

Geography and historical names of Caspian Sea

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Caspian Sea is one of the most famous and important seas in the world, located between two continent surrounded by 5 countries. It is a very large sea and considered to be the largest enclosed (inland) body of water on Earth. Also it has a high economic value as it is known to be the second place in oil reserves after Middle East (estimated to have than 200 billion barrels) in addition to huge Natural gas reserves. Caspian Sea is the most important source of the caviar in the world with a total production reach 90% of world caviar.

Caspian Sea coasts were inhabited by many tribes and civilizations including: the Persians, **Tatarias**, Turks, Muslims and others. This led to large number of names for Caspian seas.

Location

Caspian Sea sets in southwestern Asia and southeastern Europe. It is bordered by 5 countries: Kazakhstan (has the longest coast), Turkmenistan, Iran, Azerbaijan and Russia (fig 1).

Coordinate

Longitude 45° 20' – 45° 43'

Latitude 36° 33' – 47° 07'



Fig 1: Caspian Sea

Size

Caspian Sea has a surface area of 371,000 square kilometers (143,244 sq mi) and by far it's the largest enclosed sea in the whole world.

It extends about 1,210 km (about 750 mi) in northern-southern direction and about 210 to 436 km (about 130 to 271 mi) in eastern-western direction.

There is a huge difference in the sea depth; with The mean depth of the northern part is only 5-6 meters (16-20 ft), increasing to 190 meters (620 ft) in the middle part, and reaches more than 1000m (3000 ft) in its southern part.

The mean depth is about 170 m (about 550 ft) and the maximum is about 1,025 meters (3,363 ft) (fig 2).



Fig 2: Caspian Sea

Caspian's volume is about 78200 cubic kilometers (18,800 cu mi) that accounts about 40 percent of the total lacustrine water of the world, with an area of about 3626000 square kilometers (1,400,000sq mi).

The sea level varies from year to year but the average is about 28 meters (92 ft) below the Sea level.

Over 130 rivers inflow into Caspian sea, such as: Volga, Ural, Zhem , Gorgan , Atrek , kura...etc.

Volga River is the largest and contributes in about 80% of the total inflow.

Formation

Caspian Sea is a remnant of the Tethys Ocean, same as Mediterranean and Black Seas. It became landlocked sea about 5.5 million years ago due to continental drift.

Its salinity is approximately 1.2%; about one third the open seas salinity. And it is believed that this salinity came by the remnant of Tethys Sea.

Nowadays the Caspian Sea is connected to Black Sea and Baltic Sea by Volga River and some canals.

The names of Caspian Sea

Caspian Sea has large number of names; more than * names, came from many languages: local and foreign. some of the names are wide used such as Caspian, Khazar. While others are rarely used such as Talisan, Zarayeh.

Caspian Sea names derived from many roots:

- 1- Tribes who lived around the sea, this includes: Caspian (the most famous name), Khazar...etc.
- 2- Areas, cities and states bordered the sea. For example: Tabarestan, Baku, Hyrcanum.
- 3- Names mean "sea". Such as: Sala, Darya.
- 4- Names of Travelers. Example: Morgan, Philip.
- 5- Wrong names such as: Khawarizm, Persian.

Caspian: (*caspium, qazwin, ghazvin, kaspiskoye, caspii...*)

All these names were derived from the ancient kaspi people (tribe) who ones lived in around the sea. There is little information about this tribe but it is thought that it disappeared.

Since the 17th century this name became the most used name.

Huge number of old maps used this name, includes:

- Aristotle 384-322 BC.
- Eratosthene 276-194 BC.
- Ptolemaeus, C., 90-168.
- b.v.de Vitalibus map 1507 (fig 3).
- A. Ortelius map 1570 (fig 6).
- H. Langreen map 1596 (fig 7).
- M. Quad map 1600 (fig 8).
- J. Hondius map 1606.
- G. Mercator map 1620 (fig 9).
- w. Blaeu map 1635 (fig 10).
- F. de Wit map 1680 (fig 11).
- P. Vander map 1700 (fig 12).
- B. Sylvanus map 1511 (fig 4).
- Fries map 1522 (fig 5).

Khazar: (*Khazar*(Arab) , *khexer*(Persian), *Kazar, Kezer...*)

The name is of a Turkish tribe that lived around the sea and established kingdom (650-965). They ruled a large area reaching east Europe and south Russia. Their kingdom was destroyed by the Rus and their allies.

