



## DARIUS' SAGARTIA AND SARGON'S ZIKIRTU: WERE THEY THE SAME PLACE?

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### ABSTRACT

Following the decipherment of the Behistun Inscription, researchers began proposing that Sagartia, one of the rebellious countries mentioned in the inscription, might be the same as Zikirtu, a land mentioned in Assyrian texts. For over a century, most researchers working on this topic seem to have more or less accepted the equation Sagartia = Zikirtu. Additionally, efforts have been observed to separately associate both Sagartia and Zikirtu with Zakruti, a city likely located in the Central Zagros region, as mentioned in Assyrian texts. Some researchers who equate Sagartia with Zikirtu have attempted to bring the two geographically closer (or even merge them) in their proposed locations. Others, considering references from various sources, have accepted that while these two lands might occupy different geographical locations, they represent the same ethnic community. To frame this tendency within a logical context, hypotheses have been constructed suggesting that the same people were dispersed across several regions or that they migrated during different periods in history. In this study, we critically examined the hypothesis that equates the two lands and their peoples by taking into account the historical texts that contain information about these two lands, as well as the views of researchers who have worked on this topic from past to present. We also presented our own proposals regarding the probable locations of these lands. Our conclusion is that Zikirtu and Sagartia were not the same in terms of geography, nor were their populations identical in cultural or ethnographic terms. At the very least, it is clear that we do not possess convincing evidence to support such an equivalence.

**Keywords:** Ancient History, Historical Geography, Sagartia, Zikirtu, Persian Empire

## DARIUS'UN SAGARTIA'SI VE SARGON'UN ZIKIRTU'SU: İKİSİ AYNI YER MİYDİ?

### ÖZ

Behistun Yazıtı'nın deşifre edilmesinin ardından, yazıtta adı anılan isyankar ülkelerden birisi olan Sagartia'nın, Assur metinlerinde geçen Zikirtu ülkesi ile aynı yer olabileceği konusunda görüşler ortaya atılmaya başlanmıştır. Yüz yılı aşkın süredir bu konuda çalışmalar yapan arařtırmacıların çoğu, Sagartia = Zikirtu eşitliğini az çok kabul etmiş gibi görünür. Bunun yanı sıra Assur metinlerinde geçen ve büyük olasılıkla Orta Zagroslarda konumlanması gereken bir kent olan Zakruti ile de her iki ülkeyi ayrı ayrı ilişkilendirme çabalarına şahit olunmuştur. Sagartia ile Zikirtu'yu eşit gören arařtırmacılardan kimileri, bu iki ülkeyi coğrafi olarak yakınlaştırmaya (veya birleştirmeye) çalışarak konumlandırma önerilerinde bulunmuştur; kimileri de farklı kaynaklardaki atıfları dikkate alarak o iki ülkenin farklı coğrafi konumlarda olsa da aynı etnik topluluğu tanımladığını kabul etmiştir. Bu eğilimi bir mantık çerçevesine oturtmak için de aynı halkın birkaç farklı bölgeye yayılmış olduğuna veya o halkın tarihin çeşitli dönemlerinde göç ettiğine yönelik varsayımlar kurgulanmıştır. Çalışmamızda söz konusu iki ülke hakkında bilgiler içeren tarihi metinleri ve geçmişten günümüze bu konu üzerine çalışan arařtırmacıların görüşlerini göz önünde bulundurarak iki ülkeyi ve o ülkelerin halklarını bir tutan hipotezi eleştirel olarak ele aldık; ve ülkelerin muhtemel konumları hakkındaki önerilerimizi ortaya koyduk. Vardığımız sonuç, Zikirtu ve Sagartia ülkelerinin coğrafi açıdan ve o ülkelerin halklarının kültürel ve etnografik açıdan aynı olmadığı yönündedir. En azından bu yönde ikna edici kanıtların elimizde bulunmadığı açıktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Eskiçağ Tarihi, Tarihi Coğrafya, Sagartia, Zikirtu, Pers İmparatorluğu

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### Arařtırma Makalesi

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## Introduction

The Behistun / Bisitun / Bisotun Inscription provides a detailed account of the revolts that broke out in the regions under Persian rule following Darius' accession to the throne and how he suppressed them (Herzfeld, 1968, p. 289). The Behistun Inscription is unique in terms of its scope and historical significance. It is the only text that contains a narrative of historical events concerning an Akhaemenid king. The inscription can be considered a *res gestae* that Darius used to express himself and legitimize his rule (Schmitt, 2000).

Reigning between 522 and 486 BCE, Darius I is considered one of the greatest rulers in Persian history. Under his rule, the Persian Empire expanded across a vast territory and saw numerous innovations and reforms. During this period, he extended the empire's borders from Libya in the west to the Indus River in the east, and from Ethiopia in the south to present-day Kazakhstan in the north (Teraman Hepdinçler, 2019, p. 590). His accession to the throne reflects a complex period shaped by the interplay of both internal and external dynamics. Darius sought to legitimize his rule by tracing his lineage back to Akhaemenes and the god Ahura Mazda (Lincoln, 2009, p. 159). To this end, he commissioned the Behistun Monument, which stands as the most significant example of his political discourse (Teraman Hepdinçler, 2019, pp. 591-592):

*"I am Darius, the great king, king of kings, king in Persia, king of peoples / countries, son of Vishtaspa, grandson of Arshama, an Achaemenid. Darius the king proclaims: My father is Vishtaspa; Vishtaspa's father is Arshama; Arshama's father is Ariaramna; Ariaramna's father is Cishpish; Cishpish's father is Hakhaimanish. Darius the king proclaims: For this reason we are called Achaemenids. From long ago we are noble; from long ago we are royal. Darius the king proclaims: Eight of our family were kings before; I am the ninth; nine kings are we in succession."*<sup>1</sup> (DB §1-4) (Kuhrt, 2010, p. 141; Rawlinson, 1849, pp. 32-36; Norris, 1853, p. 11)

Darius' detailed explanation of his genealogy in the Behistun Inscription was a crucial step in legitimizing his rule. To justify his ascension to the throne, he emphasized both his divine and royal lineage, asserting his descent from the Akhaemenid family. By doing so, he framed his claim to the Persian throne as both a divine mandate and a legitimate royal right (Özkan, 2023, p. 21). Located on the slopes of Mount Behistun near Kermanshah in western Iran (Herzfeld, 1968, p. 28), the inscription was written in Persian, Elamite and Babylonian, making it significant for both linguistic and historical studies. The monument's elevated position makes it difficult for viewers to read the text directly, yet its presence is unmistakable from a distance. Accompanying the inscription is a life-sized relief. While the inscription itself has an "iconographic" quality, the figures depicted alongside it contribute to a "textual" narrative through visual storytelling. This suggests that the Behistun Inscription was not primarily intended for direct reading but rather designed to convey a powerful visual message (Teraman Hepdinçler, 2019, p. 59). The inscription provides key insights into Darius' rise to power, his suppression of various revolts, his lineage, and his political strategies, making it a crucial source for unders-

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<sup>1</sup> Vishtaspa = Gr. Hystaspes, Arshama = Gr. Arsames, Ariaramna = Gr. Ariaramnes, Cishpish = Gr. Teispes, Hakhaimanish = Gr. Achaemenes (Kuhrt, 2010, p. 141).

tanding the history and language of the Persian Empire. With all these characteristics, the Behistun Inscription is not merely a historical record but also an invaluable key to linguistic and cultural research.

### **Sagartia in the Behistun Inscription**

The second section of the Behistun Inscription narrates the revolts that followed Darius' accession to the throne. By successfully suppressing these revolts, Darius ensured the stability of the empire. The first revolt erupted in Elam immediately after the execution of Gaumata; here, a man named Atrina (Açina)<sup>2</sup> claimed kingship, but Darius captured and executed him. Elam was a crucial region within the Persian Empire, and its pacification was vital for Darius to consolidate his regional authority (Özkan, 2023, p. 2). The next revolt took place in Babylon, where a pretender assumed the name Nebukhadnezzar (III)<sup>3</sup>. In 522 BCE, Darius personally led a campaign to Babylon and quelled the revolt (DB §16-20). Following these events, further revolts occurred in several regions, including Persia, Elam (again), Media, Assyria, Egypt, and Parthia (DB §21). Later sections of the inscription also mention similar revolts<sup>4</sup> in Armenia, Sagartia, Hyrkania, and Arakhosia. By the end of the account, it is stated that nine rebel kings were captured and executed. Darius summarized these achievements in his own words: "*Darius the king proclaims: This (is) what I have done, by the favour of Auramazda, in one and the same year, after I became king. I have fought nineteen battles. By the favour of Auramazda, I defeated them and took nine kings prisoner*" (DB §52) (Kuhrt, 2010, p. 148).

In the monumental relief of the Behistun Inscription, these nine rebel leaders are depicted. The inscription provides extensive details regarding the revolts, including the locations of battles, the ethnic origins of the rebels, and their title (Wijnsma, 2023, pp. 110-111). Among these rebel leaders, Ciçantakhma<sup>5</sup> and his domain, Sagartia, form the focal point of our study.

Information about the Sagartians and their land appears in only two inscriptions from the Akhaemenid period: the Behistun and Persepolis inscriptions. The land referred<sup>6</sup> to as *Asagarta* in Old Persian, *Aš-šá-kar-ti-ia* in Elamite, *kurSa-ga-ar-ta-a-a* in Babylonian, and *Sagartia* in Greek is also mentioned in some Western (Greek and Roman) ancient texts. However, the information in these texts is both limited and inconsistent. These scarce records, along with the discrepancies in Greek and Roman sources, make it difficult to precisely determine the location of the Sagartians and their land. As a result, scholars have placed Sagartia in various locations, ranging from the Zagros Mountains (even as far west as Erbil) to the southern regions of Central Asia.

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<sup>2</sup> Elamite: Hašina (<sup>dis</sup>ha-iš-ši-na) (Amiri Parian, 2017, p. 5); Babylonian: Ašina ((m) A-ši-na), Old Persian: Atrinā (King & Thompson, 1907, List of Proper Names, lii).

<sup>3</sup> Old Persian: Nadi(n)tabaira, Babylonian: (m) Ni-din-tu-(ilu)Bēl, Elamite: (m) Nititpel (King & Thompson, 1907, List of Proper Names, lxvii); Elamite: Nidintu-Bel (<sup>dis</sup>nu-ti-ut-be-ul) (Amiri Parian, 2017, p. 5).

<sup>4</sup> Lines in the Old Persian section of the inscription: DB §26-30, §33, §35, §38-39, §45-47 (Kuhrt, 2010, pp. 146-148).

<sup>5</sup> Old Persian: Citra(n)takhma (or Ciçantakhma), Babylonian: (m) Ši-it-ra-an-taḥ-ma, Elamite: (m) Ziššantakma (King & Thompson, 1907, List of Proper Names, lvi); Elamite: Zišantakma (<sup>dis</sup>zi-iš-ša-in-tak-ma) (Amiri Parian, 2020, p. 7).

<sup>6</sup> Eilers 2012; Old Persian: Asagarta, Elamite: (m) Aššakartiya, Babilce: (mātu) Sa-ga-ar-ta-a-a (King & Thompson, 1907, List of Proper Names, lxxi); Elamite: <sup>as</sup>aš-ša-kar-ti-ia (Amiri Parian, 2020, p. 7); "Sagartioi" for Sagartians (Herodotos, 1.125; 7.85).

In the Behistun Inscription, Darius I mentions Ciçantakhma, a Sagartian who rebelled against him. The inscription emphasizes that Ciçantakhma traced his lineage to the Kyaksaresh<sup>7</sup> dynasty, the royal house of Media, and declared himself the king of Sagartia:

*"Darius the king proclaims: A man called Cicantakhma, a Sagartian, rebelled against me; he said to the people: 'I am king in Sagartia, of the family of Uvakhshtra.' Then I sent a Persian and Median army; a Mede called Takhmaspada, my subject - I made him their chief. I spoke to them thus: 'Go forth; the rebel army which will not call itself mine - defeat it!' Then Takhmaspada went off with the army; he joined battle with Cicantakhma. Auramazda helped me; by the favour of Auramazda, my army defeated that rebel army and took Cicantakhma prisoner, brought him to me. After that I cut off his nose, ears, and tore out one eye. He was held in fetters at my palace entrance; all the people saw him. After that, I impaled him at Arbela." (DB §33) (Kuhrt, 2010, p. 146)*

And then:

*"Darius the king proclaims: This (is) what I have done, by the favour of Auramazda, in one and the same year, after I became king. I have fought nineteen battles. By the favour of Auramazda, I defeated them and took nine kings prisoner. One called Gaumata, a magus (...) One called Cicantakhma, a Sagartian, lied, saying: 'I am king in Sagartia, of the family of Uvakhshtra'; he made Sagartia rebellious (...)" (DB §52) (Kuhrt, 2010, p. 148)*

The second Persian inscription that mentions the name Sagartia is the Persepolis Inscription, where the region is listed among the other satrapies:

*"I (am) Darius, the great king, king of kings, king of many countries, son of Hystaspes, an Achaemenid." (DPe § 1) "King Darius proclaims: By the favour of Auramazda, these (are) the countries of which I took possession together with these Persian people; these feared me (and) brought me tribute: Elam, Media, Babylonia, Arabia, Assyria, Egypt, Armenia, Cappadocia, Lydia (Sardis), Ionians of the mainland and (those) by the sea, and the countries beyond the sea, Sagartia, Parthia, Drangiana, Areia, Bactria, Sogdiana, Chorasmia, Sattagydia, Arachosia, India, Gandara, Scythians (Saca), Maka." (DPe §2) (Kuhrt, 2010, p. 486)*

### **Sagartia and the Sagartians in Ancient Sources**

Herodotos, Ptolemaios, and Stephanos of Byzantium mention Sagartia and the Sagartians in their works. In Histories, Herodotos refers to the Sagartians in three instances. According to him, during the period when the Persians united to take control from the Medes, the Sagartians were one of the ten founding tribes of the Persians (Herodotos, 1.125):

*"Now there are of the Persians many tribes, and some of them Cyrus gathered together and persuaded to revolt from the Medes, namely those, upon which all the other Persians depend, the Pasargadai, the Maraphians and the Maspians,*

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<sup>7</sup> In the Babylonian chronicles, the name of the leader who led the Medes in their raids that destroyed Assyria is recorded as "Umakištar". The prevailing view among scholars is that this corresponds to the Median king referred to by Herodotos as "Kyaksaresh" and by the Persians as "Uvakhshtra" (Gopnik, 2017, p. 48). The Median king known in Ancient Greek as "Kyaksaresh" appears in the Behistun Inscription as "Uvakhšātara" in Old Persian, "Makištarra" in Elamite, and "U-ma-ku-iš-tar" in Babylonian (King & Thompson, 1907, List of Proper Names, lvi).

