

Map 36 Garama

Compiled by D.J. Mattingly, 1996

Introduction

The desert landscapes of modern Fezzan in Southern Libya were the heartlands of the Garamantes tribe, with their capital at the oasis site of Garama in the Wadi el-Agial. The Garamantes clashed with the Romans several times in the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius, and again in Flavian times. Long-range desert campaigns, as in 20 B.C., A.D. 70 and c. 87, demonstrated Roman military power and seem to have provided a basis for longer-term treaty arrangements.

The ancient literary sources for this area provide us with few fixed points, and archaeological research has been unevenly spread. Thanks to Italian work in the 1930s and excavations and survey by Daniels in the 1960s-1970s, the bare outline of the settlement and ritual landscapes has been traced (RSGI 1937; Lethielleux 1948; Pace 1951; Daniels 1968; 1970a; 1971; 1989; cf. Ruprechtsberger 1989; 1997). Pliny's account of the triumph of Cornelius Balbus in 19 B.C. is a fundamental source for ancient toponyms, since it names the places represented in the actual procession. Desanges, however, has rightly cast doubt on the geographical integrity of the list, and it appears that many names relate to a subsidiary campaign far to the west in Algeria (Desanges 1957; 1978; 1980). With a few exceptions, I have little confidence in our ability to assign firm locations to the places named by Pliny, though I indicate those that are more likely to have been in Fezzan. The map, then, at best approximates the ancient picture of settlement, and offers few firmly locatable ancient toponyms.

Fezzan is a region of minimal rainfall (about 0.5 inches per year and less), where settlement is entirely dependent on subterranean water sources (Scarín 1934; RSGI 1937; Kanes 1969). Most of the oasis settlement falls in three parallel east-west depressions, from north to south the Wadis esc-Sciati, el-Agial and Berguig (the latter linked with the Hofra depression east of Murzuk). To the north of the esc-Sciati lies the Hamada el-Hamra, a near-waterless stony wasteland whose burnt reddish color may have earned it the epithet of Ater Mons. Between the esc-Sciati and the el-Agial, and to the west and south of the main oases, there are extensive sand seas, posing obstacles for settlement and travel alike. Water sources differ across the region. In the northernmost wadi, the esc-Sciati, there are over 270 natural springs, especially around Edri and Brach (perhaps the likely locations for ancient Dedris/ Debris and Baracum; indeed Dedris is specifically indicated as a settlement on a thermal spring which must be in the esc-Sciati). In the 1930s, the esc-Sciati was the most populous area of Fezzan, with the largest number of date- palms and gardens. The combination of more intensive agriculture and lack of detailed archaeological research there undoubtedly gives a poor impression of the ancient settlement pattern. By contrast the Wadis el-Agial and Berguig have no natural springs, but numerous wells and *foggaras* exploit the phreatic aquifer that is close to the surface (between 3-20 feet deep in the el-Agial). The *foggaras* are subterranean channels, identifiable by numerous vertical shafts from the surface and comparable with the Persian *qanat* system. Some, probably many, of the *foggaras* appear to be pre-Islamic in date.

There are some important outliers to the three main bands of oases, notably Gat (just beyond the south-western margins of the map), where Garamantian-style tombs are known in an area of many natural springs (for recent work in this vicinity, Liverani 1999). The map traces the main communication lines between oases and wells in the region, indicating where oases lie beyond the margins. It is clear that there were three groups of routes leading north towards the Roman frontier installations: north-west towards Cidamus (Ghadamès), north towards Gheriat el-Garbia and esh-Shergia, north-east towards Gholaiia (Bu Njem) (see Map 35). In addition there was an important series of tracks leading east towards the oases of Zella and Augila (Map 38). Tmessa, El-Fogaha and Uau el Chebir (the latter two lying beyond the eastern limit of the map) are vital links between the Garamantian heartlands and Zella, so pre-Islamic activity is likely here, especially at Uau el Chebir where there are also natural springs (Aroca 1942). The importance of these eastward connections of the Garamantes must not be underestimated (Bates 1914; Rebuffat 1969; 1970). Another series of tracks led south and south-west, and it is clear from Ptolemy's account of

Roman travelers who journeyed south with Garamantian parties that these trans-Saharan links were exploited in classical antiquity. It is likely that the Garamantes were involved in slaving and trans-Saharan trade, but the scale of these activities is hard to judge (Law 1967; Bovill 1968; Mattingly 1994, 155-57).

