CHAPTER 5

Regions Closer to Yehud under Persian Rule: Indigenous Elites in Lycia, Phoenicia, Arabia and Samaria

Local Ruling Families in Lycia

Having examined some Achaemenid policies in general, I now want to look at these in relation to regions which are either closer to Yehud or which resemble it in other ways, and where we might find evidence of indigenous elites operating along the lines of the way in which the NM presents them. I turn first to Lycia, a region in Asia Minor which appears to have come under Persian rule sometime between 546 and 538 BCE.

In 516/515 Lycia is included in a list of countries which paid tribute to the Persians as part of the first satrapy (Herodotus, *Histories* III.90.1).1 Despite the fact that it is geographically removed from the hinterland of Palestine, Lycia forms a fascinating context for comparison with Yehud because, thanks to a number of inscriptions, we get a glimpse into just how local elites ruled and responded to Persian hegemony in this region of Asia Minor.2 Again however, we should remind ourselves of some of the important differences. Lycia was also subject to close Athenian influence and some commentators have noted that at the same time as we see a degree of Iranisation of Lycia, we see its Hellenisation.3 In addition, Lycia with its coastal districts and established mercantile relations had likely more to offer the Persians than Yehud,4 and Lycian dynasts provided ships to Xerxes in 480 BCE.5 Thirty years later, however, they

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1 It is not included in Darius’ Behistun Inscription however, although as Keen notes Darius’ list here is not of administrative districts but of lands and peoples (Keen, *Dynastic Lycia*, 91).
2 For a preliminary survey of Lycia see Fitzpatrick-McKinley, “Ezra, Nehemiah and some early Greek Lawgivers,” 43.
4 Although, as we shall see, Yehud was to some degree strategically important in some periods.
5 Bryce suggests that the Persians were the first to take an interest in Lycia because its coast offers “unpromising” conditions for harbours and much of the terrain is difficult (Bryce, “Political Unity in Lycia during the Dynamic Period,” 31–42).
paid tribute to the Delian league. What I want to show is not that Lycia and Yehud were administered in precisely the same way by the Persians, but that the picture of Yehud as operating under various indigenous elite families in the Achaemenid period (which I believe to be reflected in the NM) becomes more plausible when relatively similar circumstances are observed in Lycia.

Conditions in Lycia under the Persians have been difficult to describe, particularly since the literary sources are not in agreement. Isocrates says that the Persians never controlled the region (Panegyricus 4.161) but Keen thinks that Isocrates simply had it wrong and that strategically the Persians could not have afforded to leave this region between the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean independent if Persia was to take root in the west. It is clear that there was a heavy Athenian influence in the region in some periods (445–444 BCE), not unexpectedly given its location, and at one point, at least parts of Lycia are reported to have been members of the Athenian confederacy. Around 450 BCE however, Lycian epigraphic sources indicate that the region was loyal to the Achaemenids and Herodotus (Histories, 1.176.1–3) describes the conquest of the plain of Xanthus by Harpagos and archaeology testifies to the burning of the city of Xanthus in the sixth century BCE. Zahle’s survey of the archaeological evidence (coins and tombs) reveals a region which did become subject to Persian rule but often demonstrated considerable independence right down until c. 360 BCE. Even under Persian rule, coinage from the sixth to the fourth centuries, indicates that Lycia was ruled by local dynastic families and this dynastic system has been shown by Keen to pre-date Persian rule, demonstrating again how the Persians frequently left local political structures in place. The coins mention approximately forty cities and forty names of dynasts or local ruler/kings. The influence on the coinage is Greek

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6 Briant, From Cyrus to Alexander, a History of the Persian Empire, 559.
8 Lycia appears in the Athenian tribute list for 446–445 BCE and moreover as a single entity (Bryce, “Political Unity,” 40).
9 Zahle, Achaemenid Influences in Lycia,” 145–60; Keen, Dynastic Lycia, 72. For a discussion of the reliability of Herodotus’ evidence see Keen, op. cit., 222–24.
10 Zahle, Achaemenid Influence in Lycia,” 146–60.
11 Contra Bryce who sees the dynastic system in Lycia as having been initiated by the Persians (Bryce, “Political Unity in Lycia during the Dynamic Period,” 31–42). For discussion see Keen, Dynastic Lycia, 39–40. Briant notes that Persian rule in the western districts frequently employed the dynastic model (Briant, “Contrainte militaire, dépendance rurale et exploitation des territoires en Asie achéménide,” 199–225).