This name is found in:

- Ibn Khurdadhabba(d.897).
- Al-Humayri(d.900).
- Al-Hamadhani(d.913).
- Al-Mas'udi map(d.957) (fig 13).
- Al-Istakhri map(d.957) (fig 14).
- Ibn Hawqal map (d.977) (fig 15).
- Al-Maqdisi (d.1000).
- Al-Biruni map (d.1048) (fig 16).
- Al- Idrisi map (d.1166) (fig 17).
- Al-Hamawi (d.1229).
- Ibn-Sa`id (d.1274).
- Abu-Al-Fida(d.1331)
- Al-Qalqashandi(d.1418)
- As-Safaqisi map 1601 (fig 18).

Hyrceanian: (*Hyrceanum, hircani, Arqania*...)

Hyrkania is an ancient state arised southern the sea; north Iran and Turkminstan. It became a part of Persian Empire in the sixth century BC. Later it was ruled by many empires ruled include: Alexander, Seleucid, Sassanid, Islamic, Mongols. In the 15th century it became a part of Iran again.

The name came from an old Persian Varkâna means "Land of the Wolf".

- Ptolemaeus, C., 90-168.
- b.v.de Vitalibus map 1507 (fig 3).
- A. Ortelius map 1570 (fig 6).
- H. Langreen map 1596 (fig 7).
- M. Quad map 1600 (fig 8).
- J. Hondius map 1606.
- G. Mercator map 1620 (fig 9).
- w. Blaeu map 1635 (fig 10).
- F. de Wit map 1680 (fig 11).
- B. Sylvanus map 1511 (fig 4).
- Fries map 1522 (fig 5).
- Al-Hamawi (d.1229).

Bachu (*Baku*):

Baku is the capital of Azerbaijan (old coastal city (6th century)). It is believed that the name came from an old Persian name Bad-kube means "Wind-pounded" or Baghkuh, means "Mount of God".

- A. Ortelius map 1570 (fig 6).
- H. Langreen map 1596 (fig 7).
- J. Hondius map 1606.
- w. Blaeu map 1635 (fig 10).
- F. de Wit map 1680 (fig 11).

Tabarestan (*Tabaristan*):

Area south of Caspian Sea North Iran. The name was derived from the very old kingdom (Tapuria) that ruled the area for long time. Many empires concurred the area, until 1596 when it became part of Iran.

Al-Humayri(d.900).
Al-Hamadhani(d.913).
Ibn Rista (d.923)
Ad-Dimashqi(d.1329)
Abu Al-Fida(d.1331).
Al-Qalqashandi (d.1418)

Mazandaran

It is another name of Tabarestan, and now it is the most common name for Caspian Sea used in Iran.

Iran map (fig 19)

Jorjan (*Jurjan, Gorgan*)

Gorgan is a city and an area south west Caspian Sea. It is the area in which the Hyrcanian state exists. Nowadays it is a city in north Iran known for its fine carpets.

Ibn Khurdadhabba(d.897).
Al-Humayri(d.900).
Al-Hamadhani(d.913).
Ibn Rista (d.923)
As-Sirafi (d.10 century)
Al-Biruni (d.1048).
Al-Qalqashandi (d.1418)
As-Safaqisi map 1601 (fig 18).

Jilan (*Gilan, chilan, Jili...*)

Gilan is an area south west Caspian Sea. It is a part of Iran since 1921.

Al-Humayri(d.900).
Al-Hamadhani(d.913).
Al-Hamawi (d.1229).
J. Hondius map 1606.
A.Efendi map 1732.

Khurasani (*Khorasani*)

Nowadays Khorasan is the name of an area north east Iran. However historically it represents a large area east Caspian Sea that includes today part of: Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

The name Khorasan is an old Persian name means "where the sun rises".

Al-Hamadhani (d.913).
Al-Hamawi (d.1229).

Adharbayjan(*Azerbaijan*)

Azerbaijan is a name of a state south west Europe west Caspian Sea, and also a name a district north west Iran. The area was ruled by many empires including: Russian, Islamic, Persian, Mongols, Seljuc...

It is believed that the name was derived from old Persian, and means "land of fire" or "protected by far" as there was a lot of natural gas fields.

Al-Humayri (d.900).

Bab Al-Abwab (*Derbend*):

Derbend is a coastal city in Dagestan (Russia). That was and still one of the most important cities on the Caspian coast as it stands on a narrow strip of land.

