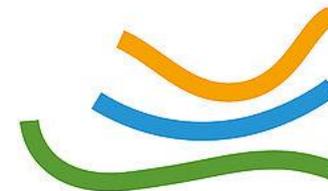


From Mesopotamia to Japan: Ancient Mesopotamian Empires and their Impact on Eurasia

Sebastian Fink



EurAsia
EURASIAN TRANSFORMATIONS

A Sassanian Glass Bowl in the Tokyo National Museum from the Tomb of Emperor Ankan (466-536)

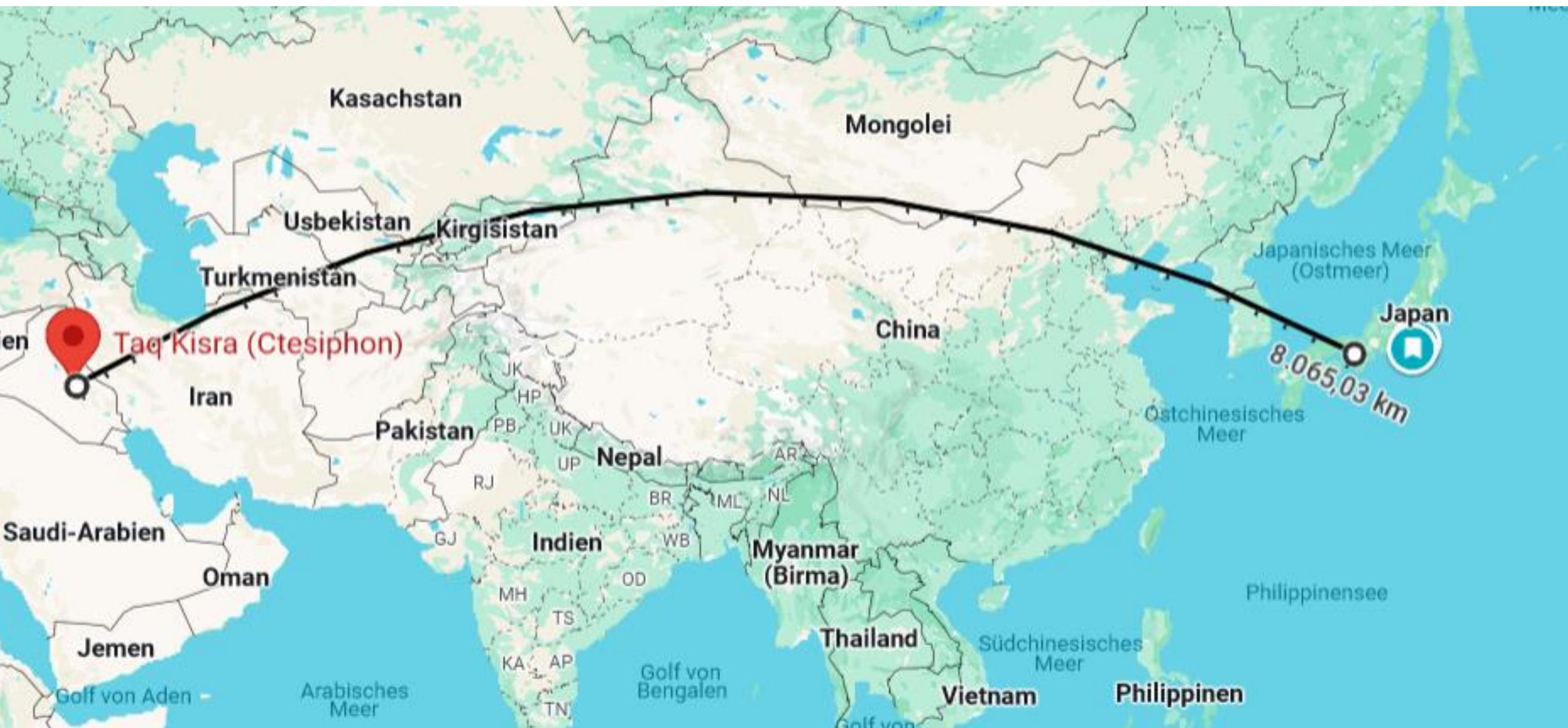


https://www.tnm.jp/modules/r_collection/index.php?controller=dtl&colid=J36665

A Sassanian Glass Bowl from Mesopotamia

- Mesopotamia was at least one center of glass-production in Sassanian times, so it is quite probably that the glass bowl in Japan was produced in Mesopotamia
- **How did the glass bowl come from Ctesiphon to Habiniko, Osaka?**





Obviously: The Silk Road!



Von
Silk_Road_in_the_1_century
AD-_ru.svg: Kaidorthis
file: Furfur - Diese Datei
wurde von diesem Werk
abgeleitet: Silk Road in the 1
century AD - ru.svg, CC BY-
SA 4.0,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=77678036>



<https://www.deviantart.com/wogofjog/art/Epoch-of-Empires-Map-of-Eurasia-100-A-D-928345540>

From the Atlantic to the Pacific through four Empires

- Roman Empire
- Parthian Empire
- Kushan Empire
- Han Empire

→ The existence of these empire enabled long-distance trade, as they provided relative safety and infrastructure for traders

What is an Empire and why Does it Facilitate Trade?

