

Irano-Semitic minora

1. *Gaza*, 2. *wādī*

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La prima parte di questo articolo discute una falsa etimologia, riportata da Pomponio Mela e da Stefano di Bisanzio, che collega il nome della città di Gaza con la parola antico-persiana **ganza* ‘tesoro, tesoreria’. La seconda parte suggerisce una possibile etimologia iranica per la parola araba *wādī* ‘valle, corso d’acqua, fiume’.

The first part of this article discusses a false etymology, related by Pomponius Mela and Stephanus of Byzantium, which connects the name of the city of Gaza with the Old Persian word **ganza* “treasure, treasury.” The second part suggests a possible Iranian etymology for the Arabic word *wādī* “valley, water-course, river.”

GAZA¹

Pomponius Mela (1st century CE), in his *De Chorographia* I.64, connects the name of the city of Gaza with the Persian word for “treasure, treasury:”

*Ceterum in Palaestina est ingens et munita admodum Gaza—sic Persae aerarium uocant, et inde nomen est quod, cum Cambyses armis Aegyptum peteret, huc belli et opes et pecunia intulerat [...]*²

Moreover, in Palestine there is the vast and very well fortified city of Gaza—so the Persians call the treasury, and hence comes the name: when Cambyses headed for Egypt under arms, he had brought here both wealth and the money for war [...]

Five centuries later, Stephanus of Byzantium, in his *Ethnica* Γ 13, presents two distinctive etymologies for this toponym, of which the latter appears to adhere in some way to the same line followed by Pomponius, albeit from a different tradition:

Γάζα: πόλις Φοινίκης, νῦν δὲ Παλαιστίνης πρὸ τῆς Αἰγύπτου. ἐκλήθη καὶ Ἄζα. καὶ μέχρι νῦν Σύροι Ἄζαν αὐτὴν καλοῦσιν, ἀπὸ Ἄζωνος τοῦ παιδὸς Ἡρακλέους. μυθολογοῦσι δὲ τινες ἀπὸ Διὸς κτισθῆναι καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ ἀπολιπεῖν τὴν ἰδίαν γάζαν, οὕτω τῶν Περσῶν τὰ χρήματα καλοῦντων.³

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² Text edited by Silberman 1988: 19.

³ Text edited by Billerbeck 2006: 396.