Derbend in old Persian means "closed gates", while Bab Al-Abwab is an Arabic name means "the gate of the gates".

Al-Humayri (d.900).

Al-Hamadhani (d.913).

Daylam (*Deilam*)

Area in Iran south Caspian Sea, near modern Tehran.

As-Safaqisi map 1601 (fig 18).

Abu Al-Fida (d.1331).

Sala:

Sala means Sea

M. Waldseemuller map 1516.

H. Langreen map 1596 (fig 7).

J. Hondius map 1606.

F. de Wit map 1680 (fig 11).

Other names

Local Names:

Abskoun, Ajam, Albanium, Astarabad, Astrakhan, Badkhoubeh, Farakhat, Fars, Ghaz, Haji Tarkhan, Jebal, Kamroud, Moghan Pahlavi, Saraie, Shirvan, Sit, Talisan (Talesh), VauruKesh, Zarayeh, Zereh-Ojestan.

European Traveler:

Morgan, Phillip, Jackson, Derm.

Words mean Sea:

Darah, Darya, Deniz, Sihaie, Zarayeh, Voroushka.

Wrong Names

Khawarizm, Persian. Faris (Persia).

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Maps

- Al-Biruni map (d.1048) (fig 16).
- Al- Idrisi map (d.1166) (fig 17).
- Al-Istakhri map(d.957) (fig 14).
- Al-Mas`udi map(d.957) (fig 13).
- As-Safaqisi map 1601 (fig 18).
- Ibn Hawqal map (d.977) (fig 15).
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- Vander, P., Robert Covertes Swerf-Reysen na Gelede..Indien Persien en Arabie tot in Magol Gedaan, Leiden 1700.

