
Review

Katarzyna Maksymiuk, *Geography of Roman-Iranian Wars: Military Operations of Rome and Sasanian Iran*, Siedlce: UPH, 2015. Pp. 143; 36 maps, 1 table, 6 figures. ISBN: 978-83-62447-13-8. Online Access available.

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The book, that has been published by Siedlce University of Natural Sciences and Humanities in 2012 and is essentially a revised and expanded translation of a study written in Polish titled *Geografia wojen rzymsko-irańskich. Działania Rzymu i Iranu w okresie sasanidzkim*, has been published in English and prepared primarily for students who take interest in the history of the Near East.

The study discusses the names of the regions and sites where wars, conflicts, sieges and conquests took place between the Roman and Sasanian empires, and the border changes brought about by the treaties made between the sides throughout a time frame from the first quarter of the 3rd century A.D. to the early Islamic conquests in the first quarter of the 7th century A.D.

In the first chapter of the study which is comprised of two main chapters, a short introduction is made and after that, a rundown on the modern literature that has been inspirational for the making of the study, is given, the structure of the study, the method used and the constraints of the subject have been formed in a reasonable manner. In the same chapter, the situation of the Roman-Persian borders in the 2nd century A.D. is described and the fragile relations, diplomatic and military conflicts between the two long-standing enemies are roughly discussed.

The second chapter of the book, which is also its essential part, has been organized in three independent subtitles (2.1, 2.2, and 2.3). The first one of these subtitles (2.1) contains a range of maps in which the march routes of the armies are illustrated and the locations of the sites where battles took place are pointed out. All the military operations that came to pass, from the march of Sasanian emperor Ardashir I to Cappadocia in 229 A.D. until the Battle of Nineveh (627 A.D.) during the reign of Heraclius, the march routes of armies, and the cities or regions that were sieged or conquered by either armies are mapped and summarily described.

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The second subtitle, the content of which being smaller than the previous one, includes four maps illustrating the regional changes consequent to the Peace of Nisibis (299 A.D.) following the Battle of Satala which took place in 298 A.D. and resulted in Roman victory, the peace treaty signed in 363 A.D. during the reign of Julian (361-363 A.D.), the treaty of Dara signed in 562 A.D. and the treaty signed under the date of 591 A.D., respectively. Below these maps under the aforementioned subtitle, very short information regarding these treaties is given. The third subtitle is made up only of ten maps showing the Roman-Persian borders between 224-591 A.D., the southern borders, the *Strata Diocletiana* and the landforms in Mesopotamia, Syria and the Near East.

The study is concluded with an index (3) for the place names mentioned in the text, an index (4) for epigraphics and ancient sources used as references and a table which is chronologically organised and contains the names of the Sasanian and Roman emperors who reigned in the same time period.

This study, which is formed by the localisation and mapping of the roads and passage routes located inside the boundaries of the areas of military conflict between the Roman and Sassanid empires and utilised by either of the armies, differs from other publishings on similar subjects with one of its characteristics. When other studies discussing the Roman-Sassanid wars are examined, it can easily be seen that the names of the locations and the sites where the relevant events took place have never been discussed before in such an inclusive manner. However, there is no doubt that other studies of similar nature were made in the light of epigraphic, numismatic and archaeological data together with ancient and modern sources, rather than sole toponymic research, and thus address a wider portion of academia.

Following the description sections below the maps under subtitles 2.1 and 2.2, it is important for the credibility of the study that all the ancient literature and other relevant sources containing the names of the settlements and provinces included in the aforementioned maps, are thoroughly listed and given. In addition, the utilisation of main modern studies that discuss the Roman-Sassanid affair makes an objective comparison about the subject possible.

It makes no sense to reexpress the criticism directed at the study here in this text.¹ However, it is necessary to remark certain suggestions and references regarding two of the sites about the locations in which, strong possibilities exist. The first of these two is *Thannuris*, where the author has defined in the location names index (p. 129) as a fortress in Northern

¹ For the location of Seleukobelos and suggestions and criticisms of location of Odenathus' military operation (Map I. 4a) see Maurice Sartre, *Syria*, Recensions 2016: 1-2.

Mesopotamia, while referring to the same place in the text as a uncertain locations (p. 67). The location of the mentioned city is an archaeological settlement which is also known as Tell Tuneinir and encompasses an area of approximately 40 hectares along the Khabur River, south of the present-day city of Al Hasakah in Syria². The second is the settlement/fortress of *Lacotena*, on the location of where the researchers have not been able to reach a complete consensus for a long time³. But recent researches have put forth that *Lacotena* may actually be present-day Derik Kale, located approximately 15 kilometres northwest of the *Chabinas* (=Cendere) Bridge that is inside the borders of the Kâhta district of the city of Adıyaman in Turkey⁴.

When it comes to such similar and encompassing studies, it is a given that the utilisation of archaeological, epigraphic and numismatic data is also expected, in addition to ancient sources and supporting modern literature. However, the author has emphasized in the introduction that the book was intended for history students that makes it possible to excuse these deficiencies to a certain degree. It is ultimately seen that the title of the study and the subjects covered under the subtitles are conceptually elaborated on in a reasonable manner, and the content of the text is relevant to and compatible with the maps included. In addition, it is observed that the information presented to the reader is clear and satisfactory. On that sense, it is beyond doubt that the study will contribute significantly to Roman-Parthian and Roman-Sassanid researches within the military scope and the academic and archaeological studies related to the subject.

² Louis Dillemann, *Haute Mésopotamie orientale et pays adjacents: Contribution à la géographie historique de la région, du Ve siècle avant l'ère chrétienne au VIe siècle de cette ère* ((Bibliothèque archéologique et historique de l'Institut français d'archéologie de Beyrouth, tome LXXII), Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthier, 1962, 176-177; D. L. Kennedy-D. Riley, *Rome's Desert Frontier from the Air*, London: B. T. Batsford 1990; M. Fuller –N. Fuller, “Archaeological Discoveries at Tell Tuneinir, Syria”, *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies* 12/2, 1998: 69-82; Richard J. A. Talbert (ed.), *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World*, Princeton 2000, 1280, Map 89, C4.

³ Cf. W. M. Ramsay, *The Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, (Royal Geographical Society Supplementary Papers IV), London, 1890, 17-18, 280 ff.; F. K. Dörner-R. Naumann, *Forschungen in Kommagene*, (Istforsch 10), Berlin 1939, 103 ff.; W. Hoepfner, “Direk Kale. Ein unbekanntes Heiligtum in Kommagene”, *IstMitt* 16, 1966: 157–177.

⁴ T. B. Mitford, “Some Inscriptions from Cappadocian Limes”, *JRS* 64, 1974: 173-175, fn. 103.; H. A. G. Brijder (ed.), *Nemrud Dağı: Recent Archaeological Research and Conservation Activities in the Tomb Sanctuary on Mount Nemrud*, Boston/Berlin: De Gruyter 2014; especially see M. J. Versluys, *Visual Style and Constructing Identity in the Hellenistic World. Nemrud Dağ and Commagene under Antiochos*, I Cambridge University Press, 2017, 46, fig. 2.4, 93 ff.

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