



## ARRAJĀN

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**ARRAJĀN**, a medieval city and province in southwestern Iran on the border between Kūzestān and Fārs. The ruins of Arrajān lay between 7.5 and 11 km northeast of modern Behbahān in an area now known as Arġūn, near the southern bank of the Kordestān river, and around a shrine called Emāmzāda Reżā, on both banks of the river. On the ground in Arġūn only scattered traces of buildings and walls remain. The site covers an area measuring some 1.5 (east-west) by 2.5 km (north-south). To the south of the site stands a prominent wall enclosing a square approximately 300 by 600 m. Within the area once covered by the town can be seen the remains of *qanāts*. To the north, parts of a bridge across the Kordestān river have survived. Ceramic evidence discovered in Arġūn attests the existence of a settlement as far back as the 11th century.

Around Emāmzāda Reżā, separated from Arġūn by a tract of land that was only sporadically colonized, lie the ruins of a settlement which, judging by the ceramic fragments found there, was occupied from the pre-Islamic period up to the 17th century. To the south stand the remains of a Sasanian combined bridge and dam structure. Near the bridge, above the southern bank of the Kordestān river, can be found the vestiges of a castle and, on both banks the mouths of *qanāts* which carried the water stored behind the dam into the plain around Arrajān.

Medieval sources give as alternative names for Arrajān Rām-Qobād, Berām-Qobād, Abar-Qobād and Beh az Āmed-e Kavād (Ṭabarī, I, pp. 887-88; Ḥamza Eşfahānī, ed. Beirut, 1961, p. 51; Dīnavarī, p. 68). The common component Qobād/Kavād points to the Sasanian king, Kavād I (484, 488-97 and 499-531



A.D.), who is said to have founded the city (Ṭabarī, loc. cit.). In his third period of rule he is reported to have mounted a campaign against Amida in northern Mesopotamia and to have instructed the 80,000 prisoners whom he took there to settle in Fārs and Kūzestān (A. Christensen, *Le Règne du roi Kawādh I et le communisme Mazdakite*, Copenhagen, 1925, p. 7). Some of them, it is claimed, were ordered to build the city of Arrajān on the border between Kūzestān and Fārs. This rapidly became a center of linen production (together with the towns of Jannāba and Rišahr, that belonged to the province of Arrajān); in this trade the people from the Amida region were considered to be experts.

After the Islamic conquest Arrajān's development continued. It achieved the peak of its prosperity in the 10th century. Descriptions dating back to that period (e.g. Maqdesī, p. 425) are vague. The city had six gates. Its buildings were constructed of ashlar, and houses had cool summer apartments below ground level (Nāṣer Ḳosrow, *Safar-nāma*, Tehran, 1344 Š./1966, p. 120). Roughly in the center of the city stood the Great Mosque, erected between 694 and 714 (Balāḍorī, *Fotūḥ al-boldān*, Cairo, n.d., p. 483). Beside it was the bazaar. An administrative building and a citadel are also mentioned, together with the two bridges over the Kordestān (the medieval Ṭāb) whose ruins still survive (Eṣṭakrī, pp. 134, 152). Subterranean canals supplied water to every house in the town. In general, Arrajān is depicted as a large and beautiful city. Its climate was considered hot but tolerable. In 1052 it allegedly had 20,000 male inhabitants (*Safar-nāma*, p. 120) and ranked among the greatest cities of Fārs. But in that same year signs of decay became visible. The sons of the Buyid Abū Kālījār fought one another for possession of the city. The roads were cut; and travelers had to wait for weeks in Mahrūbān, the most important port in the province, before they could continue their journey to Arrajān (ibid.). Between 1053 and 1057 the town changed hands several times. In 1085 it was devastated by an earthquake, a blow from which it never recovered (see Ebn al-Aṭīr, X, p. 145; cf. IX, p. 591). Those citizens who had escaped with their lives migrated elsewhere or lived amid the rubble, until a new settlement, Behbahān, arose to the south of the old city. But this never attained the importance and size of its predecessor.

As a province Arrajān has been more or less preserved in the present-day *šahrestān* of Behbahān which belongs to Kūzestān. Its landscape is dominated by the folds of the Zagros chain that runs northwest to southeast. In the north are mountains reaching to heights of more than 3,500 m that are capped with snow all year round, whereas some 150 km to the south, on the coast of the



Persian Gulf, one finds burning heat with annual maximum temperatures averaging over 30° C. The northernmost third of the province (lying above 1,500 m or so) is inhabited by nomads or semi-nomads, who practice animal husbandry and dry (*dēymī*) farming. In the south, particularly in the plains of Deh-Dašt and Behbahān and the valleys of the rivers Kordestān and Ḳayrābād, the population is settled and agricultural.

Situated on the border between Ḳūzestān and Fārs, the region around the medieval city of Arrajān was one of the gateways from the Iranian highlands to Mesopotamia. Two roads leading east from Baghdad across Ḳūzestān (one in the south, via Ahvāz, the other in the north, via Susa) joined a third route at Arrajān. On the latter, travelers by sea from Baṣra to Mahrūbān, the port for Arrajān, proceeded from there by a two-day journey via Rīšahr to Arrajān itself. From Arrajān the old Persian royal highway linking Susa with Persepolis ran through the territory of the province of Sābūr to Shiraz. Another road established a direct link between Arrajān and the Isfahan region. (On the classical itineraries, see Gaube, *Arrajān*, pp. 123-47.)