- Numerous publications discuss the question „What is an Empire?” and mostly give lists of characteristics
 - Essentialist approach “The Idea of Empire” in a Platonic heaven of ideas with certain characteristics
- Functionalistic approach: What are empires doing?
 - Empires rule over huge areas
 - To be able to rule these areas, empires need to optimize the speed of the transportation of people, goods, and information
 - Empires as accelerators

Empires and Acceleration

- Acceleration is a big topic in (post)modern philosophy and sociology
 - Paul Virillio (1932-2018)
 - Hartmut Rosa (1965-)
- No real impact on Assyriology and Ancient History
- However, there are specialized studies concerning the speed of
 - Armies (roads, road stations/fortifications, harbors, ...)
 - Communication (messenger systems, roads, road stations, harbors ...)
 - Transportation of goods (roads, road stations, harbors ...)

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Space, Time, and Speed

- Empires rule over huge areas
- The imperial area needs to be conceptualized
- Universalistic definition of imperial space (titles: Ruler of the universe, ruler of the four corners, rule from sunrise to sunset, rule from the lower to the upper sea)
 - The universalistic Empire is enlarged within its own territory (according to its ideology)
 - **To rule the imperial space the efficient transportation of people, goods, information, and armies had to be secured**

Empires and Infrastructure

- Roads
- Road stations / Fortifications
- Harbors
- Army
- Messenger System

→ Basic constituents of every Empire, with dual use options (military/economic)

A Radius Model for the Analysis of Empires and their Development

- **Radius of direct rule:** the area that is controlled by an Empire
- **Radius of action:** the area where military operations can be (successfully) undertaken
- **Radius of influence:** the area where diplomatic contacts are maintained and trade goods are exchanged

Mesopotamia

The First Imperial Powerhouse

- Mesopotamia is the place where the first Empires in history emerged
- Land along the Euphrates and Tigris
- Part of the Fertile Crescent
- Highly productive agriculture (irrigation)
- Early cities (Uruk – the first megacity)
- Invention of writing

The Imperial Turn in 3rd Millennium Mesopotamia

- Uruk Expansion in the 4th millennium (only archaeological evidence)
- Royal inscriptions in Mesopotamia start around 2700 BC
- They inform us about a system of city states in Mesopotamia and local conflicts → Early Dynastic Times
- The ideology of the city states focused on serving the city god, who was the ideological center of the state, and the ruler was his foremost servant
- Things dramatically changed with Sargon of Agade (ca. 2350 BC)

The Radius of Influence of the Empire of Agade

The Radius of Influence of the Empire of Agade: From the Cedar Forest to Meluhha

- We know of harbors, long-distance traders, and special ships for the Indian trade
- The trade with India is well documented since the Empire of Agade
- The main trade goods imported to Mesopotamia were precious stones (carnelian and lapis lazuli), exotic wood, metal, and exotic animals
- The Mesopotamians exported wool, textiles, and perfumes

The Mesopotamian Universe in the 3rd Millennium



The Lapis Lazuli Road



The Construction of Imperial Space

Lugalzagesi (ca. 2350) and the Emergence of the Idea of Universal Rule

When the god Enlil, king of all lands, (lugal kur.kur.ra), gave to Lugalzagesi the kingship of the lands (nam.lugal kalam.ma) directed (all) the eyes of the land (kalam) obediently toward him, put all the lands (kur.kur) at his feet, and from sunrise to sunset made them subject to him – then, from the Lower Sea, (along) the Tigris and Euphrates to the Upper Sea, he (Enlil) put their roads in good order for him.