*and of these the Pasargadai are the most noble, of whom also the Achaimenidai are a clan, whence are sprung the Perseid kings. But other Persian tribes there are, as follows: — the Panthaliaians, the Derusiaians and the Germanians, these are all tillers of the soil; and the rest are nomad tribes, namely the Daoi, Mardians, Dropicans and Sagartians."*

Furthermore, he notes that the Sagartians were a nomadic tribe and shared both language and ethnicity with the Persians (Herodotos, 7.85):

*"There are also certain nomads called Sagartians, Persian in race and in language and having a dress which is midway between that of the Persians and that of the Pactyans. These furnished eight thousand horse, and they are not accustomed to have any arms either of bronze or of iron excepting daggers, but they use ropes twisted of thongs, and trust to these when they go into war: and the manner of fighting of these men is as follows: — when they come to conflict with the enemy, they throw the ropes with nooses at the end of them, and whatsoever the man catches by the throw, whether horse or man, he draws to himself, and they being entangled in toils are thus destroyed."*

In his third mention of the Sagartians, Herodotos provides the information that during the reign of Darius, they were part of the 14th satrapy of the Akhaemenid Empire. Along with them; the Sarangians, Thamaniaians, Utians, Mycians and the people exiled to the islands of the Erythraean Sea<sup>8</sup> (most likely referring to the islands in the Persian Gulf) were also included in this administrative region. He also stated that this province paid 600 talents of tax per year to the Akhaemenid Empire<sup>9</sup>. This text is one of the starting points of the discussions regarding the location of Sagartia. The regions inhabited by the peoples listed alongside Sagartia have been assigned by some researchers to the far east of Iran and the south of Central Asia, thus positioning Sagartians in the east of Iran, assuming it was neighboring the other peoples listed. The same issue is seen in the other provinces listed by Herodotos. These will be discussed in due course. Another argument for positioning Sagartia in the east of Iran is found in the Persepolis Inscription from the period of Darius. In this inscription, when the regions that obey the king and pay taxes are listed, Sagartia is placed first among the countries "beyond the sea", before Parthia. The other regions are clearly located in Central Asia and south of it. It is, of course, difficult to extract a meaningful positioning from such a brief and unspecific statement. The "sea" referred to in the statement remains unknown. If it is accepted as the Mediterranean, regions like Elam, Media, Babylon, and Assyria would also fall beyond the sea. However, if the "sea" is understood to refer to the Erythraean Sea or part of it, such as the Persian Gulf, Media should also be included in the concept of being "beyond the sea". It is clear that Media, due to its position within the empire, was always listed first (or at the beginning), and this can be considered an exception. On the other hand, even if we define the "sea" as the Persian Gulf, the expression "countries beyond the sea" creates a tendency to place Sagartia in the east of Iran, but it does not impose any necessity for this.

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<sup>8</sup> What is most likely meant here are the islands in the Persian Gulf (see Potts, 2020).

<sup>9</sup> Herodotos, 3.93: "From Pactyike and the Armenians and the people bordering upon them as far as the Euxine, four hundred talents: this is the thirteenth division. From the Sagartians and Sarangians and Thamaniaians and Utians and Mycians and those who dwell in the islands of the Erythraean Sea, where the king settles those who are called the "Removed" from all these together a tribute was produced of six hundred talents: this is the fourteenth division. The Sacans and the Caspians brought in two hundred and fifty talents: this is the fifteenth division. The Parthians and Chorasmians and Sogdians and Areians three hundred talents: this is the sixteenth division."

Herodotos also makes another reference to the Thamanai region in the 14th satrapy (3.117): *"Now there is a plain in Asia bounded by mountains on all sides, and through the mountains there are five clefts. This plain belonged once to the Chorasmians, and it lies on the borders of the Chorasmians themselves, the Hyrcanians, Parthians, Sarangians, and Thamanaians..."*. The land of Sarangians, which he previously mentioned in the 14th satrapy and in this passage, is identified with the Sistan (Sakastan) region, which is located in the eastern part of modern Iran, in the southwestern part of Afghanistan, and extends to the northwest of Pakistan. In the Ancient Era, the region commonly known as Drangiana has various spelling forms (Zarangiana, Zaraka, Zaranka, Siranka etc.) (Schmitt, 1995). Although there is little information about the Thamanai, the locations of the aforementioned lands of Hyrkana, Parthia, and Drangiana are quite clear. Therefore, the country of the Sarangians and the Thamanai can also be positioned in that geography.

The situation for the other two peoples mentioned by Herodotos for the 14th satrapy, the Utians and Mycians, is more complicated. Some researchers associate the land of the Mycians with the Maka province, which appears in the Behistun, Persepolis, and other royal inscriptions. By considering the location of the lands mentioned alongside it, they position the land of Mycians in the coastal part of the Beluchistan region, which extends across both Iran and Pakistan today (Mekran, Makran, Mokran) (Bosworth, 2011). Some researchers, however, place the land of Maka on the coasts of present-day United Arab Emirates and Oman (Elamite Makkaš) (Potts, 2020, pp. 376-392; Bryce, 2009, pp. 440-441, p. 439). As a result, the first group places the land of Maka on the Iranian shores of the Gulf of Oman, while the others place it on the coasts of the Arabian Peninsula of the Gulf. In addition, the communities defined as "those living on the islands of the Erythraean Sea" refer to the islands in the Persian and Oman gulfs (Potts, 2020, 376-392).

One of the views arguing that the land inhabited by the Mycians can be located in the north, in present-day Azerbaijan, suggests that it was the Mugan Plain, situated to the south of the area where the Kura and Aras rivers converge (Melikov, 2010, p. 741). Along with this view, there are also opinions proposing that the "Mok" (or Mokk) province, one of the small provinces of the Kingdom of Armenia (currently the mountainous region south of Lake Van), was the land inhabited by the Mycians<sup>10</sup>.

There are various proposals for the geographical location of the homeland of the Utians, spanning widely different regions. The one of the views is that Yautiya<sup>11</sup>, described as a region in Parsa in the Behistun Inscription, is the land of the Utians mentioned by Herodotos seems plausible, considering the other peoples likely located to the east (Sarangians, Thamanaians, Mycians). In this context, it is suggested that the land of Utians be located to the east of Parsa (around Kerman / Baluchistan) (Potts, 2014, p. 103). However, there are alternative views equi-

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<sup>10</sup> Hewsén (1992, pp. 168-169) wrote that the region was referred to in Akkadian as "Mat Muški" and in Greek as "Moksoene", and he also provided a detailed explanation of why he believed this. Additionally, he proposed that Hubuškia, mentioned in Urartian and Assyrian inscriptions, could be the same region.

<sup>11</sup> Old Persian: Yautiya, Elamite: Yautiyaš, Babylonian: I-u-ti-ia (King & Thompson, 1907, List of Proper Names, lxxix). A man named Vahyazdata (Elamite: Mištatta, Babylonian: U-mi-iz-da-a-tu) declared himself king in the city of Tarava in the Yautiya region of Parsa, saying "I am Smerdis (Bardiya), son of Cyrus" (DB §40) (Kuhrt, 2010, p. 146; King & Thompson, 1907, p. 46 & List of Proper Names, lxxvii).

ating the Utians with the "Uksii" (Strabon, 11.13.6, 15.3.4-6; Diodorus Siculus, 17.67.4-5) encountered by Alexander the Great during his eastern campaign, who controlled the mountain passes along the road between Susa and Persepolis. These perspectives locate the Utians in a western region of Parsa (in present-day Khuzestan Province) (Kuhrt, 2010, p. 524, pp. 826-827).

On the other hand, there are also views that localize the Utians far to the north, in the eastern parts of the Armenia. Those who support this view argue that the Kingdom of Armenia's eastern province, "Utik", which stretches along the western bank of the Kura River<sup>12</sup> (Hewsen, 1992, p. 65, p. 67 Map XX), is the land of the Utians (Hewsen, 1992, pp. 142-143, pp. 257-263). The area referred to by Plinius the Elder as "Otene"<sup>13</sup> is most likely that region. In this context, the existence of the "Vitii" people<sup>14</sup>, listed by Strabon among the peoples living along the Caspian Sea, is noteworthy. On the other hand, in the Behistun Inscription, the name of a region mentioned in the passages describing the rebellion in the Armenia is "Autiyara"<sup>15</sup>. Notably, the Babylonian rendering of the name (Utiyari) is striking in terms of phonetic resemblance.

As can be seen, while there is almost no doubt about the location of some of the peoples listed by Herodotos in the 14th satrapy (such as the Sarangians, Thamanaians, and those inhabiting the islands of the Erythraean Sea), some of them are suggested to be located in vastly different geographies. Therefore, determining the location of the land of the Sagartians, based on Herodotos' statements, is not an easy task. Moreover, similar issues arise in some of the other 20 satrapies listed by Herodotos. Additionally, discrepancies exist between Herodotos' 20 satrapies list and the lists of lands mentioned in Persian inscriptions as having been brought under control (Lecoq, 1997, pp. 131-134). Nevertheless, Herodotus himself acknowledged that some satrapies sometimes included neighboring peoples, while others did not (Herodotos, 3.89):

*"Having so done in Persia, he established twenty provinces, which the Persians themselves call satrapies; and having established the provinces and set over them rulers, he appointed tribute to come to him from them according to races, joining also to the chief races those who dwelt on their borders, or passing beyond the immediate neighbours and assigning to various races those which lay more distant..."*

Considering these statements by Herodotos, attempts to position regions with uncertain locations, such as Sagartia, based on the neighborhood relationships outlined in his lists would prove to be a futile effort.

Centuries after Herodotos, Ptolemaios (2nd century AD) mentioned Sagartia in the 6th book of his work "Geography" while describing the land of Media (Chapter 2) (Ptolemaios, 6.2.6). Ptolemaios outlined the neighboring countries of Media and drew distinct borderlines

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<sup>12</sup> "-k" is the Armenian plural suffix (Hewsen, 1992, p. 339)

<sup>13</sup> Plinius the Elder, 6.42: "...Adjoining the other front of Greater Armenia, which runs down towards the Caspian Sea, we find Atropatene, which is separated from Otene, a region of Armenia, by the river Araxes..."

<sup>14</sup> "...This side of the mountains, beginning at the sea, is inhabited as far as their heights for a short stretch by a part of the Albanians and the Armenians, but for the most part by Gelae, Cadusii, Amardi, Vitii, and Anariacae..." (Strabon, 11.7.1). "...and the Tapyri live between the Hyrcanians and the Arians; and in a circuit round the sea after the Hyrcanians one comes to the Amardi, Anariacae, Cadusii, Albani, Caspii, Vitii, and perhaps also other peoples, until one reaches the Scythians..." (Strabon, 11.8.8).

<sup>15</sup> Old Persian: Autiyara, Elamite: Autiyaruš, Babylonian: U-ti-ia-a-ri (King & Thompson, 1907, List of Proper Names, liii).

by providing various coordinates (Ptolemaios, 6.2.1–4). Subsequently, the peoples residing within the outlined borders of Media and the significant geographical locations that served as defining features were enumerated (Ptolemaios, 6.2.5-6):

*"In the western part, near Armenia, dwell the Kaspi, and below them, stretching along the Assyrian border, lies Martiane<sup>16</sup>. Closer to the sea are the Kadusi, the Geli<sup>17</sup>, and the Dribykes. Beyond them, further inland, are the Amariakai<sup>18</sup> and the Mardi. Further inward from the Kadusi, up to the Martiane Lake, dwell the Kardoukhi and the Maroundi. Moving inward from the Geli, the Margasi<sup>19</sup> reside. Beyond them, Propatene<sup>20</sup> extends as far as the Amariakai. And to the east of Mount Zagros, the Sagartians settled. Beyond them, (the region of) Khoromithrene stretches to Parthia; further north of it lies Helimaida<sup>21</sup>. And to its east, [in the lands extending to the source of the Kharindas River]<sup>22</sup> are the Tapouri. South of the Khoromithrene are the regions of [The]Sidikes<sup>23</sup>, Sigrianike, and Rhagiane. Further below them lies Mount Iasonion<sup>24</sup>, where the Ouadassians reside; additionally, there is Dareitis region. And Syromedia region extends along the entire border of Persia. [And these people hold this region.]<sup>25</sup>"*

Among ancient writers, the one who most clearly defines the location of Sagartia is Ptolemaios, as seen above. He provides a distinct depiction by listing the peoples inhabiting the region, beginning approximately from the northwestern part of present-day Iran. The peoples and regions he mentions in the sentences preceding his reference to Sagartia roughly correspond to the lands north of the Merivan – Sanandaj – Tehran line today. In the following statement, *"And to the east of Mount Zagros, the Sagartians settled"*, the Zagros Mountain (or Mountains) clearly refers to vicinity of the present-day Central Zagros<sup>26</sup>. Because he described<sup>27</sup> the

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<sup>16</sup> Rendered as "Martiane" in Kiesling's translation, "Margiana" in Stevenson's translation, and "Martiane" in the Latin (Jacobus, 1513) copy (See Fig. 2 for Jacobus' copy). The translation of the chapter was created by considering and combining the texts of the three mentioned sources. For the mentioned sources, see the "Ancient Sources" section in the "Bibliography".

<sup>17</sup> Rendered as "Legai" by Kiesling, "Geli" by Stevenson, "Geloi" in the Latin copy.

<sup>18</sup> Likely *Anariacae* (Polybius, 5.44.9); recorded as "Amariakai" in the Latin copy.

<sup>19</sup> Rendered as "Margasoi" by Kiesling, "Margasi" by Stevenson, "Margasoi" in the Latin copy.

<sup>20</sup> Rendered as "Tropatena" by Kiesling, "Propatena" by Stevenson, "Propatene" in the Latin copy.

<sup>21</sup> Rendered as "Elymais" by Kiesling, "Helymais" by Stevenson, "Helymaida" in the Latin copy.

<sup>22</sup> This phrase appears only in Stevenson's translation.

<sup>23</sup> Rendered as "Sidikes" by Kiesling, "Sidica" by Stevenson, "Thesidikes" in the Latin copy.

<sup>24</sup> Rendered as "Asonion" in the Latin copy.

<sup>25</sup> This phrase appears only in the Latin copy.

<sup>26</sup> Compared to the northern part of the Zagros Mountains, which is denser and rarely provides passage for transportation between Mesopotamia and the Iranian plateau (main massif / chain: *chaîne magistrale*), the section between vicinity of the cities of Kermanshah, Nahavand, and Khorramabad -also traversed by the Great Khorasan Road- has been aptly defined by some researchers as the Central Zagros (see Karaketir, 2023, p. 168). For an in-depth examination of the Zagros Mountains, see Levine, 1973, pp. 3–14. For regarding the first mention of the Zagros in antiquity and its significance as a political and geographical boundary between Mesopotamia and Iran, from its early reference up until recent times, see Potts, 2021, pp. 45–58.