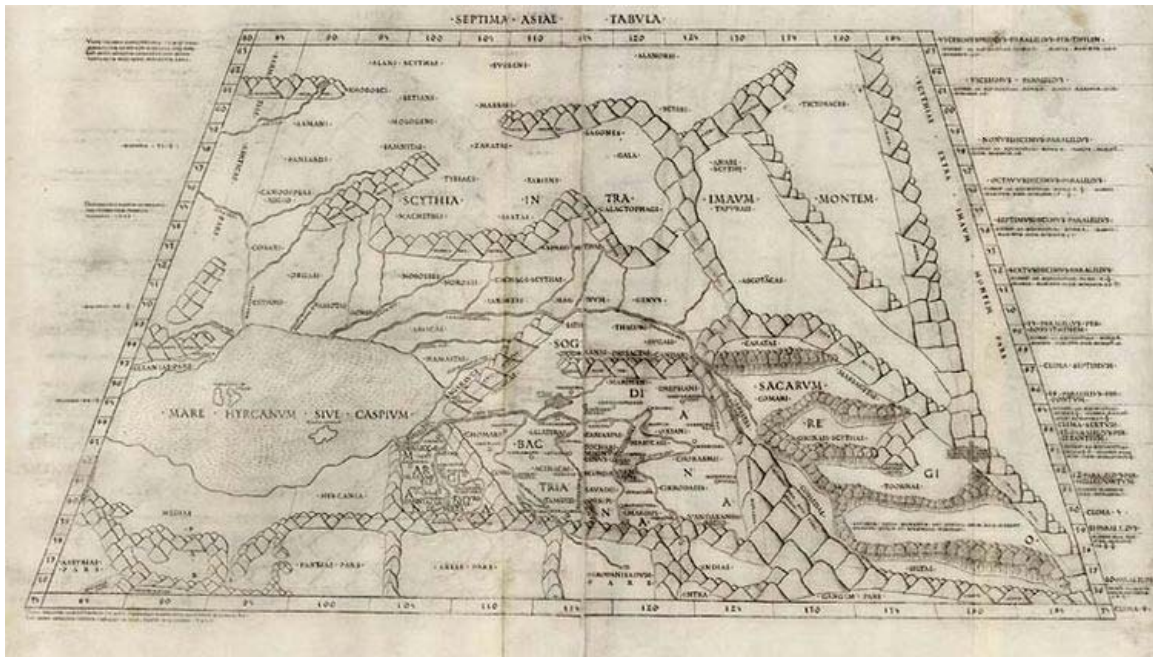


Fig 3: De Vitalibus

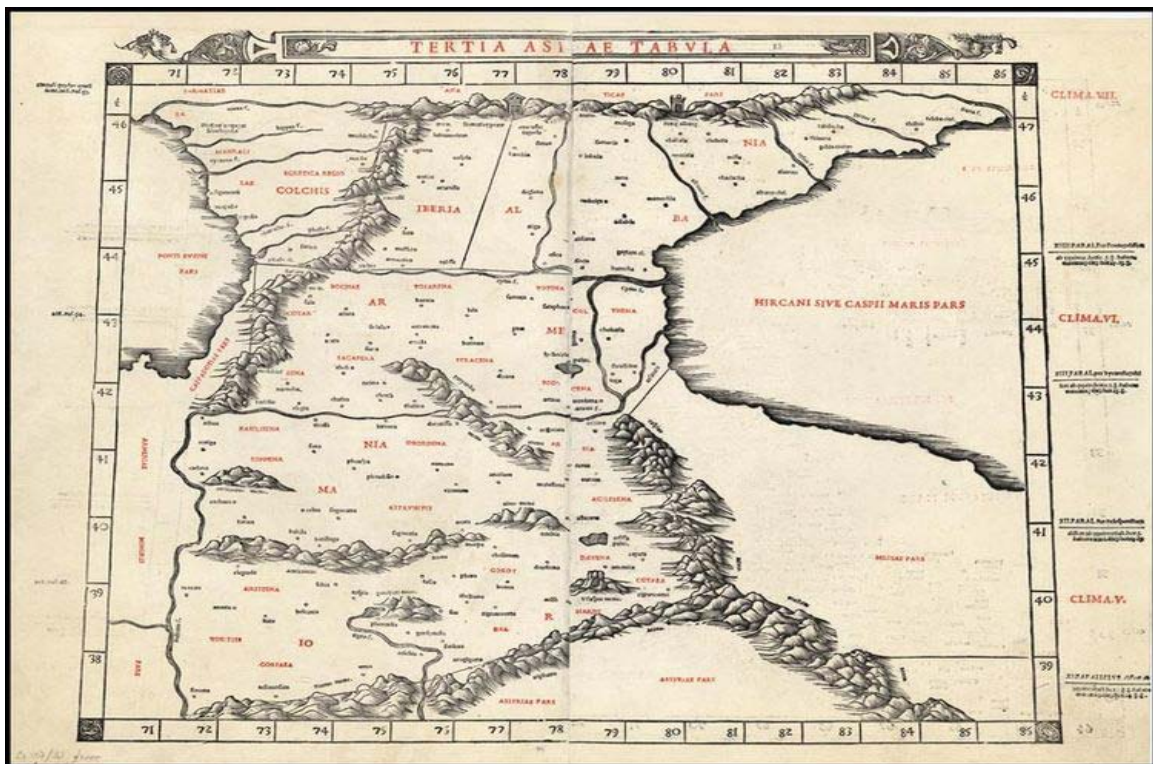


Fig 4: Sylvanus

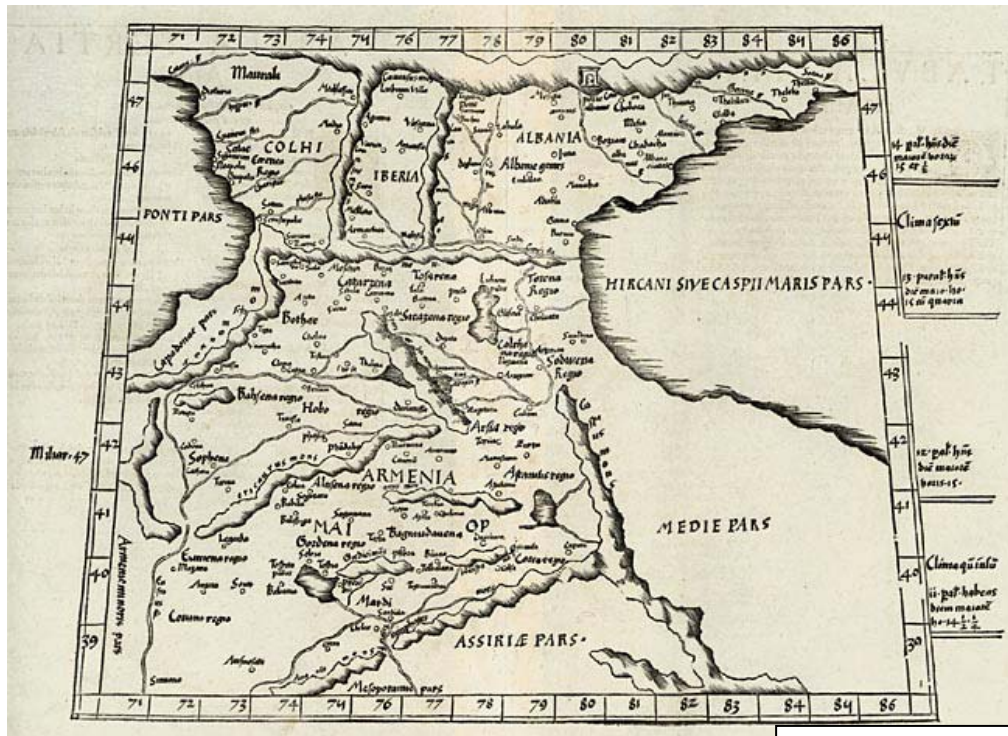