RIME1.14.20.1

Lugalzagesi

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RIME1.14.20.1



Istanbul
Bursa

Ankara

Türkei

Armenien Aserbaidtschan

Turkmenistan

Aşgabat

Upper Sea

Sunset

Zypern

Syrien

Libanon

Beirut

Damaskus

Bagdad

Irak

Sunrise
Iran

Alexandria
الإسكندرية

Jerusalem

Jordanien

Israel

Ägypten

Kairo
القاهرة

Kuwait

Lower
Sea

Persischer Golf

Bahrain

Katar

Dubai

Vereinigte Arabische

al-Ain
العين

Golf von Oman

Medina
المدينة المنورة

Riad
الرياض

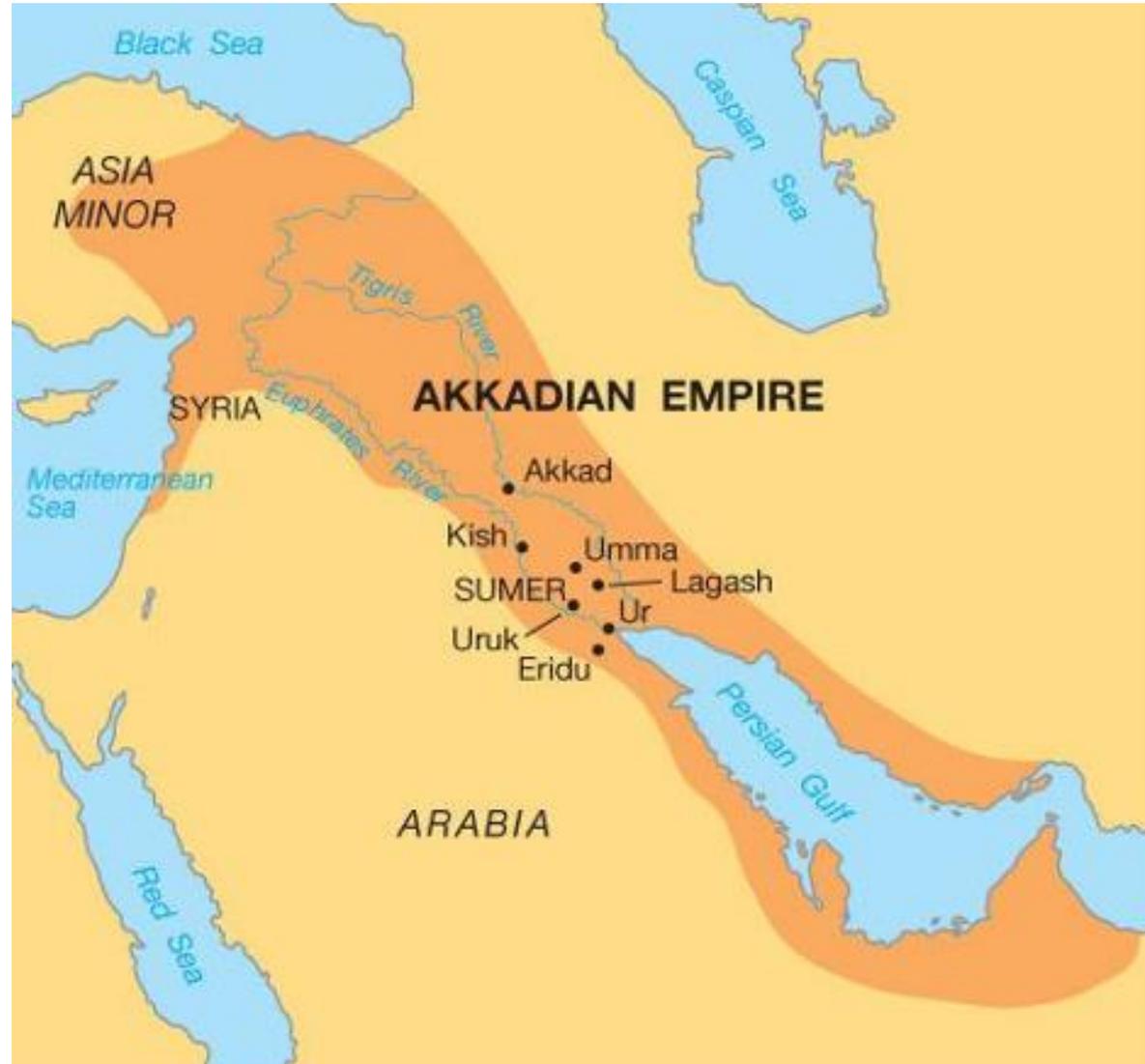
Saudi-Arabien

How Empires Defined New Political Dimensions

The City State of Lagash



The Empire of Agade (ca. 2350-2200)



The Radius of Action of Empires

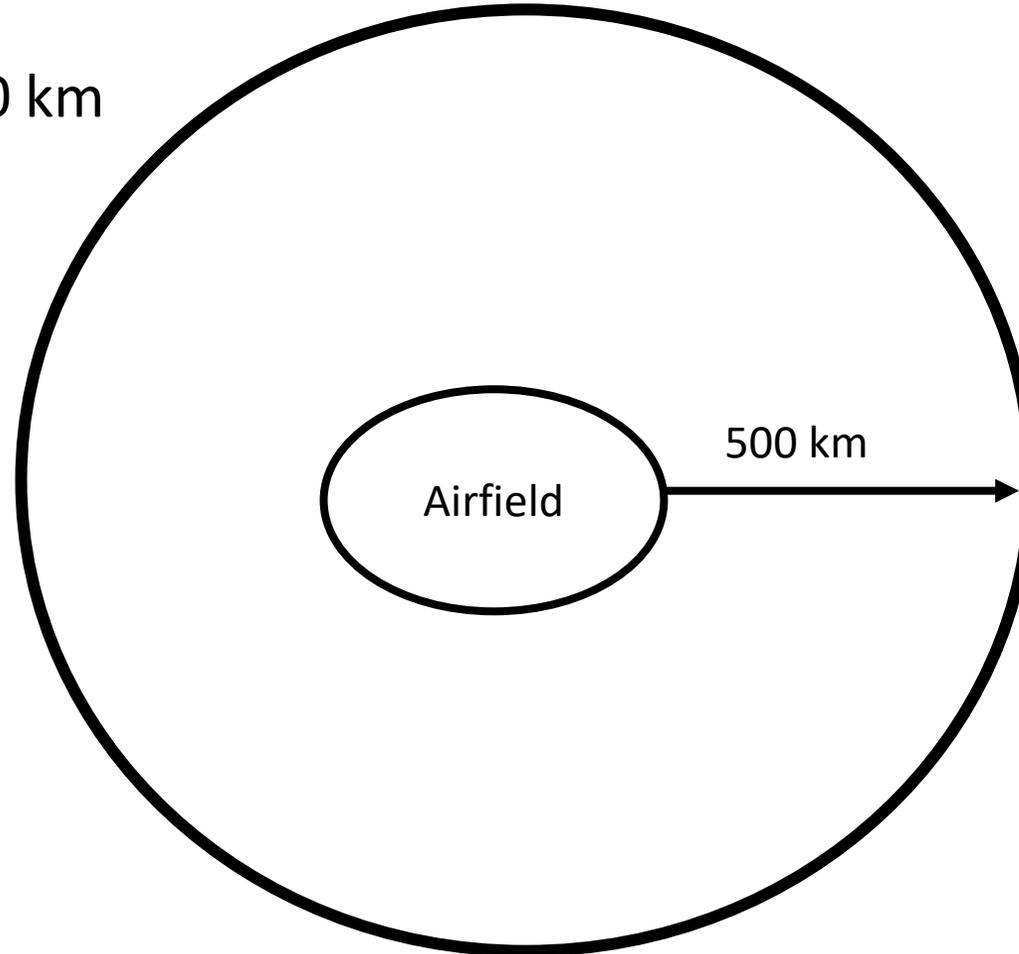
- The city states of the early dynastic period mostly controlled a city and its surrounding area
 - The territory of a city-state could be easily crossed within a day
- The Empire of Agade established some kind of control over an area „from sunrise to sunset“ and „from the Lower to the Upper Sea“ (the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean)
 - To go from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf it would take a well-trained person (40 km a day) approximately 30 days
- To make the establishment of such empires possible, the radius of action has to be huge