<sup>27</sup> Ptolemaios mentioned the Zagros Mountain(s). However, the Zagros he referred to is located in the part of Media that opens towards Mesopotamia via the Great Khorasan Road. Its exact location remains unclear. The Northern Zagros was named the Khoathras Mountains (Roller, 2023, pp. 145–146). The first person to mention the name Zagros was Polybius (Potts, 2021, p. 45; Polybius, 5.44.6). Polybius (200–118 BCE) provided a description of Mount Zagros that is similar to Ptolemaios'. He wrote that it was located in the southern part of Media and formed a boundary between the Apollonia territories in Mesopotamia and the region of Persis. Although its height is stated as 100 stadia in the English translation, since a height of approximately 15 km is not plausible, it is thought that this refers



densely mountainous area, which we might today refer to as the Northern Zagros, stretching from the Iran - Iraq - Turkey border to the northern parts of present-day Kermanshah, as "Khoathras"<sup>28</sup>. From the text, it can be understood that the lands referred to as "Martiane", extending along the Assyrian border, correspond to the eastern slopes of the northern Zagros facing Media. From the coordinates provided in the text, it is understood that the southernmost point of the "Khoathras Mountains" aligns longitudinally with the central point of Mount Zagros and Mount Orontes (most probably present-day Mount Alvand ). Of course, the coordinates provided by Ptolemaios do not correspond to modern latitude and longitude measurements (Roller, 2023, p. 119, p. 147), but they are valuable in providing a general framework and geographical description. The mountain range described by Levine as an extension of the main massif of the northern Zagros, interrupted around the Great Khorasan Road and stretching towards Mount Alvand (which he identifies as the easternmost extension of the Western Zagros) (Levine, 1973, p. 4), is likely the mountain range extending eastward from the southern edge of Ptolemaios' "Khoathras". This can be observed in the maps included in 15th-16th centuries copies of Ptolemaios' Geography (Fig. 3-10).

Returning to Ptolemaios' "Sagartia", according to his description, Sagartia should be located in the region where the southern part of Khoathras intersects with Mount Orontes. This region should be sought within or around the area encompassed by the Kermanshah-Hamadan-Sanandaj triangle, in vicinity of the section of the Great Khorasan Road that passes through the Central Zagros. Khoromithrene, mentioned immediately after Ptolemaios' reference to the Sagartians, is also crucial in determining the location of Sagartia. He stated that Khoromithrene extended as far as Parthia. Within the lands of Media, no distinct geographical feature stands out that could stretch all the way to Parthia<sup>29</sup>. Despite its rare mention in ancient and modern sources, it is plausible that Ptolemaios used 'Khoromithrene' in the sense of "the land / territory of Mithra"<sup>30</sup>. Mithra, the protector of relationships based on mutual trust, such as treaties,

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to the mountain's expanse. However, even this would not suffice for its range. In the following sentences, Polybius described Zagros as consisting of various interconnected mountain chains and valleys inhabited by different barbarian tribes, renowned for their warrior nature (Polybius, 5.44.6-7). From the information provided, it can still be deduced that Polybius was referring to the Central Zagros. Strabon also made references to a similar region; however, he did not name the mountain range stretching from Armenia to Zagros: "...Then from the Niphates the mountain chain extends still farther and farther and forms the mountain Zagrus which separates Media and Babylonia. After the Zagrus there follows, above Babylonia, the mountainous country of the Elymaei and that of the Paraetaceni, and also, above Media, that of the Cossaei..." (11.12.4); While he was explaining the limits of Media: "...on the south by Apolloniatis, which the ancients called Sitacene, and by the mountain Zagrus, at the place where Massabatice is situated, which belongs to Media, though some say that it belongs to Elymaea..." (11.13.6); See also Strabon 11.13.3, 11.13.8, 16.1.1, 16.1.8, 16.1.17; Isidore Of Kharaks (3) located the Zagros Mountain in the vicinity of the modern Serpol Zahab: "From there to Chalonitis, 21 schoeni; with five villages, in which a station, and a Greek city, Chala, 15 schoeni beyond Apolloniatis. Then, after 5 schoeni, a mountain which is called Zagros, which forms the boundary between the district of Chalonitis and that of the Medes." (1 schoeni = ~5 km). Plinius the Elder described the Zagros as a mountain chain extending from the Armenia region to Persis, similar to the modern name: "...Dabithac is a town there, adjoining to which is the district of Chalonitis, with the city of Ctesiphon, famous, not only for its palm-groves, but for its olives, fruits, and other shrubs. Mount Zagrus reaches as far as this district, and extends from Armenia between the Medi and the Adiabeni, above Paraetacene and Persis..." (6.131.31).

<sup>28</sup> Rendered as "Chaboras" by Kiesling, "Choathras" by Stevenson, "Khoakhtras" in the Latin copy.

<sup>29</sup> Perhaps the Kavir Desert (Dasht-e Kavir) could be considered. However, it lies outside Media's territory. Additionally, it is clear that the text follows a sequential order. Equating Khoromithrene with the Kavir Desert would imply an abrupt geographical jump. Polybius (5.44.3) mentions a desert beyond Media's eastern border that separates Parthia from Media. This must be the Kavir Desert, which is beyond Media's eastern boundary.

<sup>30</sup> Greek "*Khora*": land, place, country, homeland, territory, space, area.

agreements, alliances, and friendships (Schmidt, 2006; Kızıl, 2013, p. 27), was being the protector of Eurasia's most important trade routes would be unsurprising. For merchants traveling along trade routes, security and protection were vital. Mithra's role as the "guardian deity of agreements" could symbolized an international order in such a context. Thus, the trade routes that began in Mesopotamia, passed through the mountain passes in the central Zagros, referred to by ancient authors as the Zagros (or Median) (Strabon, 11.13.8) Gate(s), into Media and then extended to Parthia - then to India and China -, might have been considered under Mithra's protection. At the very least, the section passing through Media might have been conceptualized in this way. In this context, it can be suggested that Khoromithrene corresponds to the main trade route extending from the vicinity of Kermanshah to Hamadan and then to the area around Tehran (Caspian Gates)<sup>31</sup>.

A second possibility within this context is the route that, after passing through Khorramabad -where the road coming from Susa merged with an alternative route from Mesopotamia- continued through Borujerd, Arak, and Qom stations before reaching Tehran. The choice between these options would shift the locations of the three regions listed south of Khoromithrene in Ptolemaios' account by approximately 100-120 km in northwest-southeast direction. Among the three regions said to be located south of Khoromithrene (Sidikes or Thesidikes, Sigrianike, and Rhagiane), the location of Rhagiane is fairly certain and lies south of Tehran<sup>32</sup>. Sigrianike is most likely the Sigriane referred to by Strabon<sup>33</sup>. Although the exact location of Sigriane is unclear in Strabon's account, he stated that Sigriane was situated along the route of the Great Khorasan Road, which extended from the Zagros Gate to the Caspian Gates. Strabo also provided the length of this route, estimating it to be approximately 650 km (4100 stadia), a distance that closely matches modern measurements when following the route via the present-day highway<sup>34</sup>. Laurent stressed that Sigriane should be located in the vicinity of the modern city of Burucerd, which he identified with ancient Herakleia (Laurent, 1830, p. 286). This view

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<sup>31</sup> There are two possible routes for this path. The first is Hamadan - Save - Tehran, and the second is Hamadan-Qazvin-Tehran. Marquart argued that the route most likely passed through Qazvin (Marquart, 1905, p. 23). Similarly, Henkelman and Jacobs (2021, p. 721, fig. 53.1) depicted the Royal Road extending from Hamadan to Tehran via Qazvin on the map they used.

<sup>32</sup> The name of Rhaga, one of the most important cities on the Great Khorasan Road, survives in today's Rey. It is believed that Rhaga corresponds to Qaleh Iraj, located approximately 30 km east-southeast of modern Rey. In its broader sense, the Rhagiane region refers to the fertile lands stretching from the vicinity of Rey to Qazvin, south of the Alborz Mountains (Schoff, 1914, p. 29). In a narrower sense, it denotes the surroundings of the city of Rhaga.

<sup>33</sup> Strabon, 11.13.8: *"Such is the nature of the country. As for its size, its length and breadth are approximately equal. The greatest breadth of Media seems to be that from the pass that leads over the Zagrus, which is called Medic Gate, to the Caspian Gates through Sigriane, four thousand one hundred stadia. The reports on the tributes paid agree with the size and the power of the country; for Cappadocia paid the Persians yearly, in addition to the silver tax, fifteen hundred horses, two thousand mules, and fifty thousand sheep, whereas Media paid almost twice as much as this."*

<sup>34</sup> The distance from Serpol Zahab to Tehran via Kermanshah - Hamadan - Save is ~650 km; a route passing through Hamadan and Qazvin would be approximately ~690 km; A route bypassing the Kermanshah - Hamadan segment and instead following Khorramabad - Arak - Qom (or Save) would reach ~800 km. (These calculations are based on modern highways using "Google Maps"). In his book on Iran, written at the end of the 19th century, Curzon describes the caravan route from Baghdad to Tehran at that time as passing through Kermanshah, Hamadan, and Khanabad, with a total distance of approximately ~660 km (412 miles) (Curzon, 1892, pp. 50-51). Curzon also notes that during winter, caravans followed an alternative route, bypassing Hamadan - Save and instead turning east near Kangavar to reach Tehran via Qom (Curzon, 1892, p. 51 fn. 1). Schoff, in his annotated translation of Isidore of Kharaks, depicts a route passing through Hamadan and Save on his map (Schoff, 1914, p. 16, map 1). Henkelman & Jacobs (2021, p. 721 fig. 53.1) depicted the Royal Road extending from Ekbatana to the Caspian Gates via Qazvin on their map.

does not quite align with Strabon's mention. If the Great Khorasan Road passed near Burujerd, it would lengthen the route by about 50 km.

If the Sigriane (or Sigrianike) region needs to be matched with a region name mentioned in ancient texts, the most suitable candidate for this would be the "Sikris" (RINAP, Sargon II: 1 99, 1 110, 2 92, 4 45 etc.) region mentioned in Assyrian texts. According to Assyrian texts, the Sikris region must have been located in the Central Zagros. Recent studies on determining the routes of Assyrian kings' campaigns and locating the place names mentioned in the texts have made several suggestions regarding the region's location. These suggestions situate the region along or very close to the Great Khorasan Road stretching from the Zagros Gate (Serpöl Zahab) to Hamadan<sup>35</sup>. Additionally, for Sagartia, we consider that the land of "Šaparda" (Rezaei et. al., 2023, p. 132; Alibaigi et al., 2023, pp. 84-86), mentioned alongside Sikris in Sargon's 6th Campaign, may be a more suitable candidate than Zikirtu and Zakruti, which appear in Assyrian texts. As for Sidikes (Sidika or Thesidikes), mentioned by Ptolemaios before Sigrianike, an appropriate candidate could be "Silaceni", one of the two minor principalities Strabon noted to be situated on the border of Elymais<sup>36</sup>.

A second possibility regarding the region denoted by the term Khoromithrene is that, considering Mithra's epithet as "the lord / provider of vast cattle pastures" (Schmidt, 2006; Kizil, 2013, pp. 33, 36, 38; Lahe, 2018, p. 490 & fn. 71), the term may refer to the central plateaus of Media, extending from the vicinity of Hamadan to the Alborz Mountains. These lands, which ancient writers emphasized<sup>37</sup> for their fertility, contained vast pastures suitable for livestock and horse breeding. In fact, these lands correspond to a region similar to the first possibility (as the Great Khorasan Road passes through these lands). Evidence regarding the connection of these fertile lands to Mithra, or more broadly to the Zoroastrian religion, can be found in Ammianus Marcellinus' History<sup>38</sup>. From this passage, we understand that the Magi -whom Herodotos identified as a tribe of the Medes (Herodotos, 1.101)- lived in the central and fertile lands of Media. Thus, these lands may have been referred to as Khoromithrene by Ptolemaios.

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<sup>35</sup> For the positioning on the Great Khorasan Road between Asadabad and Behistun, see Medvedskaya, 1999, pp. 57-58; for two different positioning suggestions, around the modern city of Kerend or the modern cities of Sarab-e Harasam / Cheshmeh Mahi (the distance between the two cities is approximately 70 km), see Tourovets, 2015, p. 26, p. 28 Fig.4; for a suggestion situating it near the modern city of Kangavar, see Novotny & Firouzi 2023, p. 23; for a suggestion locating it near the modern city of Islamabad-e Gharb, see Rezaei et. al., 2023, p. 132. For earlier, less precise suggestions, see Novotny & Firouzi, 2023, p. 12 fn. 14.

<sup>36</sup> "...Corbiane also is a province of Elymais. Sagapeni and Silaceni, small principalities, border upon Elymais." (Strabon, 16.1.18).

<sup>37</sup> "...This, as well as Armenia, is an exceptionally good "horse-pasturing" country; and a certain meadow there is called "Horse-pasturing," and those who travel from Persis and Babylon to Caspian Gates pass through it; and in the time of the Persians it is said that fifty thousand mares were pastured in it and that these herds belonged to the kings... Further, we call the grass that makes the best food for horses by the special name "Medic," from the fact that it abounds there..." (Strabon, 11.13.8). "For all the royal herds of horses are in charge of the Medes, and they possess vast quantities of corn and cattle. It is difficult indeed to speak in adequate terms of the strength and extent of the district..." (Polybius, 5.44.1-2). "Those who dwell on the western side of the lofty mountain Coronus abound in fields of grain and vineyards, enjoy the fertility of a productive soil, and are rich in rivers and clear springs. Their green meadows produce a noble breed of horses, on which their chiefs (as the writers of old say, and as I myself have seen) when entering battle are wont to ride full of courage. These horses they call Nesaeon. Therefore Media abounds in rich cities, in villages built up like towns, and in a great number of inhabitants; it is (to speak briefly) the richest residence of the kings." (Ammianus Marcellinus, 23.6.29-31).

<sup>38</sup> "In these parts are the fertile fields of the Magi, about whose sects and pursuits—since we have chanced on this point—it will be in place to give a few words of explanation. According to Plato, the most eminent author of lofty ideas,

A third possibility regarding the meaning of Khoromithrene, as argued by Marquart (1905, p. 24 fn. 4, p. 72), is that the term describes the Alborz Mountains. In Zoroastrian mythology, the sacred mountain Hara Berezaiti, located at the center of the world, was later identified with the mountain range south of the Caspian Sea and derived its name from there<sup>39</sup>. This mountain range is the dwelling place of Mithra<sup>40</sup> (Boyce, 2014). Therefore, this context is quite consistent with the content of the term. Marquart<sup>41</sup>, who identified Ptolemaios' Khoromithrene with the Alborz Mountains, suggested that the region of Sigrianike, described in the text as being south of Khoromithrene, approximately corresponds to the territory of the present-day Qazvin province<sup>42</sup>.

