



ARACHOSIA

ARACHOSIA, province (satrapy) in the eastern part of the Achaemenid empire around modern Kandahār (southern Afghanistan), which was inhabited by the Iranian Arachosians or Arachoti. The Old Persian form of its name is Harauvatiš (h-r-u-v-t-i-); this form is the etymological equivalent of Vedic Sárasvatī- (fem., name of a river, properly “rich in waters/lakes” and derived from *sáras-* “lake, pond”); thus the province is named after its main river, the modern Arġandāb (in Greek called Arachōtós), a tributary of the Helmand. The same region appears in the Avestan *Vidēvdāt* (1.12) under the indigenous dialect form Haraxvaitī- (whose *-axva-* is typical non-Avestan); of these two forms Old Pers. Harauvatiš (remodeled nom. *-iš*) is rendered by Elamite Ha(r)-ra-u-ma-ti-iš, Ha(r)-ru-ma-ti-iš, etc., and “Arachotic” (and Median) *Haraxvatī- by Aramaic hrḥwty (cf. R. A. Bowman, *Aramaic Ritual Texts from Persepolis*, Chicago, 1970, p. 192b); Elamite Har-ku(ut-)ti-iš (DSf 39, XPh 16 and Persepolis tablets; see R. T. Hallock, *Persepolis Fortification Tablets*, Chicago, 1969, p. 691a); Greek Arachōsiā; and, reflecting a form with metathesis, *Harauxatī, Babylonian ^{KUR}a-ru-ha-at-ti(-), a-ru-hat⁰, and Aramaic hrwḥty (DB) respectively. (See M. Mayrhofer, *Onomastica Persepolitana*, Vienna, 1973, p. 32; K. Hoffmann, *Aufsätze zur Indoiranistik II*, Wiesbaden, 1976, p. 641 with n. 38; R. Schmitt in *Sprachwissenschaft* 9, 1984, pp. 205f.).

In the Achaemenid royal inscriptions Arachosia is attested in the lists of peoples and countries (the nominative form in DB 1.17, DPe 17, DNa 24, DSe 23, DSm 10 [?]) always in the neighborhood of Sattagydia (Θataguš) and Maka or Drangiana (Zraⁿka) or the Indus (Hiⁿduš) province; in XPh 20 alone is it



arbitrarily (?) and incomprehensibly placed between Elam (Ūja) and Armenia (Armina); the inhabitants' name occurs as Harauvatiya- (DN X, A?P 10; for the whole see Kent, *Old Persian*, pp. 213f.). It is identified as the source of the ivory (*piruš*) used in the palace of Susa (DSf 44f.) and is mentioned in connection with the revolts against Darius I at the beginning of his reign: In DB 3.54-76 it is related that the Persian rebel Vahyazdāta sent forth an army against the satrap of Arachosia, Vivāna, who was loyal to Darius and defeated the rebels three times near Kāpišakāniš, Gandutava (on which see R. Schmitt in *Archiv für Orientforschung* 27, 1980, p. 113 n. 25), and Aršādā/Ṛšādā, the estate (not, as formerly interpreted, the fortress) of Vivāna, so that the province remained under Darius's control. As the reason for this strange, strategically unintelligible engagement of Vahyazdāta in Arachosia, the conjecture has been ventured that there were close relations between Persia and Arachosia concerning the Zoroastrian faith (see K. Hoffmann, "Das Avesta in der Persis," p. 92).