The Radius of Action (adapted from Wikipedia)

„**Radius of action, combat radius, or combat range** in military terms, refers to the maximum distance an army can travel away from its base along a given course with normal load and return **within the military season**, allowing for all safety and operating factors.“

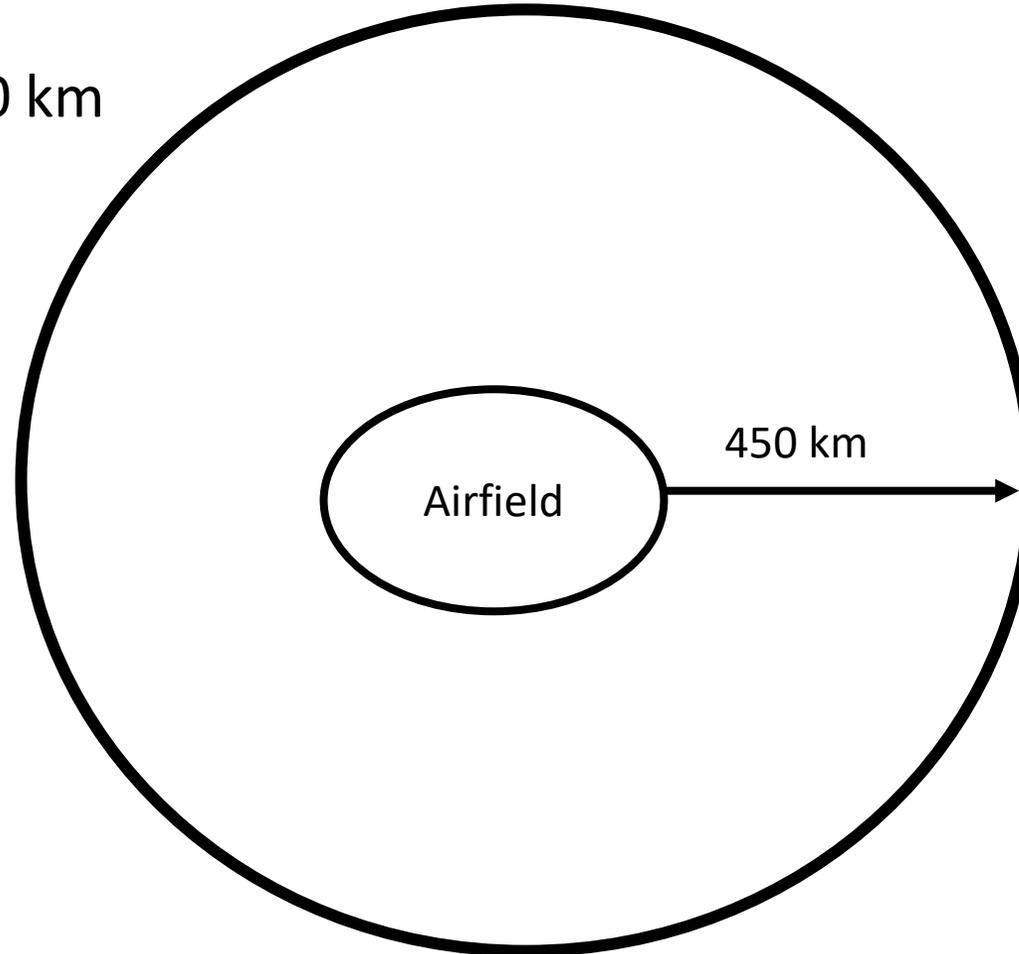
The Radius of Action:

- Plane can fly 1000 km



The Radius of Action:

- Plane can fly 1000 km
- Safety -50
- Operation -50



The Size of Mesopotamian Armies

- The cities of Mesopotamia had many inhabitants
 - These inhabitants were taxed with sef labor
 - The state had a grasp on its inhabitants and could use them for construction project (city walls, canals, ...) and in war
 - The biggest military advantage of the Mesopotamian cities might have been the ability to raise huge armies, as they had huge populations
 - We can assume that the army consisted of professional soldiers and drafted soldiers in varying ratios
- If the state had a corvée system then the state could draft almost all of the male population

Mesopotamian Armies as Conscript Armies

- Who were the conscripts?