Considering Ptolemaios' logical approach in describing Media topographically and ethnographically, following a network-like pattern from northwest to southeast, choosing the first of the three possibilities mentioned above appears more reasonable. This is because Khoromithrene and the three regions listed south of it should represent the central part of Media. The subsequent Iasonius Mountain<sup>43</sup>, the Dareitis region, the Ouadassians, and the Syromedia region, which is said to extend along the border of Persis, seem to indicate the lands southeast of Media's central part. The second possibility, as emphasized above, describes a region similar to the first possibility. The third possibility, though inconsistent with Ptolemaios' narrative logic, is highly compatible in terms of content. In this case, however, the central lands of Media would remain unmentioned. Finally, if, as in the first possibility, Khoromithrene is considered as the Great Khorasan Road and its route is extended through Qazvin, it would significantly overlap with the third possibility.

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*magic, under the mystic name of hagistia, is the purest worship of the gods... Of what he had learned he communicated something to the understanding of the Magi, which they, along with the art of divining the future, hand on from generation to generation to later times. From that time on for many ages down to the present a large class of men of one and the same descent have devoted themselves to the service of the gods. The Magi also say (if it is right to believe them) that they guard on ever-burning braziers a fire sent down from heaven in their country, and that a small portion of it, as a good omen, used to be carried before the Asiatic kings. The number of Magi of this origin in old times was very small, and the Persian potentates made regular use of their services in the worship of their gods... But they gradually increased in number and became a strong clan, with a name of their own; they possessed country residences, which were protected by no great walls, and they were allowed to live in accordance with their own laws, and through respect for religion were held in high esteem..."* (Ammianus Marcellinus, 23.6.32-36).

<sup>39</sup> Avesta: "Harā bərəzaiti", Middle Persian: "Harborz" (Eilers, 2014).

<sup>40</sup> Ahura Mazda built a residence for Mithra on the sacred mountain Hara Berezaiti, around which the stars revolve (Kızıl, 2013, p. 38).

<sup>41</sup> Marquart (1905, p. 24 fn. 4) stated that Khoromithrene could only be explained as Parakhoathras (i.e. the Alborz Mountains) mentioned in ancient sources. He referred to Parakhoathras as "Ptolemaios' Parkhoathras" in parentheses. However, Ptolemaios used Parkhoathras to describe the mountain range that formed the border between Media and Persia and continued beyond Karmania (Ptolemaios, 6.2.3; 6.4.1; 6.5.1; 6.6.1). Strabon's Parakhoathras, on the other hand, clearly corresponds to the Alborz Mountains (Strabon, 11.8.1, 8; 11.12.4; 11.14.1).

<sup>42</sup> Marquart also suggested that the "Dastaba" region mentioned in Sassanian and Islamic period texts might correspond to the Sigrianike region (Marquart, 1905, p. 24 fn. 4). The exact location of Dastaba (Dastuva) remains uncertain. In Islamic sources, Dastaba appears both as a city and as a region (Le Strange, 1905, p. 220). It was likely a city situated between Hamadan, Ray and Qazvin. When defined as a region, however, it seems to have covered a larger area. Historical sources indicate that the Dastaba region was divided into two parts, with one belonging to the city of Ray (ar-Razi) and the other to Hamadan (al-Hamadhani) (Murgotten, 1924, pp. 4, 9, 13, 14). On the other hand, it is thought to have been located along the route leading from Ray to Azerbaijan, bypassing Qazvin (Le Strange, 1905, p. 220).

<sup>43</sup> Considering the coordinates given by Ptolemaios, it can be identified with the Karkas Mountains to the north of Isfahan.

### Researchers' views on the location of Sagartia

Returning to the location of Sagartia, some researchers who have pondered this issue (Rawlinson, Sayce, Lecoq, Kuhrt, Junge, Eilers etc.)<sup>44</sup> tend to place Sagartia in eastern Iran based on Herodotos' accounts and the references found in Persian inscriptions. Other researchers, however, argue that it would be more accurate to search for the land of the Sagartians in the west of Iran, based on data of other sources (e.g., Assyrian inscriptions, the account of the Sagartia rebellion in the Behistun Inscription). The idea that Sagartia was located in the west of Iran and may be related to Zakruti<sup>45</sup> (or Zakrute), a city mentioned in Assyrian texts (during the reigns of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II) and situated in Media, was first proposed by Norris<sup>46</sup>.

Then, in 1870, Lenormant took this view a step further. He proposed that the land of Zikirtu (or Zigirtu / Ziqirtu / Zikirta), one of the main targets of Sargon II's 8th Campaign, was the same as Zakruti and therefore Sagartia (Cited from Lenormant by Potts, 2014, p. 103). Shortly thereafter (1886), Tiele equated Zikirtu in the land of Manna with Sagartia. Tiele stated<sup>47</sup> that the people of Zikirtu, who were defeated by Sargon II, were forced to abandon their country, as described in the text<sup>48</sup>. Potts noted that later researchers referenced Tiele when discussing the connection between these two regions, as if Tiele were the first to propose it. He reported that this hypothesis (Zikirtu = Sagartia) was generally accepted among researchers<sup>49</sup>. Melikov also equated Zikirtu with Sagartia without any doubt<sup>50</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> To east of the Kavir Desert, south of Parthia, and mostly desert lands (G.Rawlinson, 1873, pp. 11-12); the eastern neighbor of the Medes, possibly referring to the Kavir Desert (Sayce 1883, pp. 75, 386); the vicinity of present-day Yazd (Olmstead, 1948, pp. 34, 115); in the same region as G. Rawlinson, situated in eastern Iran south of Parthia (Lecoq, 1997, p. 140; pp. 14-15 Fig. 2); though Kuhrt made no definitive statement, she expressed her view using a map by Briant. The region south of the Kavir Desert and west of the Lut Desert, around the cities of Yazd and Zarand (Kuhrt, 2010, p. 139, Fig.5.1; p. 155, fn. 70); within the borders of present-day Kerman province (cited from Junge by Eilers, 2012); for other locations in eastern Iran, see Eilers, 2012.

<sup>45</sup> RINAP, Tiglath-pileser III: Annals Series A, B, and C Frgm.\_5 61, Annals Series B Frgm.\_2 42, 17 6, 35 ii 43', 39 18, 41 6', 47 o 30, 47 o 36; Sargon II 65 47, 117 ii 46, 117 ii 47.

<sup>46</sup> Potts stated that he could not find such a view in Norris's publications and that this information was conveyed by Delattre (Potts, 2014, p. 103)

<sup>47</sup> Tiele (1886, pp. 261, 265 & 261 fn. 1) suggested, based on the execution of Sagartian leader Çiçantakhma in Arbela following the Sagartia rebellion described in the Behistun Inscription, that Sagartian lands, as stated by Ptolemaios, were located east of the Zagros Mountains and extended as far as modern-day Erbil. However, he added that this occurred after the fall of Assyria (p. 261, fn. 1). Regarding the region known as Zikirtu during Sargon II's reign, Tiele proposed that it was an outpost of the Persians (whom he referred to as Iranians) in the land of the Sagartians and that, after their defeat by Sargon, some of them moved southward (p. 265). Marquart, supporting Tiele's view that there was a Sagartia in the vicinity of Erbil after the fall of Assyria, interpreted this as a reward granted to them by the Medes following their victory over Assyria (cited from Marquart by Potts, 2014, p. 105).

<sup>48</sup> "...He gathered together all the people of his land and made (them) climb with (great) difficulty up distant mountains; their whereabouts have never been discovered. Moreover, (as for) him, his royal city Parda had no value in his eyes and (so) he abandoned the property of his palace and left town (lit.: "went outside"). He mobilized his horses and his battle troops and brought (them as) auxiliary troops to the aid of Ursâ (Rusâ), his ally...." (RINAP, Sargon II, 65 79-91).

<sup>49</sup> Potts, 2014, p. 104. For references to some authors who have written about this hypothesis (Prašek, Herzfeld, Rigg, Minorsky, Zadok, Justi, Cameron, Young) and Potts' comments on them, see Potts, 2014, pp. 104-105, fn. 108, 109. Potts notes that Justi, in 1869, suggested based on the execution of the Sagartian leader Çiçantakhma in Arbela after the rebellion that Sagartia was located in northern Mesopotamia (as cited by Potts, 2014, p. 105). Melikov also mentioned researchers (Tiele, Hommel, Marquart, Prašek, König, Girshman, Herzfeld, Grantovskiy) who accepted the equivalence of Zikirtu = Sagartia and stated that this view was first proposed by Tiele (Melikov, 2010, p. 737).

<sup>50</sup> Melikov points to a very broad geography for Sagartia. He argued that these lands also included the territories inhabited by the Utians and Mycans, whom Herodotus listed within the 14th satrapy: "*The Asagarta satrapy, that is, Zigirtu, located in the region extending from the Lower Tigris Valley to the Caspian Sea, also includes the area inhabited*

Marquart noted that various nomadic tribes in Iran, as understood from ancient texts, could be encountered in different regions and suggested that the Sagartians might also have been part of such a distribution, and the Sagartia rebellion took place in western Sagartia near Arbela in Assyria<sup>51</sup>. Like Marquart, some researchers accept that nomadic communities in Iran lived scattered across different regions and that there was more than one Sagartia. One of these researchers, Brunnhofer, Brunnhofer (1893, pp. 68-70) emphasized the description of Sagartia as “*a peninsula on the Caspian Sea*” according to Stephanos of Byzantium<sup>52</sup>, and, considering other written evidence, argued that the Sagartians, a nomadic equestrian people, lived in various regions of Iran (north, south, east, west), which would be entirely natural for nomadic populations<sup>53</sup>. Justi (1897) also considered the possibility of two Sagartias as one in the east (based on Herodotos’ account) and the other in the west (based on Assyrian and Persian inscriptions). He argued that if this situation arose due to migration, then, in accordance with the chronological positioning of the evidence, the migration must have been from west to east rather than from east to west (cited from Justi by Potts, 2014, p. 106). Streck (1899) rejected the equivalence of Sagartia and Zikirtu and maintained that, as Herodotos indicated (most researches do not doubt that Herodotos’ description refers to an eastern location), the Sagartians originated in eastern Iran. In addition, for another location of the Sagartians in the west, Streck, like Norris, argued that they should be associated with the city of Zakruti mentioned in Assyrian texts within Media (cited from Streck by Potts, 2014, pp. 106–107). Similarly, Prašek (1906) accepted the existence of two distinct Sagartias, stating that during the time of Darius, one was located east of Media (near present-day Yazd), while the other was in Assyria (with its capital at Arbela) (cited from Prašek by Potts, 2014, p. 106).

#### **Additional Evidence Shedding Light on the Location of Sagartia**

Jacobs, in his study examining the toponyms and ethnonyms found in documents such as the Persepolis Fortification Tablets (PFT), which recorded the travels and rations of individuals on state duty within the Persian Empire, emphasized that ethnonyms in these texts largely corresponded with the lists of satrapies found in Persian inscriptions and other ancient sources<sup>54</sup> (Jacobs 2017, pp. 12 & 32-33 Table 3-4). Jacobs (2017, pp. 13-14) suggested that the ethnonym “Arbelan”<sup>55</sup>, which appears a few times in the texts, was used for the people of Sagartia, a co-

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*by the Mycians and Utii in the former Northwestern Media. Otherwise, Asagarta would have separated these peoples from the center of Media. The lands of the Asagarta satrapy (excluding the Assyrian provinces along the Lower Tigris) represent the territory of Lesser Media, which in the future would be known as Media-Atropatene.”* (Melikov, 2010, p. 744).

<sup>51</sup> Marquart, 1905, pp. 23-25, fn. 4; p. 183. Marquart suggested that there were two Sagartias, one in the east around Parthia and the other in the west around Erbil in the Northern Zagros (p. 174).

<sup>52</sup> “*Sagartia, a peninsula on the Caspian Sea. The name of the people is Sagartioi*” (Stephanos of Byzantium, S549.14)

<sup>53</sup> In his commentary, enriched with quotations from the Rigveda, Brunnhofer, following the information provided by Stephanos of Byzantium, suggested that the peninsula he referred to as Sagartia was located on the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea, around the Karabogaz Gulf peninsula in northwestern Turkmenistan (Brunnhofer, 1893, p. 73).

<sup>54</sup> Henkelman & Stolper (2009, p. 306) emphasized that Sagartia appears four times as a departure point and once as a destination in the Persepolis Fortification Tablets. However, they noted that no ethnonym corresponding to “the people of Sagartia” has been identified in the tablets published so far (as of that date, 26 ethnonyms had been identified in approximately 5,000 tablets, and a similar situation was noted for Areia / pp. 272-273). Based on this, Jacobs identified the ethnonym “Arbelan,” mentioned in the tablets, as referring to the people of Sagartia.

<sup>55</sup> Arbelan workers in Persepolis: PF-NN 1001, PF-NN 2342, PF-NN 1739 (Henkelman & Stolper, 2009, p. 300; Jacobs, 2017, pp. 13-14). For foreign workers around Persepolis, see Henkelman et. al., 2023, pp. 230-233; Henkelman &

untry rarely mentioned in the tablets, and that this ethnonym should be matched with the toponym Sagartia<sup>56</sup>. Therefore, he concluded that Sagartia must have been located around Arbela. However, Jacobs cited Tuplin as a reference for the opposing view, noting that the Arbela mentioned in the texts might not be the one north of Assyria. Instead, Tuplin suggested that it would be more reasonable to consider it as a homonymous location in Parsa (Tuplin 2003, p. 362 fn. 26). Tuplin reasoned that, considering the routes described in the mentioned tablets (unless there was a specific reason for travelers to follow this route), Jacobs's proposed placement of Sagartia was not logical<sup>57</sup>. According to Henkelman & Stolper (2009, p. 300), there is no reason to assume the existence of two different places named Arbela (Harberan), as some researchers suggest. In the administrative structure of the Persian Empire, each satrapy had 3-4 sub-administrative units (provinces) (Henkelman, 2020, p. 213). Arbela, where Darius' palace was located (Strabon, 16.1.4), was also one of these (Henkelman, 2020, pp. 213-214; Henkelman & Jacobs, 2021, p. 723). Based on this, ethnonyms derived from certain sub-administrative units, such as "Arbelans" encountered in the PFT, might be understood as corresponding to the overarching ethnonym of the satrapy to which that administrative unit belonged<sup>58</sup> (Henkelman & Stolper, 2009, p. 275).