It must be stressed that none of these routes was in any sense a formal "Roman" road. Rather, they were all unmarked desert tracks, whose courses were determined by the availability of water at intervals along them. Although there have been minor local variations over time in the principal trans-Saharan routes, the validity of what is mapped here for the Roman period can be assumed with a fair degree of confidence (Bovill 1968; Ward 1968).

Another problem concerns the mapping of wells. The precise antiquity of most of those marked along the desert routeways is unknown. I have only named sites where ancient activity seems particularly likely, and have not attempted to add all the many wells known from early modern travelers' accounts.

The mapping of Garamantian settlement reflects to a large extent the geographical limits of modern archaeological fieldwork. The settlement of the esc-Sciati (with its abundant natural springs) seems drastically under-represented, while that of the Berguig east and west of Murzuk is only partially known through limited reconnaissance survey. In the el-Agial, the visibility of the Garamantes is raised dramatically by the existence of a cliff-like escarpment along most of the length of the wadi directly south of the oases (el-Rashedy 1986; Daniels 1989). This was a preferred location for many cemeteries. While the oasis center settlements are obscured below modern cultivation or later settlements, the presence of the Garamantes is securely attested by almost continuous burials along approximately 75 miles of the wadi. A number of hillforts have been located on top of the mesa-like escarpments, including the excavated site of Zinchecra (Daniels 1968, ninth century B.C. to first century A.D.). It would appear that these hilltop locations gave way to oasis-floor villages during the period of contact with Rome. The metropolis of Garama (Germa) has been partly excavated, revealing impressive buildings of first century A.D. date with ashlar footings, surrounded by the more usual mud-brick constructions. However, the nearby 'suburbs' of Saniat Gebiril and Saniat Suleiman suggest that the more recent pattern of an oasis center comprising a number of discrete villages may also have applied in antiquity. Certainly, we should envisage an ancient settlement pattern that was more dispersed than the few certain ancient oases would suggest. I have therefore marked a number of major oases where ancient settlement is likely but as yet unproven (Ubari, Marzuch, Traghen, Tesaura, Tmessa, Socna and Hun). In most of these there are hints of Garamantian activity, but the actual settlement is in all probability overlain by medieval structures. The distribution of oases is also indicated by the Oasis Area pattern (see Map Key). Again, in all likelihood there has been a long history of exploitation in many locations where ancient remains have yet to be recorded. Where cemeteries have been adequately mapped, their distribution attests to such exploitation. In particular, new, ongoing archaeological work in the region of Germa (Mattingly 1997; 1998; 1999; Edwards 1999) now confirms that there are numerous additional settlements to match the impressive distribution of cemeteries.

Archaeological findings also call for significant modification of the view derived from the ancient sources that the Garamantes were a nomadic and ill-disciplined people. In fact they were clearly skilled oasis-farmers, cultivating bread-wheat, the vine and dates by 500 B.C. at the latest (Van der Veen 1992). They constructed sophisticated hydraulic irrigation systems, and developed substantial nucleated settlements. Their burials contain a great range of imported goods, reflecting extensive contact and trade with the Mediterranean world.

Directory

All place names are in Libya unless otherwise noted

Abbreviation

RSGI 1937

Il Sáhara Italiano. I: Fezzán e oasi di Gat, Reale Società Geografica Italiana, Rome, 1937