Integrated in this manner into the main road system, and blessed by nature with fertile soil and bountiful supplies of water, the province of Arrajān achieved considerable prosperity in a time of peace and stability. Owing to its position, it was inevitably affected by events in lower Mesopotamia and southern Iran.

During the period for which literary sources supply information about the city and province of Arrajān (i.e., from the Sasanian to the Il-Khanid eras), the shape and size of the province changed. At the end of the Sasanian period and in the first Islamic centuries it was bounded on the west by the Kordestān river. The northern border was marked by the mountains and the Ḳersān river. In the east it was enclosed by the Kūh-e Denār massif, the upper and middle reaches of the river Zohra, and a line running from north to south from the Zohra to the coast of the Persian Gulf and intersecting the coast near Bandar Daylām. The southern boundary was formed at all times by the coast of the Persian Gulf. In the middle of the ‘Abbasid period (by 951 A. D., when Eṣṭakrī wrote), territory had been added northwest of the Kordestān river. In the southeast, too, new areas were added to the province, so that its eastern border in the southern part followed a line running from north to south from the Zohra to a point on the Gulf coast east of Jannāba (Ganāva). In the post-‘Abbasid era the province lost large tracts of land in the north and the northeast. At that time the northern border ran some 40 km to the north of



Arrajān; and the eastern border followed, roughly, a line running north-south about 60 km to the east of the city.

Among the oldest towns in the province that are mentioned in the accounts of the Arab conquest are Arrajān, Jannāba (ruins near the present Ganāva on the Persian Gulf), Rīšahr (ruins about 25 km southeast of Arrajān on the northern bank of the Hendījan river) and Sīnīz (ruins some 23 km southeast of Bandar Daylām on the coast of the Persian Gulf). Rīšahr (pre-Islamic Rēv-Ardašīr) is mentioned in Yāqūt (II, p. 887), in Syriac sources (e.g. the *Chronicle of Séert*, ed. Paris, 1907-08, pp. 221-22, and as a mint on Sasanian coins (R. Göbl, *Sasanidische Numismatik*, Braunschweig, 1968, pp. 84-85). The name Arrajān can be read on a Sasanian clay bulla (E. Herzfeld in *Transactions of the International Numismatic Congress, London, 1936*, London, 1938, p. 420). Jannāba and Sīnīz are attested in Islamic written sources only. The remains of pre-Islamic buildings can be found in Patāva (a bridge over the Ḳersān, some 90 km northeast of Arrajān) and Ḳayrābād (Čahār-Taq, about 20 km southeast of Arrajān).

For the period between the Arab conquest (639-44) and the end of Buyid rule (1055), Maqdesī, Ebn Ḳordādbeh, Eṣṭakrī, etc. mention 47 different names of places and/or districts belonging to Arrajān province. The most important (with the four already mentioned, which are certainly pre-Islamic foundations) are: Jūma, the center of the district of Belād-Šābūr (ruins about 30 km north of Arrajān on the banks of the Kordestān), Jonbaḍ-Mallaḡān (ruins about 75 km east of Arrajān on the road to Shiraz), and Mahr ū bān (ruins on the Persian Gulf about 17 km north of Bandar Daylām). The province was then at the height of its prosperity, its economy based on long-distance trade and agricultural production. Via the ports of Jannāba, Sīnīz, and Mahrūbān (among the most important on the Persian Gulf), trade was conducted with India and the Far East, and also with Iraq. Local agriculture produced goods for export in the form of date- and grape-syrup, olive oil, soap, and, above all, cloth of diverse kinds. Other agricultural products were dates, cactus figs, corn, nuts, olives, oranges, grapes, and lemons.

By the beginning of the Saljuq period the province was already past its peak. Internal dissension within the Buyid ruling house and the growing power of the Isma‘ilis had undermined its economic strength. The 11th-13th-century sources, in Persian, generally refer to the province by the archaic form of its name: Kūra Qobāḍ-korra or Kūra Qobāḍ (Abu'l-‘Abbās b. Abu'l-Ḳayr Šīrāzī, *Šīrāz-nāma*, Tehran, 1310 Š./1932, p. 20; Ebn al-Balkī, *Fārs-nāma*, London, 1921,



p. 148; Mostawfī, *Nozhat*, p. 129). The seven towns already cited, together with the districts belonging to them, remained the most important in the region. Mahrūbān overtook Jannāba and became the most important center of the maritime trade. A significant role is assigned to three Isma‘ili strongholds: Qaḷ‘at al-Jeṣṣ (a ruin some 15 km northeast of Arraġān in the mountains), Qaḷ‘at Ḥalāḏān/Dez Kelāt (the ruin lies ca. 50 km southeast of Arraġān), and Qaḷ‘at al-Nāẓer (the ruin is about 30 km north of Arraġān, near Jūma). From these castles the Isma‘ilis terrorized the province and did it great harm by their attacks on Arraġān and Jūma.

With the decline of the city of Arraġān in the 11th century, the “province of Arraġān” disappeared as an administrative and topographical entity. However, its territory, representing a naturally coherent and balanced structure in a landscape very much defined by its physical geography, has continued to be designated by a unifying term (Kūhgīlūya or Behbahān), even though the seat of government has occasionally shifted.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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