It is apparent that the available written evidence makes it challenging to draw satisfactory conclusions regarding the relationship between Sagartia and Arbela, the existence of multiple locations named Arbela, or the precise location of Sagartia. Nevertheless, in his extensive studies in recent years, Henkelman has argued that an analysis of the texts in the PFT, where Sagartia appears as either a departure or arrival point, suggests that Sagartia had no connection to Arbela or Western Media. Instead, its location should roughly be sought between Media and Parsa (Persis), and -also citing Ptolemaios- it should be placed to the east of the central Zagros mountain range, that is, in central Iran<sup>59</sup> (Henkelman, 2020, p. 216). In another study led by Henkelman, considering two tablets of the PFT (documenting the journeys of Karkiš [Henkelman, 2010, pp. 704-713], the satrap of Karmania -possibly Gergis mentioned in Herodotos 7.82- who traveled twice from Sagartia to Carmania with a large army [Henkelman & Stolper, 2009,

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Stolper, 2009, 304-322. Henkelman & Stolper (2009, p. 300) stated that the Arbelan workers are mentioned three times in the PFT (<sup>HAL</sup>kur-taš <sup>HAL</sup>har-ber-ra-an) and that they are given with a "personal determinative" (HAL) rather than a "locative determinative" (AŠ), and that, so far, the name Arbela has not appeared as a place name in the tablets.

<sup>56</sup> Sagartia to Elam (via Parsa): PF-NN 2040; Sagartia to Kerman (via Parsa) (or and vice versa): PF-NN 2261, Fort. 0472-101, Fort. 11811; Sagartia to Persepolis: PFa 31; to Sagartia: PF 1501 (Henkelman, 2008b, p. 120 fn. 266; Henkelman & Stolper, 2009, p. 306, p. 274 fn.8; Jacobs, 2017, p. 11 fn. 43; Henkelman, 2020, p. 216 fn. 39; Henkelman et al., 2023, pp. 239-240).

<sup>57</sup> Tuplin cited Jacobs' 1994 publication regarding his view. Tuplin argued that if Sagartia were located in the west, as Jacobs proposed in Erbil (or even east of Zagros as suggested by Ptolemaios), there should not be a travel tablet (PF-NN 2040) in the Persepolis Records for individuals traveling from Sagartia to Susa (Tuplin, 2003, p. 362 fn. 26). Henkelman noted that the group traveling from Sagartia to Susa carried an authorization from the king and obtained barley supplies from the city of Zanana (a place likely in the west of Persepolis) (Henkelman, 2008b, p. 120 fn. 266; p. 486 fn. 1113).

<sup>58</sup> According to them, Parikanians might correspond to Arakhosians, Hattians and Arbelans to Assyrians, and Maki-ans to Arabs (Henkelman & Stolper, 2009, p. 275).

<sup>59</sup> Henkelman also proposed that the administrative center of Sagartia was a place named Šurauša/Šaušša (and perhaps Šaušaka). He referenced an upcoming publication, titled "*This Wide Earth with Many Lands in It*", in which he would examine this hypothesis and the possible location of Sagartia in greater detail. In a 2023 article co-authored by Henkelman, Kaniuth, and Mohammadkhani, it was again stated that this topic would be addressed in the same publication. As of the time this article was written, the mentioned work had not yet been published. For the connection between Šurauša/Šaušša and Šaušaka, see Henkelman, 2010, p. 710 fn. 162.

p. 302]) and various pieces of evidence, it was emphasized that the most suitable location for Sagartia, situated between the satrapies of Media and Parsa, was in the plain surrounding modern-day Isfahan (Henkelman et. al., 2023, pp. 230-233). The city of Kabaš (likely corresponding to Gabae / Gabene in ancient texts)<sup>60</sup>, mentioned in the PFT as a place supplying animals to traveling groups, was likely located on the route from Media and Sagartia to Kerman and Parsa (Persepolis) (Henkelman, 2008a, p. 311; Henkelman, 2008b, p. 119 fn. 266; Henkelman, 2010, p. 707, p. 718 fn. 195). Based on the information in the tablets, Henkelman suggested that Kabaš should be located near modern Isfahan (Henkelman, 2008a, p. 311; Henkelman, 2010, p. 707 fn. 151). Accordingly, based on Henkelman's views, it can be inferred that Sagartia must have been situated west of Isfahan, on the route to Media (to Ekbatana).

### **Sargon's 8th Campaign and the Land of Zikirtu**

The geographical target of the renowned 8th campaign conducted by Assyrian King Sargon II in 714 BCE was northwestern Iran. The main political objective of the campaign was to curb the expansion of the Urartian Kingdom around Lake Urmia and to prevent its alliance with the regional powers. Thus, one of the secondary goals of the campaign was to punish the land of Zikirtu, which had allied itself with Urartu (although Sargon stated at the beginning of the campaign that he directed his course toward Zikirtu and Andia), and to "persuade" other regional powers to accept Assyrian dominance. The campaign was recorded in a letter dedicated "To the Father of the Gods, Aššur" written by the king's chief scribe, Nabû-šallim-šunu, son of Harmakki. Besides being a significant military operation of the Assyrian Empire, this campaign provides valuable insights into the geographical, military, and political landscape of the period (Çilingiroğlu, 1984, p. 1). While the text details the route followed by Sargon during the campaign and the localization of the conquered regions, the exact locations of these places remain a subject of debate, informed by the geographical references in the text and modern research.

Departing from the royal city of Kalhu, Sargon crossed the Upper Zab River with his army and passed through the Kullar Mountains in the land of Zamua (Lullumi). In the region of Sumbi, he inspected his troops and completed his preparations. Leading his army "toward the mountains for the third time", Sargon set his sights on the lands of Zikirtu and Andia. With a poetic narrative describing his passage over mountains, hills, rivers, and river valleys, Sargon reached the region of Surikaš, a part of the Mannaeen Kingdom, bordering the lands of Karalla and Allabria (Çilingiroğlu, 1984, pp. 2-4; RINAP, Sargon II 065 6-32). Upon hearing this, the Mannaeen king Ullusununu, along with his entourage, arrived at Sinihini, a border fortress of the kingdom, to meet Sargon and declare his allegiance to him. From there, Sargon advanced through the land of Allabria to Parsuaš, where he received tributes from kings of various lands / regions, including the Medes, as a sign of their allegiance (Çilingiroğlu, 1984, pp. 4-6; RINAP, Sargon II 065 32-51). After leaving Parsuaš, Sargon proceeded to Missi, a region of Manna, where King Ullusununu welcomed him at the fortress of Sirdakka (Zirdiakka). After various ceremonies, Sargon received tributes and declarations of allegiance from a delegation of rulers, including those from the land of Gizilbunda, and then departed (Çilingiroğlu, 1984, pp. 6-7; RINAP, Sargon II 065 51-75).

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<sup>60</sup> Henkelman, 2008a, pp. 310-312. Henkelman referenced the city named Gabene as recorded by Ptolemaios (6.2.13). However, when examining the coordinates given by Ptolemaios for this city (87°00' - 37°30'), it becomes clear that it was situated west of Ekbatana (88°00' - 37°45' / 6.2.14). Therefore, Kabaš, as mentioned by Henkelman, cannot be the same place as Ptolemaios' Gabene.



Having completed his preparations, Sargon set out to punish Zikirtu and Andia, one of his targets. After a journey of "30 *beru*"<sup>61</sup> (~180 km) between the lands of Manna, Bit-Kapsi, and the Medes, he arrived at Panziš, a fortress positioned against Zikirtu and Andia. From there, Sargon crossed the Ištaraurâ River and entered Aukane, a region of Zikirtu. Seeing Sargon's approach from afar at Mount Uašdirikka, Mitatti of Zikirtu gathered his people and fled to the distant mountains in fear. Simultaneously, he sent his troops to support Urartian King Rusa. Later, Sargon destroyed the 13 fortified cities<sup>62</sup> and 84 settlements of Zikirtu. To fight King Rusa of Urartu, Sargon advanced from Aukane to Uišdiš, a region in Manna captured by Rusa (Çilingiroğlu, 1984, pp. 7-8; RINAP, Sargon II 065 79-91). The distance between the two mentioned regions is unclear. Sargon attacked the Urartian army, which was waiting for battle on the great Uauš Mountain with their allies, and inflicted a heavy defeat. The allied army scattered, and Mitatti and surrounding kings fled. Sargon pursued them for "6 *beru*" from Mount Uauš to Mount Zimur, "the jade mountain". In his letter, Sargon stated that he halted his march towards Zikirtu and Andia and turned his direction to the Urartian territories, claiming that he destroyed many cities in Uišdiš (Çilingiroğlu, 1984, pp. 8-11; RINAP, Sargon II 065 91-167). Sargon, who left Uišdiš, returned to his country by capturing many cities on his way, gaining spoils, and plundering their lands in a way that would break the power of Urartu (Çilingiroğlu, 1984, pp. 11-25; RINAP, Sargon II 065 167-426).

#### **Opinions on the Route of Sargon's 8th Campaign and the Location of Zikirtu**

Although the text describing Sargon's 8th Campaign is quite detailed, the place names and the route of the campaign mentioned in the text are still under debate<sup>63</sup>. For the direction of the campaign, very different routes have been proposed, as well as widely divergent location suggestions for some place names<sup>64</sup> (Muscarella, 2012, pp. 7-8). Muscarella has rationally classified the views of researchers who have expressed opinions on the route Sargon followed after heading towards Urartu: According to him, all perspectives can be divided into two main categories, "Short Route" and "Long Route". The Short Route states that the campaign remained around Lake Urmia and did not extend to Lake Van. The Short Route has two subcategories. The first involves circumnavigating Lake Urmia starting from the east<sup>65</sup>. The second involves starting from the south of Lake Urmia, following only the western shores of the lake, and then heading south towards Assyria<sup>66</sup>. The Long Route claims that the campaign visited both Lake Urmia and Lake Van. Like the Short Route, the Long Route also includes two subcategories. The first extended as far as the vicinity of Lake Van<sup>67</sup>, while the second completed the campaign by circling Lake Van as well<sup>68</sup>.

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<sup>61</sup> *Beru*: a two-hour journey, approximately 1 league or farsakh or ~6 km.

<sup>62</sup> Though the text mentions the destruction of 12 fortified cities, the names of 13 cities are listed (RINAP, Sargon II 065 87-89).

<sup>63</sup> See Riggi 1942, pp. 130-138; Wright, 1943, pp. 173-186; Levine, 1977, pp. 135-151; Çilingiroğlu, 1977, pp. 235-251; Zimansky, 1990, pp. 1-21; Muscarella, 2012, pp. 4-9; Kroll, 2012, pp. 11-17; Pınarcık, 2014, pp. 39-53; Tourovets, 2015, pp. 21-33 etc...

<sup>64</sup> For a brief discussion of the views of researchers who have expressed opinions on the route of the campaign, see also Kroll, 2012.

<sup>65</sup> Researchers supporting this view: Piotrovskiy, Burney, Van Loon, Çilingiroğlu, Selim & Belli, Mayer, Zimansky, Liebig, Reade, Kroll (Muscarella, 2012, p. 7).

<sup>66</sup> Researchers supporting this view: Riggi, Muscarella, Levine, Salvini (Muscarella, 2012, p. 8).

<sup>67</sup> Researchers supporting this view: Thureau-Dangin, Wright, Çilingiroğlu, Van Loon, Kleiss (Muscarella, 2012, p. 8).

<sup>68</sup> Researchers supporting this view: Thureau-Dangin, Piotrovskiy, Burney, Çilingiroğlu (Muscarella, 2012, p. 8).

Although the narrative of Sargon's 8th Campaign and the supporting descriptions in other Assyrian texts help to establish the historical geography of northwestern Iran at that time to a certain extent, it is a fact that researchers who have pondered this subject have struggled considerably. This is clearly reflected in the vastly different location suggestions for the mentioned regions and topographical features. Nevertheless, it is possible to propose a narrowed geographical area for the location of Zikirtu, which is one of the focal points of this study. One of the determining points for the location of that country is Mount Uauš, mentioned in the text of the 8th Campaign. Most researchers agree on identifying that mountain with present-day Mount Sahand. According to Sargon's narrative, that mountain is located in the Uišdiš region, which is a region of Manna and was captured by the Urartian king Rusa. Sargon crossed into Uišdiš after plundering Aukane region of Zikirtu. Although the distance between these regions is not specified, it can be assumed that Aukane was adjacent to Uišdiš. Therefore, as supported by many researchers, it would be reasonable to position Zikirtu in the lands east of Mount Uauš (Sahand).

It is understood that Zikirtu and Andia, mentioned together with it, were regions of Manna or semi-independent territories under a certain dependency on Manna (Çilingiroğlu, 1984, p. 7 fn. 25; Hejebri Nobari & Mollazadeh, 2004, p. 88). Archaeological research conducted in the last 50 years has revealed some material cultural elements attributed to the Kingdom of Manna in the southern vicinity of Lake Urmia, including the basins of the Zerrineh (Cıgatı / Çağatay / Jighati River), Simineh (Tatao / Tatavi / Tatahu River), Mahabad (Sablagh River) rivers and possibly the Little Zab River (Hassanzadeh, 2022, pp. 20-36). It can be stated that the western border of Manna was the Zagros Mountains, while its southern and eastern borders were the valley of the Kızıl Özen River (Hejebri Nobari & Mollazadeh, 2004, pp. 88-90; Hassanzadeh, 2022, p. 14). Sargon stated that he left Parsuaš and reached Missi, a region of Manna, and then the Sirdakka fortress there. It would be logical to assume that this region was in the southernmost lands of Manna. Therefore, this region should be positioned around or north of modern Bijar (Bicar) or near modern Takab (Tikan Tepe) (Hejebri Nobari & Mollazadeh, 2004, p. 89 map 1; Hipp, 2014, p. 775; Hassanzadeh, 2022, p. 20 fig. 1). Two archaeological sites in the vicinity can be suggested for the location of Sirdakka fortress. The first is the fortress of Ghamchi-Khay (Ghamchoghay / Qamchqay) (Hassanzadeh, 2022, p. 29), approximately 30 km north of Bijar. The other is the Zendan-e-Soleyman (Hassanzadeh, 2022, p. 23) archaeological site. This location corresponds to the scene described in which rulers from the land of Gizilbunda (as well as Kitpat and Appatar<sup>69</sup>) presented their tributes and declarations of allegiance to Sargon at the fortress of Sirdakka. For it is stated in the text that the Gizilbunda extended like a border between the Mede and Manna territories. Associating Gizilbunda with the valley of the Kızıl Özen River seems plausible. Departing from Sirdakka, Sargon traveled approximately 180 km to reach the fortress of Panziš at the border of Zikirtu. Two suitable routes can be suggested for this journey. The first involves following the valley of the Zerrineh River. The second involves moving east-northeast, passing near modern Zencan, following the Zencan River, and progressing northwest through the confluence of the Kızıl Özen and Zencan rivers<sup>70</sup> (Tourovets, 2015, p. 30). This is also consistent with the statement in the campaign text: "*I marched furiously a*

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<sup>69</sup> Wright noted that Herzfeld identified Appatar with the town of Abhar, located between Kazvin and Zencan, and associated Kitpat with Kazvin (Wright, 1943, p. 179 fn. 33).

<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, the Kızıl Özen valley can be followed directly without going up to the Zanjan River valley; in Assyrian texts, it is seen that a similar route (Parsua - Missi - Gizilbunda - Bit-Kapsi) was followed by Šamši-Adad V (Hipp, 2014, pp. 775-776).