Names

Grid	Name	Period	Modern Name / Location	Reference
D5 B2	<i>el-Abiad</i> Ater M.	RL		Pace 1951, 247-48, 377-81 See Map 35
D4 B6 D1 C5	Baracum? <i>Bir Baghira</i> <i>Bir esc-Sciuref</i> <i>Brech</i>	HR RL R HR	Brach Fugar, Sidi Ali	Desanges 1980, 407-408; Daniels 1989, 59 Daniels 1989, 58 Rebuffat 1975, 499-500; 1982, 197 Pace 1951, 242, 360-61; Daniels 1971, 267-68
C5 C5	<i>el-Charaig</i> <i>Chlef</i>	H?RL R		Pace 1951, 363-73; Daniels 1989, 48 Daniels 1972, 37; 1989, 48-50
C4 B5 C5	Dedris? § Debris § Decri Oppidum <i>ed-Disa</i> <i>Dugial</i>	HR R R? RL	Edri	Desanges 1980, 392-94; Daniels 1989, 59 Desanges 1980, 404-405 Pace 1951, 384 Daniels 1989, 58-59
C5 C5	Fauces Garamanticae <i>el-Fgeg</i>	 R	Wadi el-Agial	Daniels 1989, 47 Bellair 1953, 82; Daniels 1989, 49
C5	Garama Metropolis	HRL	Germa	Ayoub 1962; Daniels 1971, 264-65; Desanges 1980, 394-99; Daniels 1989, 51-56
C4	Garamantes	CHRL		Mattingly 1994, 26, 33-37; EncBerb 18 Fezzán
C5 C5 C5	<i>Gasr Abudrina</i> <i>Gasr Bendbeia</i> <i>Gasr el-Uatwat</i>	L? RL? R		Daniels 1989, 48 Pace 1951, 212 Pace 1951, 252-91, 320-34; Daniels 1971, 267-68
C6 C5 C5 C5 C5 D5 C5 C5	<i>Gasr esc-Sceraba</i> <i>Gasr Mara</i> <i>Gelah</i> <i>Germa Necropoleis</i> <i>el-Gheraia</i> <i>Goddua</i> <i>el-Grefa</i> <i>el-Gser</i>	RL RL R? HR H? RL R? R		Daniels 1989, 58; Mattingly 1999, 135 Daniels 1989, 58; Mattingly 1999, 135 Daniels 1989, 48-49 Pace 1951, 292-320; Ayoub 1962; 1967 Pace 1951, 376-77 Daniels 1989, 59 Pace 1951, 212 Bellair 1953, 82; Daniels 1972, 38
C5 B3 B5 E2	<i>el-Hamra</i> <i>el-Hassi</i> <i>el-Hattia</i> <i>Hun</i>	R? R? R R?	el-Hatir / el-Hatiya	Pace 1951, 212 Lefranc 1986, 306-308 Daniels 1989, 48-49; Mattingly 1998 Mattingly 1994, 7, 48
	Iter Praeter Caput Saxi			See Roads
B3	<i>el-Kissan</i>	R?		Lefranc 1986, 308-309
C5	<i>Lecksair</i>	R		Daniels 1989, 48-49

Grid	Name	Period	Modern Name / Location	Reference
C6	<i>Murzuch</i>	R?		Daniels 1989, 59
D3	Niger M.		Gebel Soda	Desanges 1980, 403; Daniels 1989, 46
C5	<i>er-Rugheba</i>	RL?		Pace 1951, 382; Daniels 1989, 48
D4	Sabae	R?	Sebha?	RSGI 1937, 283
C5	<i>Saniat Ben Howedi</i>	HRL		Daniels 1989, 53-56
C5	<i>Saniat Gebril</i>	RL		Daniels 1970; 1971, 265
C5	<i>Saniat Suleiman Craida</i>	RL		Daniels 1989, 56
E2	<i>Socna</i>	R?		Mattingly 1994, 7, 48
C5	<i>es-Spetaf</i>	RL		Daniels 1989, 58-59
B5	<i>Tag'lit</i>	RL	Thelge?	Pace 1951, 162, 381-84; Daniels 1971, 267; Edwards 1999, 114-19
C5	<i>et-Tanahma</i>	R?		Lethielleux 1948, 5; Bellair 1953, 82
C5	<i>Techertiba</i>	A?H?		Pace 1951, 162, 373-76
E6	<i>Terbu</i>	R		Daniels 1989, 59
C6	<i>Tesaua</i>	R?		RSGI 1937, 335, 631-32
B5	<i>Tin Abunda</i>	A?H?R		Pace 1951, 385-86
B5	<i>Tinda</i>	A?HR		Daniels 1972, 37-38; 1989, 48-51
E5	<i>Tmessa</i>	R?		RSGI 1937, 334, 638
D6	<i>Traghen</i>	R?		Duveyrier 1864, 279
C5	<i>Tuasc</i>	R		Daniels 1971, 267-68
C5	<i>Tuiua</i>	R		Pace 1951, 361-63
B5	<i>Ubari</i>	A?HR		Daniels 1972, 37-38; 1989, 48-51
F2	<i>Waddan</i>	RL		Pace 1951, 425-29; Rebuffat 1969, 181, 187
C5	<i>Zinhecra</i>	ACHR		Daniels 1968; 1971, 262-64; 1989, 56-58
C5	<i>Zuaya</i>	H?R		Daniels 1989, 48-49
E5	<i>Zuila</i>	R?L		Daniels 1989, 59