- They had to be farmers, as most of the population

- Military Season is restricted by the need of the farmers to return to their fields

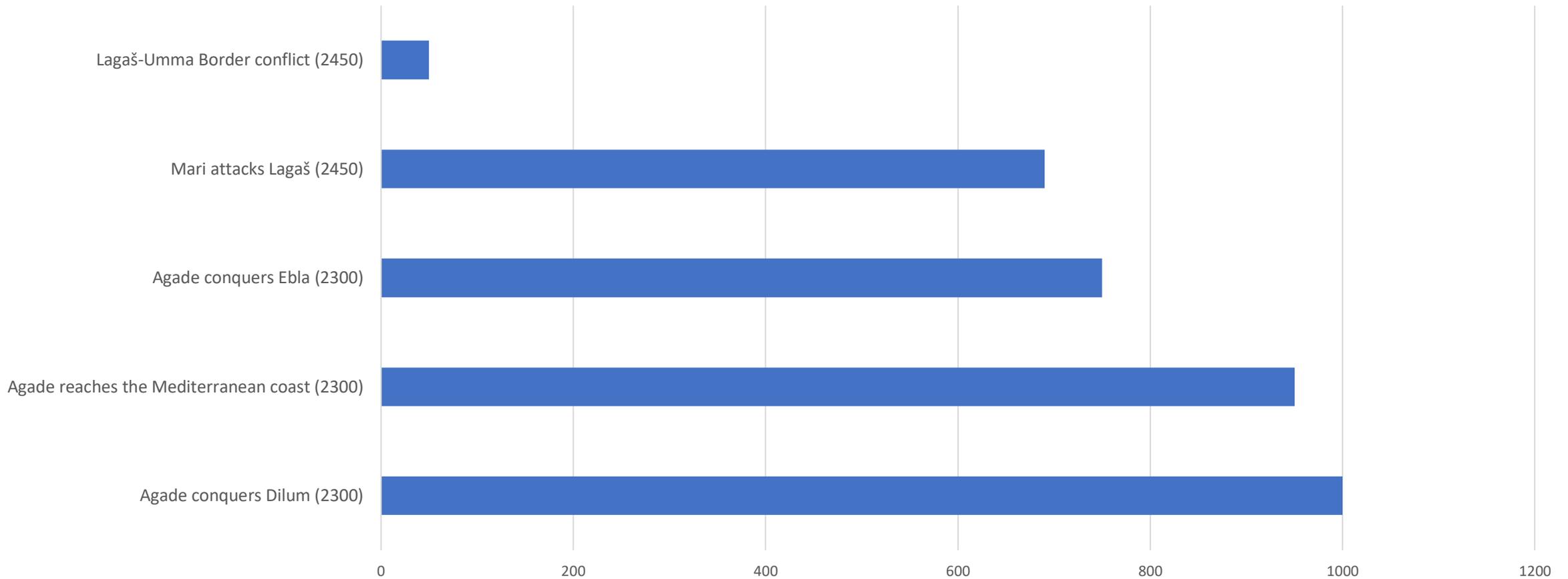
How long was the military season?

- Sources give no definite answer
- From spring equinox (March) to autumn equinox (September)? → 180 days?
- Barley-season: 6. month (September / October) to 3. month (May / June), so from mid June to mid September? → 100 days?
- Sesame-season 3. month (May/June) to 6. month (September / October)

