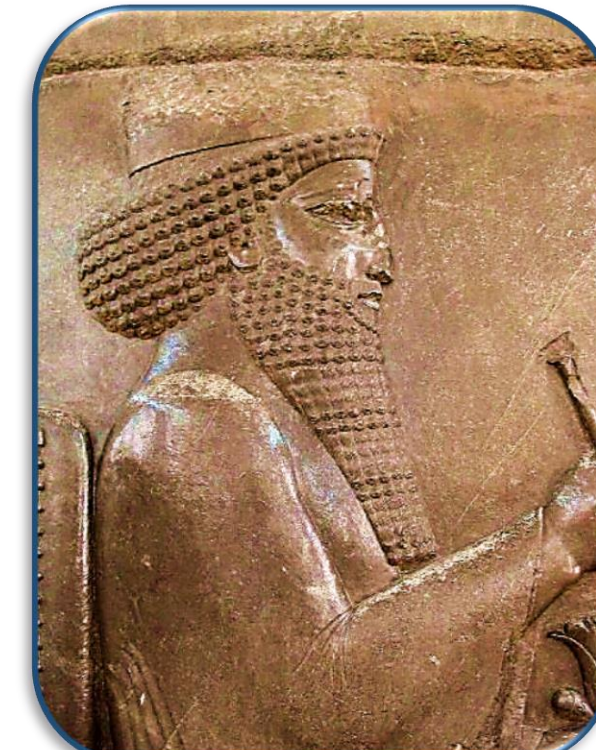
- No state relationship today is a direct correlate to Ancient Egypt and the Achaemenids. **However**, there is worthy discussion when we compare the attitudes of both states as the economic powerhouses of the day. **Persia seemed to view Egypt as a resource rather than a competing state**. As a result, the rebellion of Egypt and repeated alliances with Greece were a destabilizing force for the would-be superpower.
- Modern-day Egypt and the larger Middle East are under pressure, facing most serious **consequences of climate change** in the next half-century. Future research that incorporates the **social history** of the Ancient Near East could be **crucial in aiding its people in resource cultivation and preservation of the region's rich cultures**.
- All states can learn a lesson from the interactions of the **Persians, Greeks and Egyptians**. Treating a state as a resource, as a penultimate foe, or anything other than a real network of human beings is short-sighted, if not crude.

Background

- In 525 BCE, the Persian King Cambyses II conquered Egypt's 26th Saite Dynasty. **Late Period Egypt was undergoing a revival of art, architecture and cultic practices** at the time Cambyses II claimed the title, "King of Upper and Lower Egypt".
- Under the **scrupulous administration of Darius I**, road networks were completed in Upper Egypt, a canal formed in the Delta for a burgeoning navy and a documentation of Egyptian laws and pantheon ordered.
- The **evidence for effects of Persian rule over Egyptian society** (below the elite level), either positive or negative, **are extremely limited**.
- Egyptians rebelled when Xerxes ascended the throne in 486 BCE, forcing the new monarch to send his army to the Nile to re-sequester the territory.
- For the next 82 years, the **relationship between Persia, Greece and Egypt developed into something of a proxy war**.
- A successful rebellion led in 404 BCE temporarily liberated Egypt while the Persian Empire floundered for 63 years.



525 BCE Cambyses II invades Egypt



522 BCE Darius I orders public works projects in Egypt



480-399 BCE Greek-Persian Wars



341 BCE Artaxerxes IV reconquers Egypt

486 BCE Egyptian Rebellion

404 BCE Egyptian Rebellion

331 BCE Alexander the Great conquers Persia

Conclusions

- Transdisciplinary research should be an increased asset in the study of the Ancient Near East**— especially during time periods and locations where different empires intersect.
- Our **gaps in social history increase as we move down the hierarchy**. Non-monumental archaeology, and a continued investment in the deciphering of administrative tablets, documents and scripts may help historians create a fuller picture of Late Dynastic Egypt.
- Envisioning a more comprehensive structure of Egyptian society is a decidedly complex endeavor that requires us to redefine our parameters in different dynastic periods**. This representation of Egyptian society is unique to the Achaemenid period, whose nature awoke a rebel spirit in Egypt that is unlike previous invasions of the river valley.
- Careful considerations of early state relationships within the context of social historiography is important and useful**. Understanding the collapse of states— Egypt under the Saite Dynasty and Persia's Achaemenid Empire as excellent examples— are crucial ways to examine the similarities and differences in which modern states operate.

