

# Vassal Territories of the Achaemenid Empire: A Historical and Geographical Review



**Darius the Great**

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The Achaemenid Empire, one of the largest and most expansive empires in world history, reached the height of its territorial breadth and flourishing development during the reign of Darius the Great (regarded as a patriarchal figure of the Tajiks, Persians, and Kurds). One of the defining characteristics of this empire was its meticulous and systematic administration of its vassal lands—regions encompassing a wide range of ethnic groups and cultures. An inscription attributed to the tomb of Darius the Great at Naqsh-e Rostam lists these subject territories, reflecting the vastness and diversity of the Achaemenid dominion.

### **1. Introduction to the Vassal Territories**

In the list inscribed at Naqsh-e Rostam, over twenty regions or provinces are named, each with distinct historical and geographical significance. These territories stretched from Central and South Asia to North Africa and Eastern Europe.

Africa and Eastern Europe.

No.	Territory or Region	Description and Historical Significance
1	Media (Mada)	One of the oldest Iranian peoples; laid the groundwork for the Achaemenid imperial structure.
2	Khuzestan (Khuj)	A strategic region in southwestern Iran; a hub for agriculture and commerce.
3	Parthia	An important region in northeastern Iran; birthplace of the Sassanian dynasty.
4	Herat	A historic city in present-day Afghanistan; a military and communication center.
5	Bactria	A vast region in western Afghanistan and eastern Iran.
6	Sogdiana	A region in Central Asia; a major trading center on the Silk Road.
7	Khwarezm	A historical area near the Caspian Sea; significant in commerce.
8	Zarang	Located in southern Afghanistan; a crossroads between East and West.
9	Arachosia (Rakhj, Kandahar)	A strategic region in southern Afghanistan; a cultural convergence zone.
10	Punjab	A wealthy region in present-day northwest India and Pakistan.
11	Kabul	A key political and cultural center in Afghanistan.
12	Peshawar	A strategic city in northwestern Pakistan.
13	Sindh	A densely populated agricultural region in southern Pakistan.
14	Transoxiana	A vast region in Central Asia; a meeting point of Iranian and Asian cultures.
15	Babylon	The heart of Mesopotamian civilization in present-day Iraq.
16	Assyria	A historical land in northern Iraq; center of the Assyrian Empire.
17	Arabia	The Arabian Peninsula; strategically and commercially important.
18	Egypt	One of the world's oldest civilizations; a key economic and military region.
19	Armenia	A mountainous region of strategic importance on Iran's northwestern frontier.

No.	Territory or Region	Description and Historical Significance
20	Eastern Asia Minor	A region in modern-day Turkey; the junction of Europe and Asia.
21	Sparda (Sardis region)	A satrapy in Asia Minor; one of the prominent provinces.
22	Sardis	Capital of a satrapy in Asia Minor; a crossroads of Persian and Greek cultures.
23	Lydia (Western Asia Minor)	A rich and historic region in western Turkey.
24	Greek Communities of Asia Minor	Greek-inhabited areas within Asia Minor.
25	Scythians Beyond the Sea (Crimea and Danube)	Nomadic Iranian peoples in areas north of the Black Sea.
26	Macedonia	A region in northern present-day Greece; a key confrontation point with the Achaemenids.
27	Shield-bearing Greeks (Thrace and Thracians)	Greek colonies in northeastern Europe under Achaemenid control.
28	Somalia	A region in the Horn of Africa; considered a vassal territory.
29	Ethiopia (Abyssinia)	A historic African civilization with independent development and contact with the Achaemenids.
30	Mekka (Tripoli, Lebanon)	A commercial region in present-day Lebanon.
31	Cyrenaica (Carthage)	A region in North Africa centered on Carthage; a major trade hub.
32	Caria (in Asia Minor)	A strategically important region in Asia Minor.

#### Footnotes

1 – Barthélemy, F. (2016). *Politics and Administration in the Achaemenid Empire*. Tehran: University of Tehran Press.