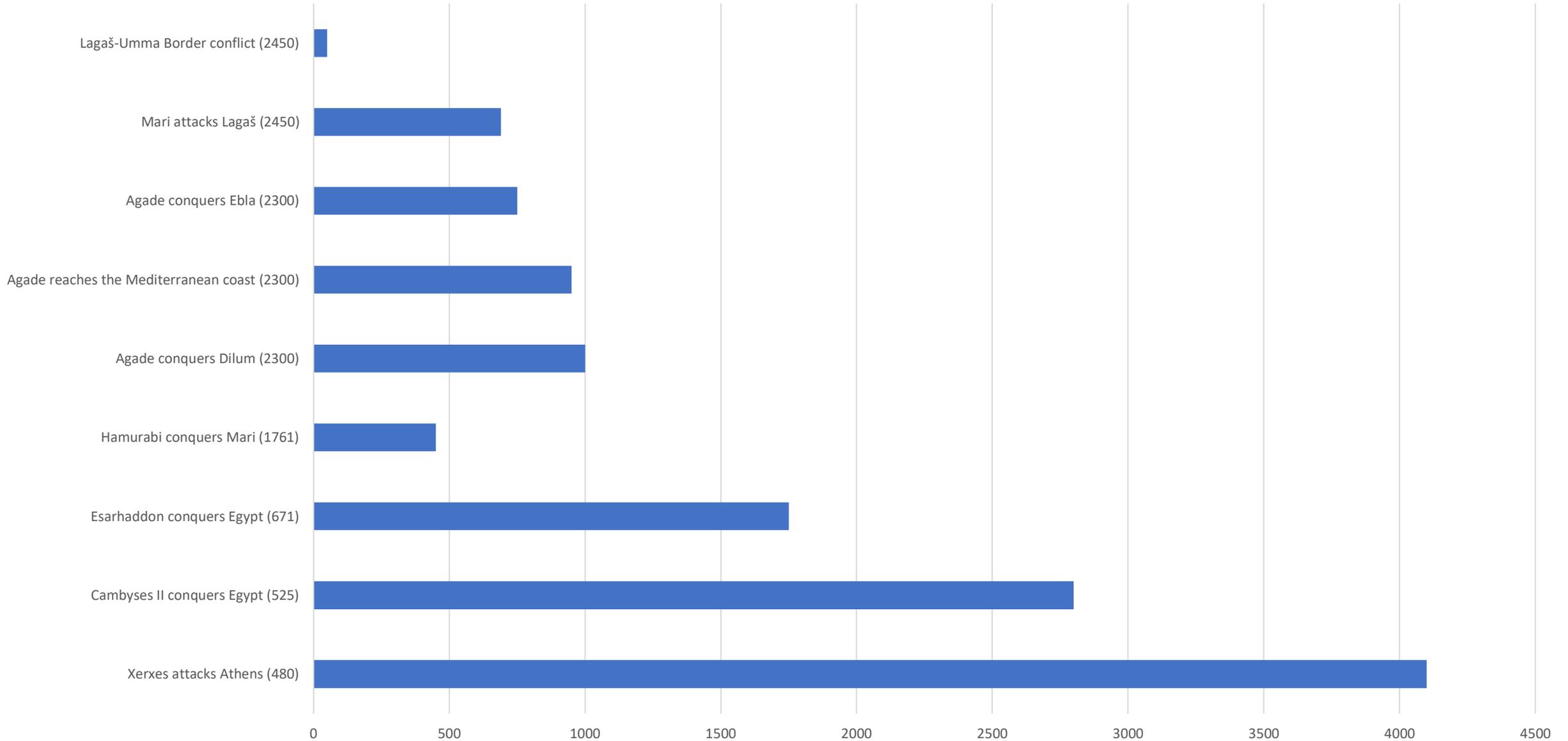
Speed and Time Set Limits to Expansion

- Yearly (seasonal) campaigns
 - If there is no standing army, the farmers have to return to their fields
 - King and his army have to be able to go to a certain place, stay there for a time and return within the season
- Maximal action radius is defined by the length of the season and the speed of the army

The Radius of Action in the 3rd and 2nd Millennium



The Radius of Action from 2450-480 BC



How to Enhance the Radius of Action?

- Speed of Transportation
 - Infrastructure (roads, fortifications, ...)
- Organization of the army
 - Establishment of a provincial system
 - Military outposts near the borders
 - Standing army

Toward a Globalized Eurasia

From the Neo-Assyrian to the Sassanid Empire

- Neo-Assyrian Empire (911-609)
- Neo-Babylonian Empire (626-539)

- Achaemenid Empire (550-330)
- Alexander and the Diadochs (330-63 BC)
- Parthian Empire (247 BC – 224 AD)
- Sassanid Empire (224-651)

Neo-Babylonian Empire (626-539)



By
IchthyovenatorSémhur
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The Achaemenid Empire (500-330)

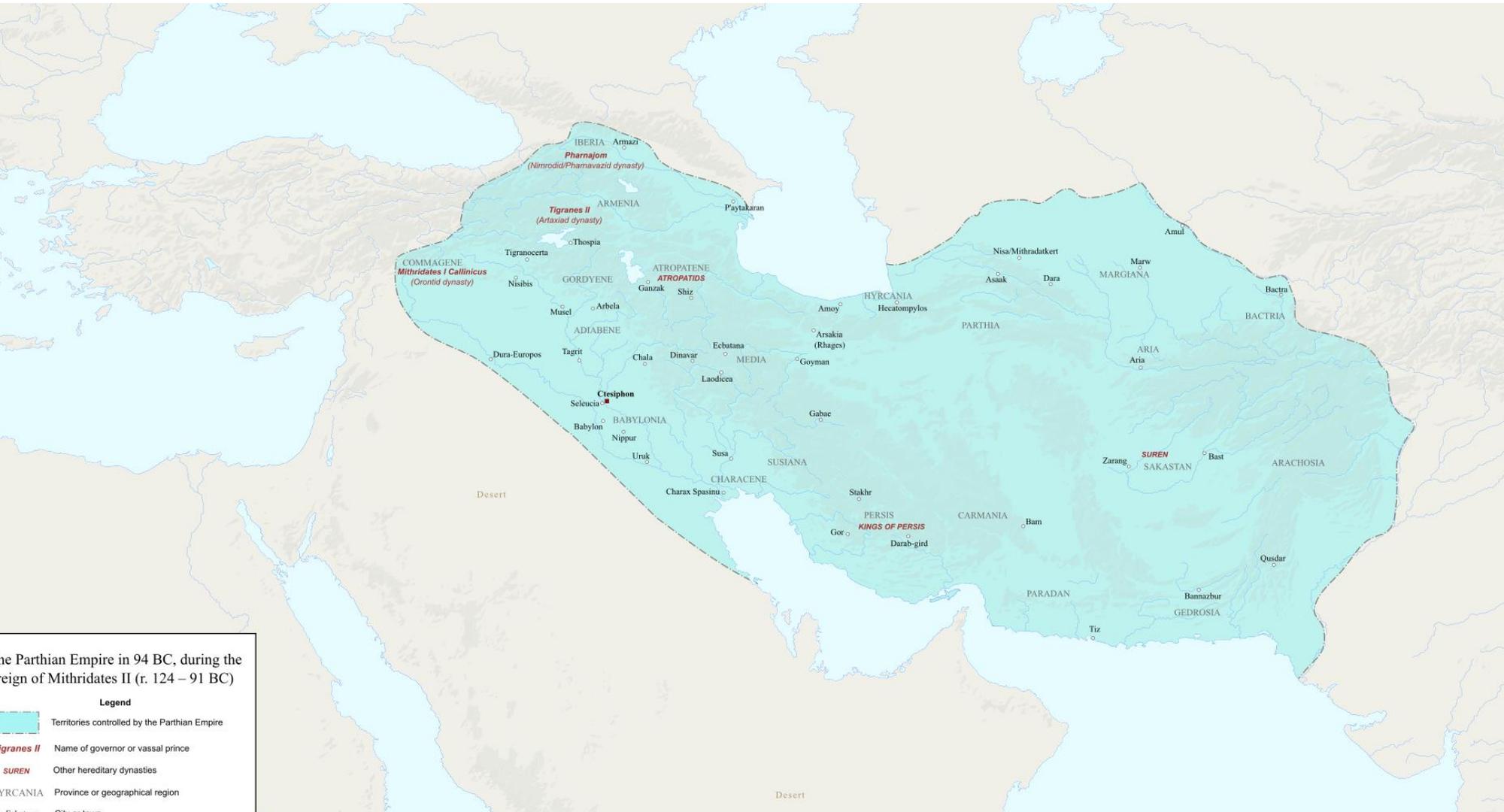


Alexander and the Diadochi (330-63 BC)