Redefining the Pyramid

Persepolis Fortification Tablet



Priesthood

An overlapping occupation that facilitated public works, medicine, education and religious observation. The cult of the Apis was prominent during Persian rule.

Agriculture

The foundation of Ancient Egypt. The continuity of the Nile supported stable farming for thousands of years. Administrative documents show that under Imperial rule, the Egyptians received supplemental food imports in exchange for metal and stone exports.

"Others"

Society was not homogenous. Prior to invasion, the Saite Dynasty bolstered their economy by opening borders to trading networks over land and sea.

Pharaoh?

Egyptological evidence shows Cambyses II holding the whip and tattle, but it is likely that Persian kings relationship with Egyptian society was limited.

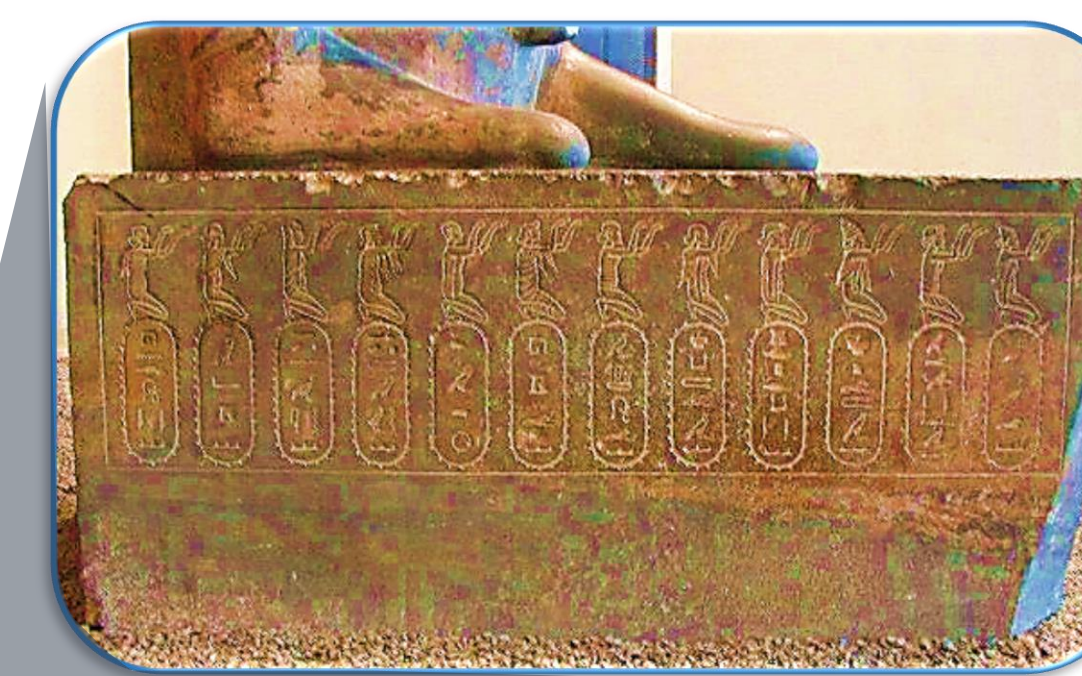
Temple Economy

The nature of religious festivals continued through Achaemenid reign but with limitations on gold, silver and iron that were now being exported to Persia.

Craftsmanship

The Saite Dynasty is often referred to as "The Egyptian Renaissance". Highly skilled Egyptians helped build the most monumental works of Persia.

Darius I statue



Sphinxes in Susa



Egyptian Tiles in Persepolis

References and Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge **Dr. Kara Cooney** and thank her for her unwavering mentorship and encouragement.

For the sake of brevity, the following is a compressed works cited. My full literature review and analysis may be viewed at:

<https://chavez-ucla.academia.edu/CANDISEVOGEL>

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