*distance of thirty leagues between (the territory of) the land Mannea, the land Bīt-Kapsi, and the land of the powerful Medes"* (RINAP, Sargon II 065 75). In this context, the views (Reade, 1979, p. 180<sup>71</sup>; Hipp, 2014, p. 773; Babazadeh et. al., 2024, pp. 61-62) on identifying Bit-Kapsi with the modern city of Qazvin and its surroundings (although its western border is uncertain) gain meaning. Whichever route he used, the given distance suggests that Sargon aimed to reach a region approximately south of modern Hashtrud, towards the upper streams of the Karangu River, which aligns with Wright's (1943, p. 180 fn. 39) proposal<sup>72</sup> decades ago for the location of Zikirtu, situated in a roughly 60 km arc encompassing the south and east of Mount Sahand. Nevertheless, following the Zerrineh River valley may be a more suitable route both for the security of the army's march and -as understood from the text- to approach Zikirtu from the west.

One reason Sargon sought to punish Zikirtu may have been its alliance with Urartu, but another reason must have been Zikirtu's strategic location. It would be reasonable to assume that Zikirtu was situated along the routes of the Great Khorasan Road, which passed through Zencan and Miyane to reach eastern Anatolia via Tabriz, and extended through Miyane-Miandoab (Goşaçay), crossing south of Lake Urmia and through the lands of Manna to connect to the Assyrian heartland. Therefore, we can propose that the location of Zikirtu lay in the valleys of the Karangu (Qaranqu), Aydoğmuş (Aydughmush), and Şahar (Shahr) rivers, in the lands extending from east of modern Miandoab and Heştrud to Miyane, south of the Bozkuş Mountains. Thus, Zikirtu, considering the Urartian presence in the Acı (Aji / Talkheh) Çay valley between the Sabalan and Bozkuş mountains, would be located in a position compatible with the texts, as a region bordering Urartu in the north and Manna in the west.

We acknowledge that the most suitable of the aforementioned route proposals for the 8th Campaign, in accordance with the text, is the route supported by researchers such as Zimansky and Kroll, which is the Short Route, involving circumnavigating Lake Urmia from the east, crossing to its west, and then returning to Assyria. Accordingly, it can be suggested that Sargon fought with the army of Urartu and its allies east of Mount Sahand (Uauš), in a location west-northwest of modern Hashtrud. Mitatti, having accepted defeat, likely fled east-southeast towards his own lands, and Sargon pursued him for a while (6 *beru*) (RINAP, Sargon II 065 145). Realizing that Sargon would not be able to catch Mitatti or that it would be a futile effort, he stated, "*I discontinued my campaign to the lands Andia and Zikirtu, my (original) destination, and I set out for the land Urartu...*" (RINAP, Sargon II 065 162) and turned towards Urartu (northwest), advancing towards the great fortress Ušqaya, which guarded a pass on the border of Urartu (RINAP, Sargon II 065 167-168). This advance is the subject of another study.

Finally, it is appropriate to convey the views of some researchers regarding the location of Zikirtu in relation to this section. Thureau-Dangin, one of the first researchers to express an opinion on the campaign route, placed Aukane on the southeastern slopes of Mount Sahand and positioned Zikirtu starting from the eastern part of the mountain (the sources of the Karangu River) extending southward to the Aydoğmuş River valley<sup>73</sup>. Herzfeld suggested that Zikirtu

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<sup>71</sup> Although Reade identified the area between Qazvin and Zanjan as Gizilbunda, it may be more accurate to identify that region as Bit-Kapsi.

<sup>72</sup> Although Wright drew the route of the 8th Campaign very differently and placed Aukane further south, around the modern city of Shahindej, he ultimately located the core region of Zikirtu in the lands mentioned above.

<sup>73</sup> For Thureau-Dangin's map, see Muscarella, 2013, p. 372 fig. 1.

extended between the modern cities of Tabriz, Miyane, and Ardabil (Herzfeld, 1968, p. 243). Melikov noted that Herzfeld's view was supported by researchers such as Aliyev, Diakonov, and Kashkai, who also localized Zikirtu around Miyane and Ardabil (Melikov, 2010, p. 739). Melikov also shared Grantovski's suggestion, conveying his view that the territory of Zikirtu extended east of Lake Urmia to the Bozkuş Mountains (Melikov, 2010, p. 738). Similarly, Nobari and Hassanzadeh, agreeing with Diakonov's views on the locations of Zikirtu and Andia, placed Zikirtu in the Miyane region and Andia to the east of Zikirtu, in the Sefid River valley and along the western foothills of the Alborz Mountains (Hejebri Nobari & Mollazadeh, 2004, pp. 88, 90 & 89 fig. 1; Hassanzadeh, 2022, p. 20 fig. 1). Reade, based on an innovative schematic diagram he created while considering Assyrian campaigns in the Iranian geography, placed Zikirtu in his map east of Mount Sahand, in the valley between the Sabalan and Bozkuş mountains (Reade, 1995, pp. 34-35 fig. 3-4). Kroll also accepted this view and noted that it was supported by Fuchs as well (Kroll, 2012, p. 13). Zimansky (1990, p. 14), who analyzed Sargon's campaign from a logical perspective, also suggested that Zikirtu must be located east of Mount Sahand. Tourovets (2015, p. 31) proposed that Zikirtu and Andia extended along fertile lands from the south-southeast of Mount Sahand to Miyane. Researchers who argued that the route of the 8th Campaign passed east of Lake Urmia naturally placed Zikirtu in the lands east of Mount Sahand. Within this group, Wright can be considered an exception as he sought Aukane in the mountainous areas east of the Zerrineh River valley. Wright (1943, p. 180 fn. 39) proposed that Zikirtu extended in a broad arc of approximately 60 km encompassing the southern and southeastern parts of Mount Sahand<sup>74</sup>. He also clearly located many toponyms mentioned in the text<sup>75</sup>.

Researchers who advocate for the Short Route and the path following the southern and western shores of Lake Urmia tend to inevitably place Zikirtu in the Zerrineh River valley. One of them, Levine, stated that there were not enough clues to propose a view on the location of Zikirtu, but that it should still have a location in the Zerrineh River valley (Levine, 1973, p. 115)<sup>76</sup>. Çilingiroğlu, although one of the researchers supporting the Long Route, proposed several possibilities for Zikirtu's location, including the northeast of modern Saqqez, the southern shores of Lake Urmia, and east of modern Miandoab (Çilingiroğlu, 1977, p. 242 fn. 39; Çilingiroğlu, 1984, p. 3 fn. 7). Salvini (2006, p. 10) also proposes the vicinity of Miandoab, probably south of Lake Urmia, for Zikirtu. Although Muscarella did not suggest a direct localization for Zikirtu, he argued that the Short Route and route were limited to the southern and western parts of Lake Urmia (Muscarella, 2012, pp. 6-8; Muscarella, 2013, p. 380 fig. 3). Thus, it is highly probable that he placed Zikirtu in the south of Lake Urmia. Although Rigg does not state a clear view on the location of Zikirtu, it is seen from the route he proposes for the campaign that he considers a location for Zikirtu in the south or southwest of Lake Urmia (Rigg, 1942, pp. 133-134).

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<sup>74</sup> On the other hand, the locations he indicates for Parda, the capital of Zikirtu, and Aukane extended far beyond the southern direction of the 60 km arc he mentioned. See footnote below. Wright also proposed that Andia extended further north and east of Zikirtu (see same footnote).

<sup>75</sup> For the proposed present-day locations of the toponyms mentioned in the text and the part of the expedition concerning Zikirtu and the route drawn by Wright, see Wright, 1943, pp. 180-183.

<sup>76</sup> In his 1977 publication, Levine placed Zikirtu between the north of the modern city of Bijar and the Saruq River valley on his map. This is also south of the lands Wright proposed for Aukane. For the map, see Muscarella, 2013, p. 379 fig. 2.

### **Discussion: Were Sagartia and Zikirtu the Same Place?**

Following the decipherment of the Behistun Inscription, researchers began proposing that Sagartia, one of the rebellious countries mentioned in the inscription, might be the same as Zikirtu, a land mentioned in Assyrian texts. For over a century, most researchers working on this topic seem to have more or less accepted the equation Sagartia = Zikirtu. Additionally, efforts have been observed to separately associate both Sagartia and Zikirtu with Zakruti, a city likely located in the Central Zagros region, as mentioned in Assyrian texts. Some researchers who equate Sagartia with Zikirtu have attempted to bring the two geographically closer (or even merge them) in their proposed locations. Others, considering references from various sources, have accepted that while these two lands might occupy different geographical locations, they represent the same ethnic community. To frame this tendency within a logical context, hypotheses have been constructed suggesting that the same people were dispersed across several regions or that they migrated during different periods in history.

The location of the land of Zikirtu mentioned in Assyrian texts is relatively clear. Although there are differing opinions on the route of Sargon's 8th Campaign around Lake Urmia, there is no dispute that Zikirtu was located near Lake Urmia; or, more broadly defined, in northwestern Iran. In contrast, the suggested locations for Sagartia span almost all of Iran. Researchers who consider Herodotos' accounts of the satrapies established by Darius tend to place Sagartia toward the east of Iran. This tendency is influenced by the assumption that the peoples listed alongside the Sagartians must have been neighboring communities. However, Herodotos himself noted that, during the formation of the satrapies, sometimes non-neighboring peoples were grouped under the same administration. Therefore, there is no valid justification for placing Sagartia in eastern Iran solely based on Herodotos' accounts.

On the other hand, there is no evidence to justify envisioning multiple Sagartias and relocating this people from one place to another solely based on Herodotos' statement that the Sagartians were a nomadic pastoral tribe. Of course, this does not mean that such a possibility should be dismissed entirely. Indeed, many ancient sources contain information about various peoples appearing in different regions. Likewise, ancient texts also attest to large-scale population transfers in antiquity. However, even if we accept that the Sagartians were a nomadic and migratory people, it is questionable whether the people of Zikirtu shared this characteristic. Sargon reported that he destroyed 12 (possibly 13) fortified cities and 84 settlements in the Aukane region of Zikirtu alone. This does not align well with the lifestyle of a nomadic people. As Tiele suggested, the idea that some of the Zikirtu people, fleeing in fear from Sargon, moved south and then migrated to the region later called Sagartia, goes no further than a nice piece of fiction. The fleeing people of Zikirtu most likely moved eastward or northward (and presumably returned after the danger had passed). Moreover, the sudden adoption of a nomadic lifestyle by these people is also not easily accepted.

According to the information provided by Darius in the Behistun Inscription, Sagartia was located in Media. He used the expression "*This (is) what has been done by me in Media.*" after the suppression of Ciçantakhma's rebellion and the impalement of the rebel in Arbela. Darius' this statement and the rebel leader's claim of Mede origin in the inscription are a clear obstacle to locating Sagartia near the eastern provinces. While Herodotos' unclear statement about Sagartia's location appears to have been given undue importance, Darius' far clearer declaration seems to have been given less attention. Attempting to reconcile the geographical references in

these two sources by assuming multiple Sagartias and explaining the situation through a migration from east to west is not a particularly rational approach. If a migration must be hypothesized, considering the chronology, as Justi emphasized, it should be from west to east. However, there is not the slightest piece of evidence to support this. On the other hand, the impalement of the rebel in Arbela remains an important problem that has not yet been resolved.

Centuries after the accounts of Darius and Herodotos regarding Sagartia and the Sagartians, Ptolemaios provided perhaps the clearest information about the location of Sagartia. According to Ptolemaios, Sagartia was located in Media, which he described using a rational method by providing coordinates and listing various toponyms and ethnonyms. Ptolemaios described Media systematically, beginning from its northwest and mapping it like a network. The region where he concluded his description corresponds to the southeastern part of Media. According to him, Sagartia laid east of Zagros. However, Ptolemaios' definition of Zagros differs from the modern understanding. He identified the northern portion of what we now call the Zagros mountain range as Khoathras; and the mountain he described as the Zagros was most likely the mountain massif where peaks such as Kuh-e Takht and Kuh-e Shahu are located, northeast of the pass (Patagh Pass) near the modern city of Serpol Zahab, which was probably described by ancient authors as the Zagros (Median) Gate (or Gates). Therefore, based on his description, Sagartia should be sought within or around the triangle formed by modern-day Kermanshah, Hamadan and Sanandaj. Khoromithrene, which Ptolemaios mentioned after Sagartia and stated extended as far as Parthia, must be the Great Khorasan Road. Marquart, very fittingly based on the term's meaning, equated Khoromithrene (likely meaning the Land of Mithra) with the Alborz Mountains. However, had Marquart been correct, one would expect Ptolemaios to emphasize Khoromithrene earlier in his listing -specifically when mentioning the peoples who lived in or around the Alborz Mountain- prior to referencing Sagartia. On the other hand, Marquart's proposal that Sigrianike -one of the three regions Ptolemaios names to the south of Khoromithrene- may correspond to the area known in Sasanian and Islamic sources as Dastaba, is noteworthy. Dastaba extended between Ray and Hamadan during those periods. Sigriane, which Strabon said was on the road leading from the Zagros Gate to the Caspian Gates, must be the same as Ptolemaios' Sigrianike. Therefore, from this perspective, Marquart's identification of Sigrianike with Dastaba seems accurate. Another alternative for this region could be the Sikris mentioned in Sargon II's 6th Campaign. Additionally, the land of Šaparda in the text of that same campaign seems a more suitable candidate for Sagartia than Zikirtu in the text of the 8th campaign.

Perhaps the most reliable evidence regarding the location of Sagartia can be found in the Persepolis Fortification Tablets. These tablets briefly document groups traveling within the empire whose rations were supplied by the state. Among the tablets compiled to date, it has been determined that Sagartia is mentioned as a starting or destination point of travel -six times- in tablets dating back to the reign of Darius. It has been observed that Karkiš, the satrap of Karmania during that period, traveled multiple times with a large army from Sagartia to Kerman (via Parsa). Henkelman, one of the leading researchers in this field, considering the other relevant tablets as well, argued that Sagartia was located along the route from Media to Parsa and Karmania. According to him, along this route, there was a ration-supply station called Kabaš, which should have been located near modern Isfahan. Therefore, it would be logical to assume that Sagartia was on the road extending from the west of Isfahan towards Media. Henkelman also emphasized that a Sagartia situated west of Isfahan would correspond with the location

assigned to the region by Ptolemaios. Although we do not agree with this view, it is possible to reconcile both proposed locations to some extent. Another discussion on this matter revolves around the information in one of the aforementioned tablets. That tablet (PF-NN 2040) contains information about a group traveling from Sagartia to Elam via Parsa. If this route was a regularly used one, then a western location for Sagartia (such as in western Iran or near Erbil) becomes implausible. Tuplin, who commented on this issue, argued that unless the group had a special reason, passing through Persepolis on their way from a Sagartia in the west to Elam would unnecessarily lengthen the journey. This viewpoint is quite logical. Because, there were much shorter routes to reach Elam from Sagartia where in the west as Ptolemaios reported or as suggested by some researchers. Traveling via Parsa would considerably extend the route several times over. However, such a tablet is unique; there are no other examples; and perhaps, as Tuplin stated, the traveling group had special reasons to pass through Parsa. Thus, it is clear that more tablets containing similar routes are needed to draw a definitive conclusion.