By This vector image includes elements that have been taken or adapted from this file:
 - Own work using: The Macedonian Empire, 336-323 B.C. AND Kingdoms of the Diadochi in 301 BC and 200 BC. Historical Atlas by William R. Shepherd, 1911. Courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin., CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=31138196>

The Parthian Empire (247 BC – 224 AD)



The Parthian Empire in 94 BC, during the reign of Mithridates II (r. 124 – 91 BC)

Legend	
	Territories controlled by the Parthian Empire
Tigranes II	Name of governor or vassal prince
SUREN	Other hereditary dynasties
HYRCANIA	Province or geographical region

By Original file by Ro4444, edited by me - Own work using: Sources I listed at en:w:Talk:Parthian_Empire/Archive_1#Boundaries_on_the_map, too lazy to write them down here at the moment. The Iranian Expanse by CanepaOlbrycht, Marek Jan 2009. "Mithridates VI Eupator and Iran, pp. 164–166, 170–171Olbrycht, Marek Jan (2010). "The early reign of Mithradates II the Great in Parthia". pp. 151–153Shayegan, M. Rahim (2011). Arsacids and Sasanians: Political Ideology in Post-Hellenistic and Late Antique Persia. pp. 116–118, 168Kia, Mehrdad (2016). The Persian Empire: A Historical Encyclopedia [2 volumes]: A Historical Encyclopedia. pp. 55, 186 (need to find a better source to replace this in the future though)., CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=94664729>

The Radius of Direct Rule of the Sassanid Empire



How to determine the Radius of Action of the Sassanid Empire?

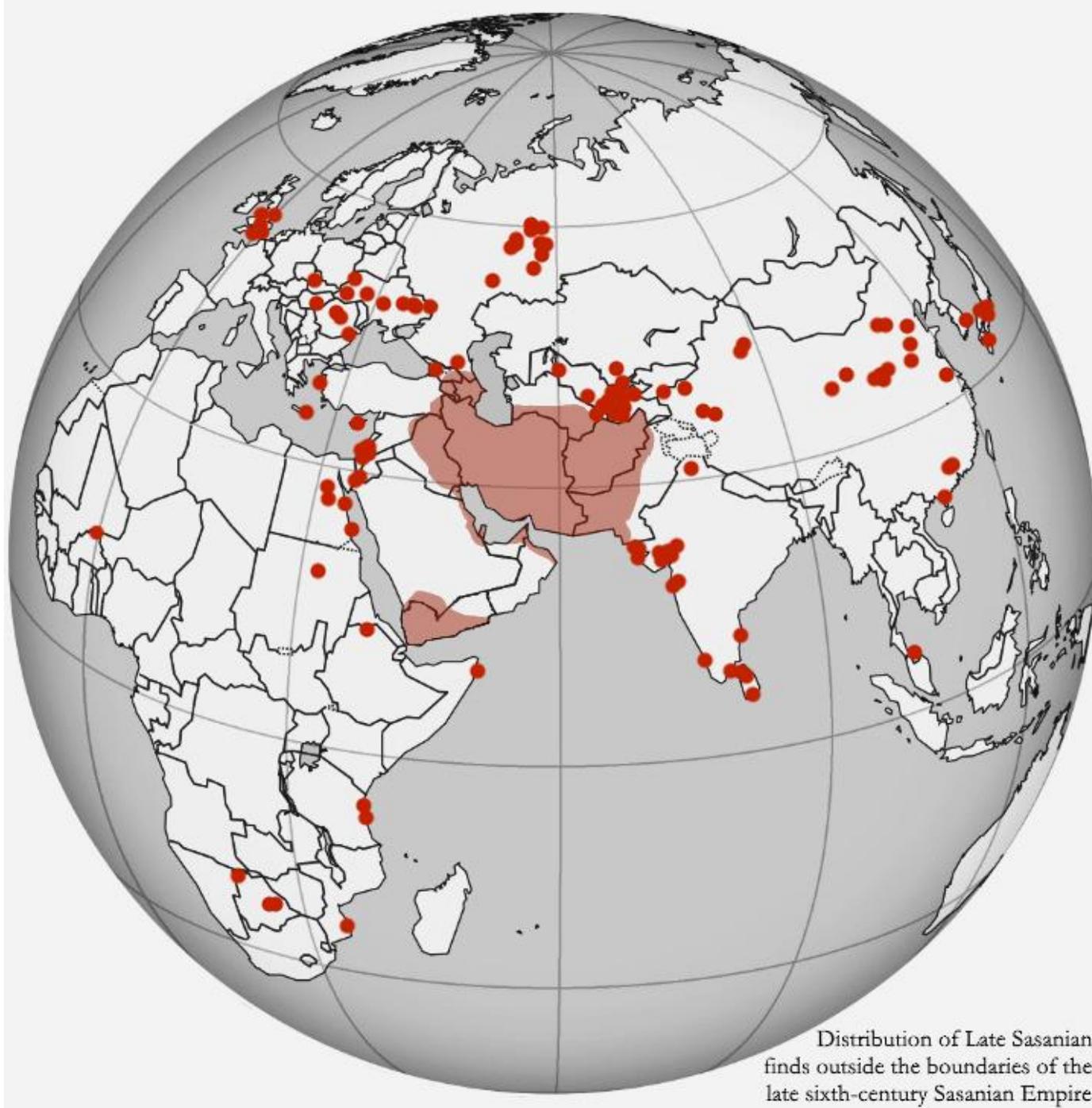
- We have to gather information from historical sources about far-reaching military operations
- The Sassanids conquered Egypt and North Africa in the West and Yemen in the South, similar far-reaching operations should have been possible in other directions as well

The Radius of Action of the Sassanid Empire



How to determine the Radius of Influence of the Sassanid Empire?