Roads

Grid	Name / Itinerary	Period	Reference
D2	Iter Praeter Caput Saxi	RL	Desanges 1980, 413-14; Mattingly 1994, 67; cf. Lefranc 1986
	Dedris? → NW	R	Lefranc 1986
	Dedris? → Ubari	R	Denham 1826, 177-87
	Murzuch → SE	RL	Denham 1826, 124-25; RSGI 1937, 600-601
	Murzuch → Zuila	RL	Daniels 1971, 269-70
	N → Socna → SW	RL	RSGI 1937, 596; Rebuffat 1969; 1970
	NW Bir-esc-Sciuref	RL	Rebuffat 1982
	routes into Murzuch	RL	Denham 1826, 122-25; RSGI 1937, 598-99; Daniels 1971, 269-71
	routes into Waddan	RL	RSGI 1937, 596; Rebuffat 1969; 1970
	routes into Zuila	RL	Ward 1968
	Sabae → E	RL	Rebuffat 1969; 1970
	Sabae → Garama Metropolis → Ubari → W	RL	Daniels 1970; 1989
	other routes running off E edge	R	Rebuffat 1969; 1970

Unlocated Toponyms

Name	Period	Probable Location	Reference
Aethiopes	R	S of map	Desanges 1978 Ethiopiens; EncBerb 2
Agisymba	R	S of map	Desanges 1978, 197-213
Alasit = (H)Alasit			
Balla	R		Desanges 1980, 408
Bedeiron	R		Ptol. 4.6.12
Boin/ Boinag	R	near Bu Njem, or conceivably one of Giofra oases (Hun, Waddan, Socna)?	Desanges 1980, 406-407; Marichal 1992, 106
Boouata	R		Ptol. 4.6.12
Bubeium	R	town or people name	Desanges 1980, 401-402
Buluba/ Bulba	R		Desanges 1980, 408
Cizania/ Zizania	R		Desanges 1980, 409
Dasibari fl.	R	Wadi el-Agial? (modern Ubari)	RSGI 1937, 284; Desanges 1980, 407
Enipi	R	people name ALG	Desanges 1980, 402-403; EncBerb 17
Galsa/ Galia	R	Gholaia (Bu Njem)	Desanges 1980, 408
Gelanos	R		Ptol. 4.6.12
Gyri/ Girgiri? M.	R		Ptol. 4.6.6; Desanges 1980, 409-10; EncBerb 20 Giri
(H)Alasit	R		Desanges 1980, 408
Harmiai	R		EncBerb 22
Maxalla	R		Desanges 1980, 408-409
Milgis Gemella	R	Gemellae ALG	Desanges 1980, 401
Nathabur fl.	R	Nathabudes natio ALG or Nathabres, W Garamantes	Desanges 1980, 405
Niteris natio/ Niciebres	R		Desanges 1980, 400
Nitibrum	R	Nitibres / Natabres natio in S Tunisia	Desanges 1980, 403-404
Ouanias	R		Ptol. 4.6.12
Pege	R		Desanges 1980, 407
Rapsa	R	Capsa or Gat? TUN	Desanges 1980, 404; EncBerb 20 Ghat
Tabudium	R	Thabudeos ALG	Desanges 1980, 400
Tamiagi natio	R		Desanges 1980, 406
Thapsagum	R		Desanges 1980, 405-406
Thelge	R	Tag'lit? Tinda?	Desanges 1980, 391-92
Thoumelitha	R		Ptol. 4.6.12
Thuben	R	Tobna ALG	Desanges 1980, 403
Troglodytae	R	S of map	Desanges 1978
Viscera natio	R	Viscera ALG	Desanges 1980, 404

Zizania = Cizania

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