



EBER-NĀRI

EBER-NĀRI (Aram. Abar Naharā, “Beyond/Across the river”), the Akkadian name used in Assyrian and Babylonian records of the 8th-5th centuries B.C.E. for the lands to the west of the Euphrates—i.e., Phoenicia, Syria, and Palestine (Parpola, p. 116; Zadok, p. 129; see [ASSYRIA ii](#)). These regions apparently passed from Neo-Babylonian to Persian control in 539 B.C.E. when Cyrus the Great conquered Mesopotamia.

In 535 B.C.E. Cyrus made Babylonia and Eber-Nāri into a single satrapy that included almost all the territory of the previous Neo-Babylonian kingdom. From Babylonian legal documents the following satraps, all evidently Persians residing in Babylon, are known: Gubāru (535-525 B.C.E.), Uštānu (521-516 B.C.E.), Ḥuta [...], son of Pagakanna (486 B.C.E.). Eber-Nāri also had its own governors subordinate to the satrap of the united province. This post was held by Tattannu, about 518-02 B.C.E. (Dandamayev, pp. 3-4, 73-79, 84, 139-41; Eph'al, p. 154; Stolper, p. 290).

Some time between 486 and 450 B.C.E. the satrapy of Babylonia and Eber-Nāri was divided into two administrative units of equal status (Stern, p. 78). Probably the separation occurred soon after 482 when Xerxes crushed the rebellion of the Babylonians against Persia. Soon this satrapy, now also including Cyprus, occupied a leading position in the western part of the Achaemenid empire. Babylonian legal documents from 407-01 B.C.E. mention Bēlšunu, son of Bēl-ušuršu (Belesys), as governor of Eber-Nāri (Stolper, p. 290; Xenophon, *Anabasis* 1.4.10, 7.8.25). Another Belesys, governor of Syria under Artaxerxes III (r. 358-38 B.C.E.) is mentioned by Diodorus (16.42.1); he may



have lived in Damascus or Sidon. In 349 B.C.E. the Phoenician cities revolted against the Persians; thereafter, in about 344 B.C.E. Eber-Nāri was joined to Cilicia, whose satrap Mazaeus had led an army against the Phoenicians. His coins are inscribed with the Aramaic legend “Mazaeus who is over Abar Nahār and Cilicia” (Cooke, p. 346). In 332 B.C.E. the satrapy was occupied by Alexander.

Eber-Nāri included three areas with distinct types of administrative status: Phoenicia, Judah and Samaria, and the Arabian tribes. The Phoenician cities of Tyre, Sidon, Byblos, and Aradus were vassal states ruled by hereditary local kings who struck their own silver coins and whose power was limited by the Persian satrap and local popular assemblies. The economies of these cities were mainly based on maritime trade. During military operations, the Phoenicians were obliged to put their fleet at the disposal of the Persian kings (Elayi, pp. 13ff.; Eph’al, pp. 156f.). Judah and Samaria enjoyed considerable internal autonomy. Bullae and seal impressions of the end of the 6th and beginning of the 5th centuries mention the province of Judah (Eph’al, pp. 160f.). Its governors included Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel under Cyrus and Darius I; Nehemiah (ca. 445-32); Bagohi, who succeeded Nehemiah and whose ethnicity is difficult to determine; and “Yehizkiyah the governor” and “Yohanan the priest,” known from coins struck in Judah in the 4th century B.C.E. From the second half of the 5th century the province of Samaria was governed by Sanballat and his descendants (Eph’al, pp. 151-52). Finally, the Arabian tribes in the area between Egypt and the Euphrates were ruled by their tribal chiefs (Eph’al, p. 162).

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