The available information and findings for determining the location of Sagartia are both scarce and -as scarce as they are- complex and contradictory. Therefore, establishing a definitive location is quite challenging. Nevertheless, based on the points discussed above, we can broadly suggest an area extending as a wide band of approximately 450x50 km in a northwest-southeast direction, from the modern cities of Sanandaj and Kamyaran to the cities of Isfahan and Shahrekord. If we disregard the document containing information about the group traveling from Sagartia to Elam, it would be logical to search for Sagartia in a region located within (or the vicinity of) the modern Sanandaj - Kermanshah - Hamadan triangle. Otherwise, it would be necessary to shift its proposed location eastward toward Isfahan. Until more documents emerge confirming the mentioned route, we prefer a western location. Perhaps, like researchers who attempt to explain the naming of different geographically distinct areas with the same name through migration in the chronological process, proposing that Sagartia shifted westward from the time of Darius to the time of Ptolemaios could also be an option for resolving the issue.

In conclusion, whether in a broad or narrow sense, the location proposal we have provided above is sufficient to reach a clear conclusion for the objective of our study. That is, in our opinion, there is no connection between Sargon's Zikirtu and Darius' Sagartia. The peoples lived in those regions were not the same. Furthermore, while we maintain that Sagartia had no relation to the city called Zakrute mentioned in Assyrian texts, we argue that, considering the location of Zikirtu, Sagartia was geographically closer to Zakrute than to Zikirtu.

### **Conclusion**

To more clearly convey the opinions we have put forward in the main text and discussion section of our study, within the context of our study's main objective and scope, we find it appropriate to list them in points:

- 1- There is no justification for assuming the existence of a Sagartia located in eastern Iran based on the interpretation of Herodotos' accounts concerning Sagartia.
- 2- Sagartia must have been located within the borders of Media.
- 3- There is no evidence to support the existence of more than one Sagartia or that such a notion resulted from migratory movements.

4- We do not consider it likely that there was a Sagartia located around Arbela (modern Erbil), north of Assyria. However, the reason why the Sagartian leader was impaled in Arbela remains an unresolved issue.

5- We believe that the most suitable location for Sagartia could be found in a region located within (or the vicinity of) the modern Sanandaj - Kermanshah - Hamadan triangle.

6- Nevertheless, considering the findings obtained from the Persepolis Fortification Tablets, we do not rule out the possibility that the proposed location of Sagartia might shift toward modern Isfahan. As long as the tablet describing the route "Sagartia to Elam via Parsa" (PF-NN 2040) remains a single and unique example, we argue that the information found in the other tablets does not undermine the location proposed in the above item.

7- Zikirtu must have been clearly located in the lands southeast and east of Mount Sahan, east of Lake Urmia, possibly extending as far as modern Miyane.

8- Therefore, we believe that Darius' Sagartia and Sargon's Zikirtu were not the same places and were even quite distant from each other.

9- The land of the Sagartians mentioned in the Behistun Inscription is not related to the land of Zikirtu or the city of Zakruti referred to in the Assyrian texts. However, considering the location of Zikirtu, we can state that Sagartia and Zakruti are situated closer to each other (near the Central Zagros region) than to Zikirtu.

10- It is understood that the people of Zikirtu were a sedentary population with a significant number of fortified cities and numerous settlements. If we take Herodotos' description of the Sagartians as a nomadic people to be accurate, then we can assert that these two peoples were not the same. The idea that the people of Zikirtu, after fleeing the devastation of the Aukane region by Sargon, later migrated south (or elsewhere) and transformed into the nomadic Sagartians seems to be an improbable proposal.

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#### Abbreviations

AD	Anno Domini	fn.	Footnote
BCE	Before Common Era	Gr.	Greek
DB	Darius' Behistun Inscription	Km	Kilometer
DPe	Darius' Persepolis Inscription	PFT	Persepolis Fortification Tablets

#### EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Following the decipherment of the Behistun Inscription, researchers have attempted to equate the land of Sagartia, mentioned as a rebellious region during the reign of Darius, with Zikirtu, a land referred to in earlier Assyrian sources. This equation, largely based on superficial name similarity and general geographical ambiguity, has been accepted or at least assumed by many researchers for over a century. Additionally, both Sagartia and Zikirtu have been linked, separately or together, with a city called Zakruti, also mentioned in Assyrian texts. These hypotheses have often been reinforced by speculative migration theories or assumptions about ethnic continuity.

The primary aim of this study is to critically assess the longstanding assumption that Sagartia and Zikirtu refer to the same region or people. By reevaluating historical, geographical, and textual data from both Assyrian, Akhaemenid and Greco-Roman sources, this research seeks to offer a more plausible identification of Sagartia, while arguing against its equation with Zikirtu or Zakruti.

A critical comparative analysis was conducted using textual sources from the Assyrian period (particularly Sargon II's campaigns) and Akhaemenid records, especially the Behistun Inscription and the Persepolis Fortification Tablets. The geographical assertions of ancient authors such as Herodotos and Ptolemaios were revisited and reinterpreted in the light of modern and historical topographical knowledge. Emphasis was placed on routes, administrative records, and the political geography of Media during the Akhaemenid era.

Findings suggest that the land of Zikirtu was most likely situated to the east and southeast of Lake Urmia, in northwestern Iran, based on the accounts of Sargon's military campaigns. The people of Zikirtu appear to have been settled and urbanized, with numerous fortified cities and settlements, contrasting sharply with Herodotos' portrayal of the Sagartians as a nomadic pastoral tribe. The assumption that the Zikirtu population migrated and transformed into Sagartians is not supported by any substantive evidence and appears speculative. Conversely, Darius' own statement in the Behistun Inscription positions Sagartia within the territory of Media. This is corroborated by Ptolemaios' geographical descriptions, which place Sagartia east of what he defines as the Zagros Mountain -a designation differing from the modern understanding and likely referring to the area surrounding Kuh-e Takht and Kuh-e Shahu. Based on Ptolemaios' systematic mapping, Sagartia should be located within or near the modern-day triangle formed by the cities of Kermanshah, Hamadan, and Sanandaj. The Persepolis Fortification Tablets provide further insight, referencing Sagartia multiple times in relation to military and administrative movements, especially along the route from Media to Karmania via Parsa. While one unique tablet (PF-NN 2040) describes a journey from Sagartia to Elam via Persepolis, suggesting a more eastern location, this instance remains isolated. Therefore, it is not sufficient to override the stronger case for a location in the western part of Iran.

The evidence supports the conclusion that Sagartia and Zikirtu were distinct territories with different cultural and geographical characteristics. Sagartia was part of Media and should be placed in the Central Zagros region -most plausibly within the Sanandaj-Kermanshah-Hamadan triangle. This localization aligns with both Darius' inscriptions and Ptolemaios' Geography, and there is no justification for situating Sagartia in eastern Iran based on Herodotos' account. His description, while informative, is not precise enough to override the more geographically grounded testimony of other sources. Moreover, Herodotos' note that satrapies could include non-contiguous peoples undermines any rigid geographical interpretation based solely on satrapal listings. We find no convincing evidence to support the idea of more than one Sagartia. Nor do we consider it likely that there was a Sagartia located near Arbela (modern Erbil), despite the execution of a Sagartian rebel there. While the reason for this impalement remains unclear.

The hypotheses connecting Sagartia to Zikirtu or Zakruti is equally unconvincing. Zikirtu appears to have been located east-southeast of Mount Sahand and east of Lake Urmia, likely extending toward modern Miyane. The people of Zikirtu seems were sedentary, dwelling in for-

tified cities and dense settlements -traits inconsistent with Herodotos' description of the Sagartians as nomadic. Accordingly, we argue that these were different populations occupying geographically distant regions. The idea that the people of Zikirtu fled Sargon's devastation and later became the nomadic Sagartians is historically and demographically fictional and it doesn't make much sense. Sagartia referenced in the Behistun Inscription was not connected to either Zikirtu or Zakruti. However, the location of Zakruti suggests it was closer to Sagartia than to Zikirtu. Finally, while the Persepolis Fortification Tablets contain a unique reference to a route from Sagartia to Elam via Parsa, this singular instance does not contradict the proposed location of Sagartia in the Central Zagros -unless further similar records emerge. Although we cannot definitively rule out the possibility that future discoveries may adjust our understanding, the current data clearly indicate that Sagartia and Zikirtu were unrelated in both location and cultural identity. Any perceived connection between them appears to be the result of interpretive overreach rather than genuine historical continuity.

#### FIGURES

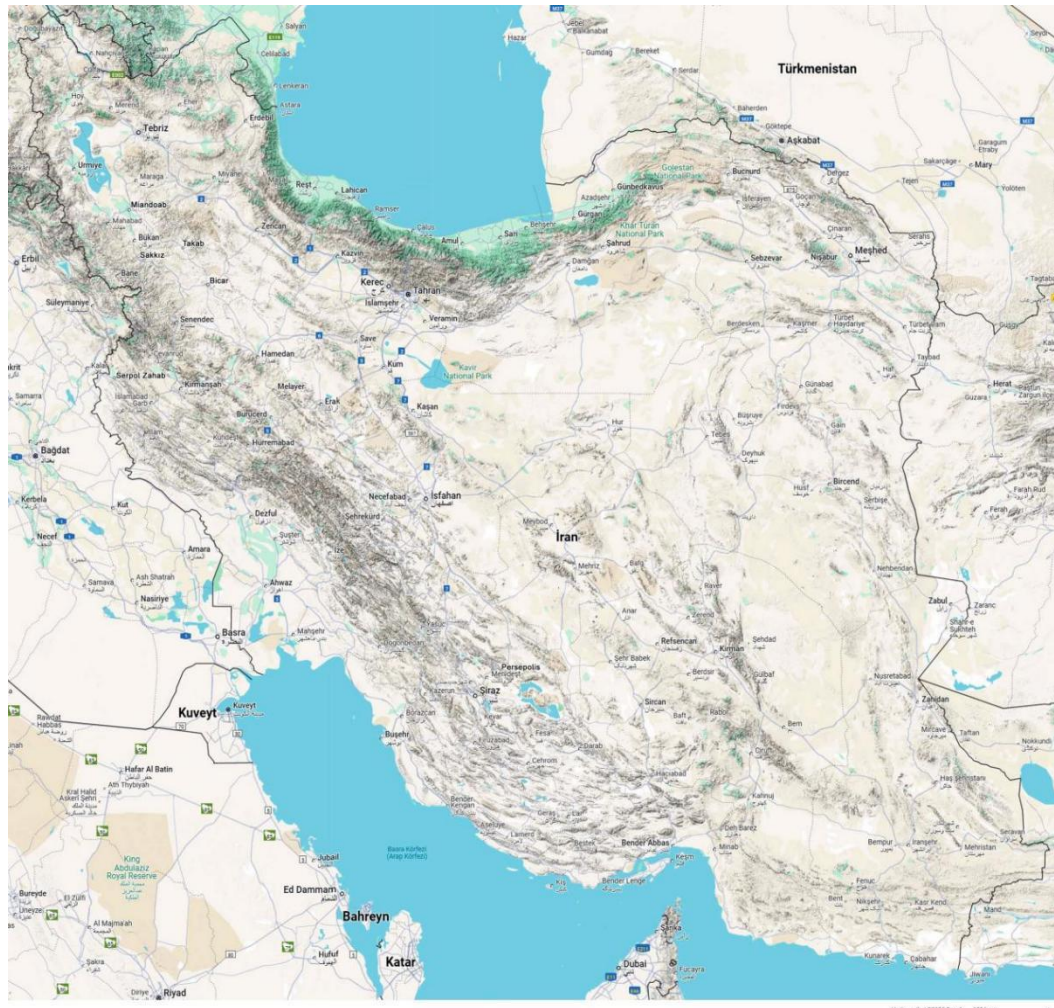


Figure 1- Iran map (Source: Google Maps)



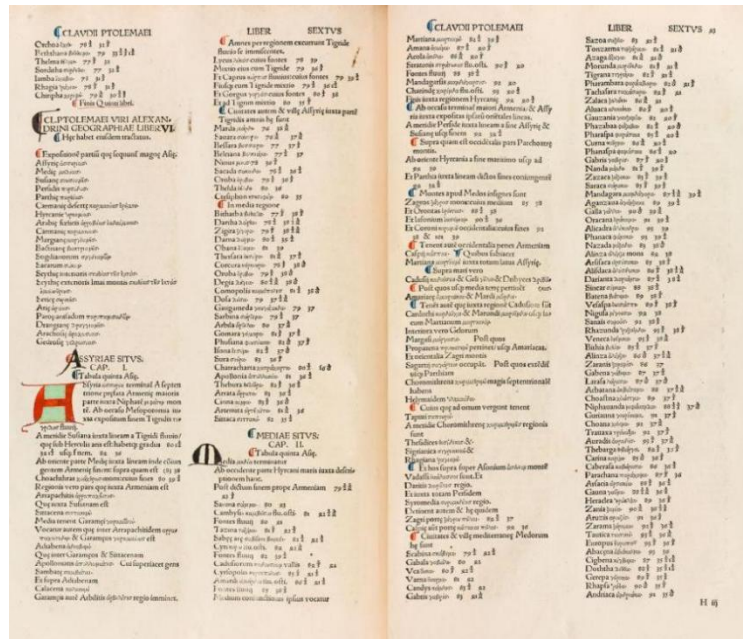


Figure 2 - Media section in Ptolemaios' Geographike, (adapted by) Jacobus, 1513.