Fig 5: Fries



Turcici Imperii Descriptio 1598 AD; Aris: Ortelius

Fig 6: Ortelius

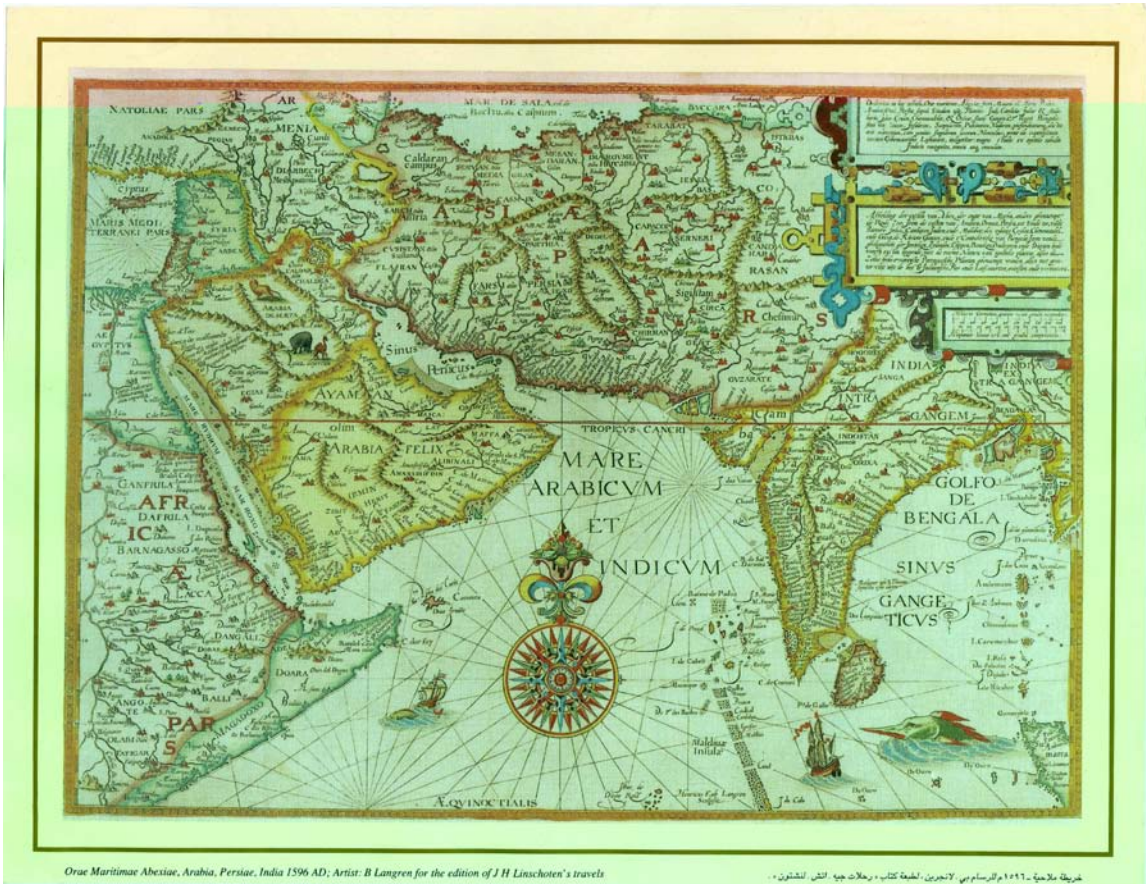


Fig 7: Langreen