- Diplomatic contacts with China (attested since the Parthian Period)
- The Kushan Empire was a mediator between Persia and China
- We have information on Sassanian Traders in China
- Archaeological evidence



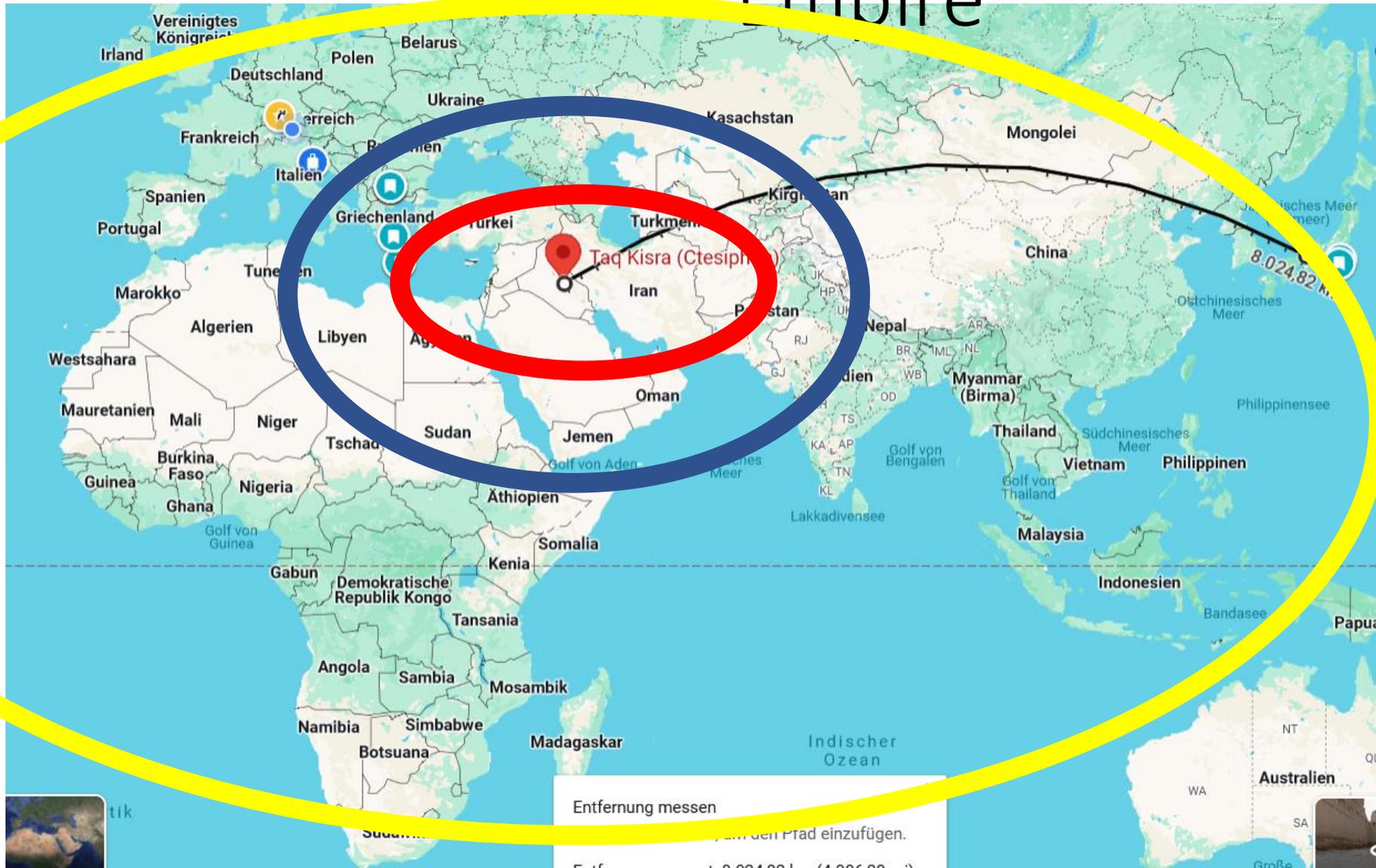
Distribution of Late Sasanian finds outside the boundaries of the late sixth-century Sasanian Empire

<https://www.caitlingreen.org/2017/07/sasanian-finds-in-early-medieval-britain.html>

The Radius of Influence of the Sassanid Empire



The Radius of Influence of the Sassanid Empire



Eurasia around 100 AD – A Globalized World



<https://www.deviantart.com/wogofjog/art/Epoch-of-Empires-Map-of-Eurasia-100-A-D-928345540>

Connecting the World Through a Chain of Empires

- Empires developed sophisticated systems to control their territories
- These systems can be described and analyzed with different radii (Radius of direct control, Radius of Action, Radius of Influence)
- The establishment of infrastructure like roads, way stations, and harbors facilitated trade within the empire
- If a chain of neighboring empires existed as in the early first millennium, their infrastructure could be connected, resulting in what we can describe as globalization or proto-globalization of Eurasia