The exact extent of Arachosia is not clear. With the Arḡandāb valley as its center, it seems not to have reached the Hindu Kush, but it apparently extended east as far as the Indus river (Strabo 11.10.1), particularly in view of the reference to its ivory. According to Ptolemy 6.20.1 (cf. Strabo 15.2.9), Arachosia bordered on Drangiana in the west, on the Paropamisadae (i.e., the satrapy of Gandāra) in the north, on a part of India in the east, and on Gedrosia (or, according to Pliny, Natural History 6.92, on the Dexendrusi) in the south; Ptolemy also mentions (6.20.3) several tribes of Arachosia by name—the Parsyetae, and, to the south, the Sydri, Rhoplutae, and Eoritae. In the work of Herodotus, who nowhere makes mention of Arachosia or the Arachosians, they may be concealed under the name of the Thamanaei (3.93.2; 117.1). The metropolis of Arachosia, which bore the same name as the land and its main river (Strabo 11.8.9, eis Arachōtoùs tèn pólin; Pliny, op. cit., 6.61 *Arachosiorum oppidum*; Stephanus Byzantius, p. 110, 13 M.), has to be sought at the site of modern Kandahār (see P. Bernard in *Studia Iranica* 3, 1974, pp. 171-85), all the more so since the importance of the Greek colony Alexandria or Alexandropolis (called the "metropolis of Arachosia" by Isidorus Characenus 19), newly founded on the ancient site in post-Achaemenid times, has been corroborated by the discovery of both a Greek and a Greco-Aramaic edict of the Indian king Aśoka (q.v.). Moreover a number of Arachosian cities and villages, other than those mentioned in the Bīsotūn inscription (see above), are listed by Isidorus Characenus 19 (Bist [for Biút], Pharsana, Chorochoad [Chorochoad pólis, perhaps reflecting *Haraxvatī], Demetrias; for



the whole see P. Daffinà, *L'immigrazione dei Sakā nella Drangiana*, Rome, 1967, pp. 99ff.) and Ptolemy (6.20.4-5: Ozola, Phoclis, Alexandria, Rhizana, Arbaca, Sigara, Choaspa, Arachotus, Asiace, Gammace, Maliane, Dammana).

The history of Arachosia in Achaemenid times after 520 B.C. is unknown except that, under Darius III, the Arachosians were, together with the Drangians, under the command of the satrap Barsaēntes (Arrian 3.8.4, 21.1), who then joined Bessus, satrap of Bactria, and contrived a plot of the Arachosians against Alexander (Curtius Rufus 8.13.3). The Macedonian king entrusted the province to Meno (Arrian 3.28.1; Curtius Rufus 7.3.5) and, after this satrap's early death (in 325 B.C.), to Sibyrtius (Plutarch, *Eumenes* 19.3; Polyaeus 4.6.15; Arrian 5.6.2; Diodorus 18.3.3; Orosius 3.23.1 3; Justin 13.4.22), who maintained this office until at least 316 B.C. The hypothesis that Seleucus I Nicator yielded eastern Arachosia along with Gandāra to the Indian king Čandragupta (Sandracottus) in 304 or 303 B.C. has now definitely been refuted by Daffinà (op. cit.); but Aśoka, the third sovereign of the Maurya dynasty, actually ruled over that province, at least by the formal recognition of the local governors. Later on, the land was under the control of the Seleucid Antiochus III, Demetrius of Bactria (seemingly the founder of Demetrias), and the Parthian king Mithridates I; in the time of his successors Phraates II (ca. 138-128 B.C.) and Artabanus II (ca. 128-123 B.C.), nomad Saka tribes invaded from the north, i.e., from Central Asia, and occupied Arachosia and especially the neighboring Drangiana, whose name thereafter was Sakastāna (later Sīstān). At what time (and in what form) Parthian rule over Arachosia was reestablished can not be said with any authenticity. In Isidorus Characenus (sec. 19) there is at least evidence for Arachosia, if only a little part of the original province of this name, being under the rule of the Parthians, who called it Indikē Leukē "White India."

Arachosia, which formed part of Ariane in Eratosthenes's sense of this term (cf. Strabo 15.2.8 and see [Aria](#), Ariane), was a fertile land, whose main valleys offered enough for the wealth of a large settled population of agriculturists, whereas the mountainous northern part was suitable for cattle-breeding only.

See also [Rokkaġ](#).



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