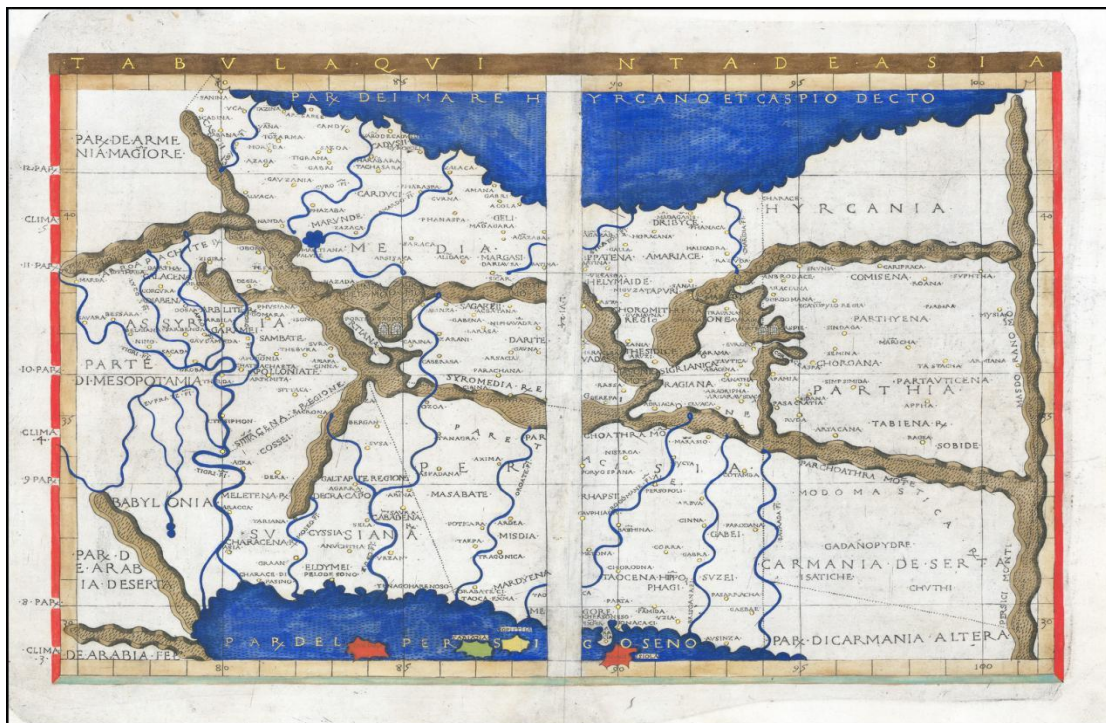


Figure 3 - Media map in Ptolemaios' Geographike, (adapted by) Nicolaus Germanus, 1467.





**Figure 4** - Central Zagros detail of Media map in Ptolemaios' Geographike, (adapted by) Nicolaus Germanus, 1467.



**Figure 5** - Media map in Ptolemaios' Geographike, (adapted by) Francesco Berlingheri, 1482.



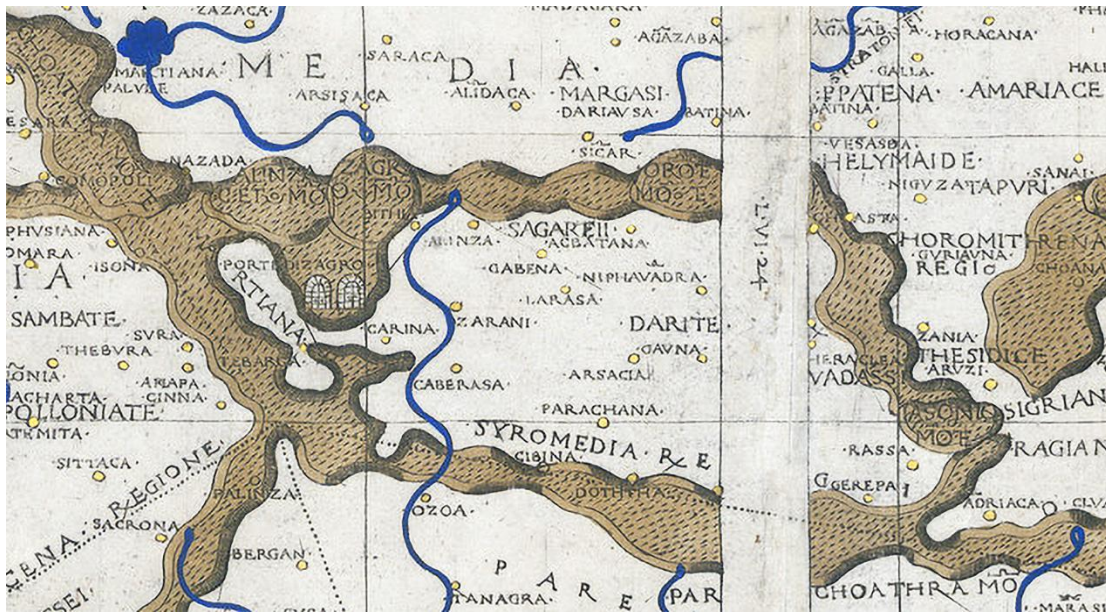


Figure 6 - Central Zagros detail of Media map in Ptolemaios' Geographike, (adapted by) Francesco Berlingheri, 1482.

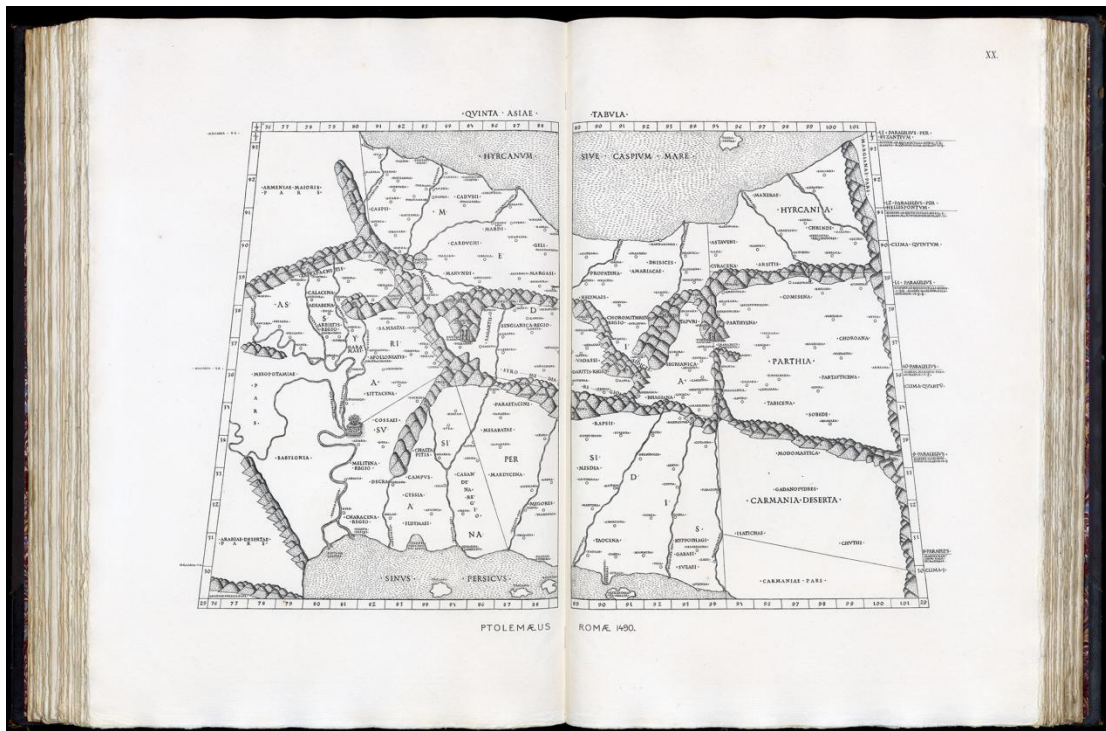


Figure 7 - Media map in Ptolemaios' Geographike, (adapted by) Nicolaus Germanus, 1490.



*Darius' Sagartia And Sargon's Zikirtu: Were They The Same Place*

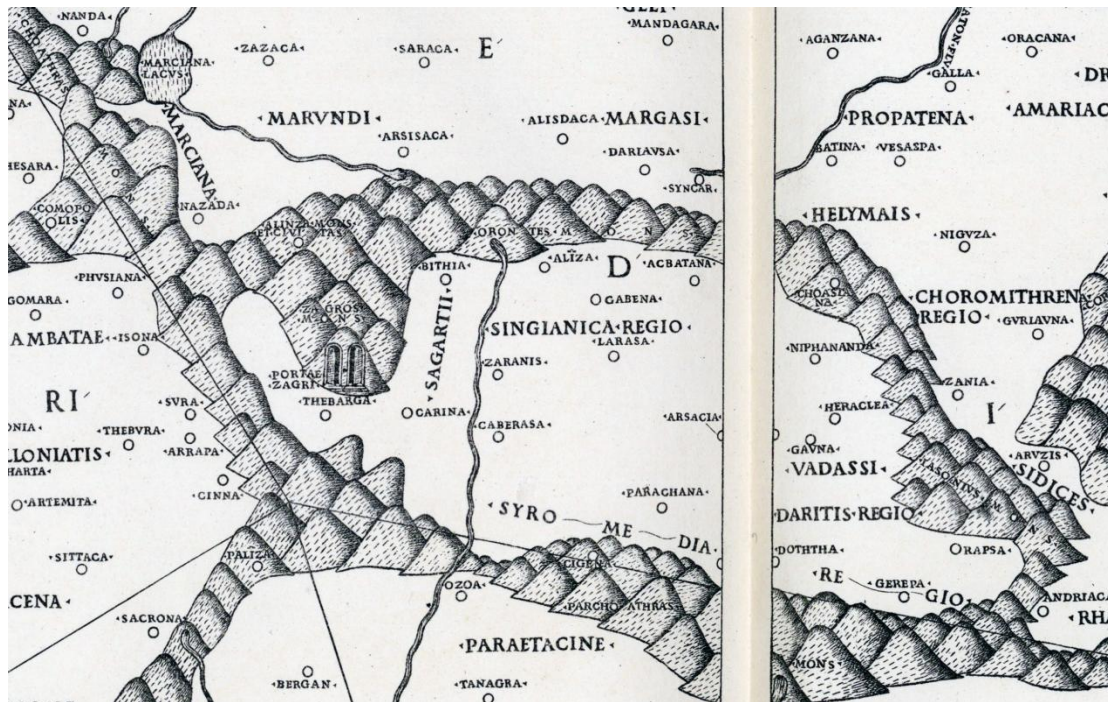


Figure 8 - Central Zagros detail of Media map in Ptolemaios' Geographike, (adapted by) Nicolaus Germanus, 1490.

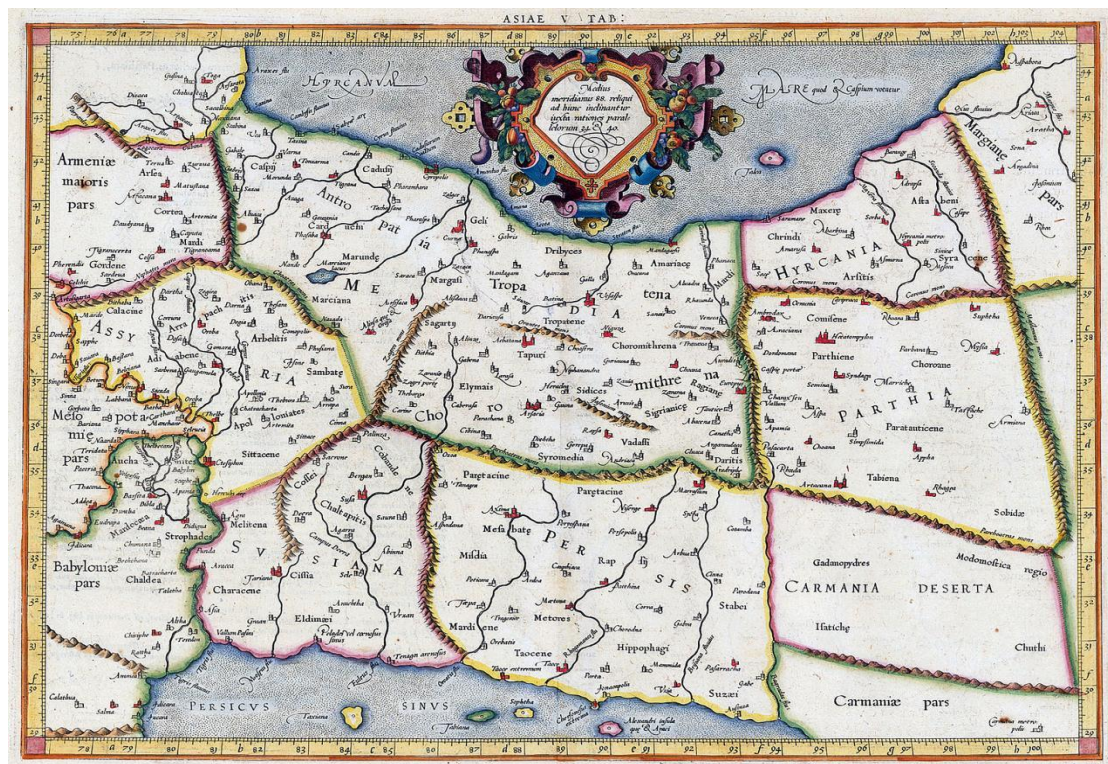




Figure 9 - Media map in Ptolemaios' Geographike, (adapted by) Gerardus Mercator, 1584.

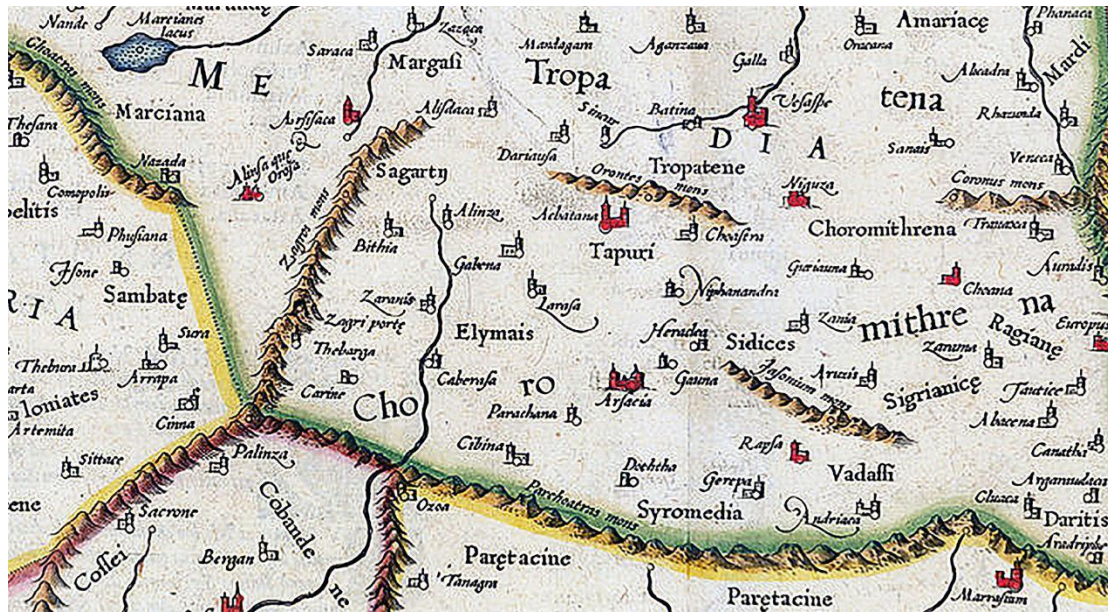


Figure 10 - Central Zagros detail of Media map in Ptolemaios' Geographike, (adapted by) Gerardus Mercator, 1584.