



CAMBYSENE

CAMBYSENE (Latin form of Gk. *Kambysēnē*), name of a region mentioned for the first time in Strabo's *Geography* as one of the northernmost provinces of Armenia, bordering on the Caucasus mountains (11.14.4), and also as a rugged and waterless region through which a road connecting Albania and Iberia passed (Strabo, 11.4.5; cf. 11.3.5; see also Fabricius, pp. 146, 160, and map; Trever, p. 113 and map). The Greek form of the name must have been derived in the Hellenistic period from an indigenous name, corresponding to Armenian *K'ambēčan*, with the common ending *-ēnē*. In Georgian it is written *Kambečovani*, in Arabic *Qambīzān*.

Stephen of Byzantium (Meineke, 1849, p. 351, s.v.) defines *Kambysēnē* as a *persikē khōra* (Persian country) named after the Achaemenid king Cambyses, following a popular but unfounded traditional etymology. Actually the region took its name from the Cambyses (modern Iori) river (see Herrmann), a tributary of the Cyrus (modern Kura). According to Ernst Herzfeld (p. 345), the names of the Cyrus and Cambyses rivers, as well as the Achaemenid names *Kuruš* and *Kambūjiya*, were derived from two ethnics. This assumption, though attractive, is doubtful.

It is difficult to define the borders of Cambysene precisely (cf. Margwelaschwili, pp. 19-21; [Figure 54](#)). Although it was Fabricius's opinion that it encompassed only the territory between the Cambyses and Alazonius (modern Alazan) rivers (p. 146 and map), it must have been much larger; a careful reading of Strabo suggests that it stretched approximately from the Cyrus river on the west to the Alazonius river on the east (11.4.1-5; cf. Lasserre,



p. 152 and map). Whatever its boundaries, the road or roads that passed through it must have conferred on Cambysene strategic and commercial importance.

Whether or not Cambysene was part of the Achaemenid Empire is unknown. When the Artaxid dynasty of Armenia was at the peak of its power this region was one of its provinces or districts; it remained so until it was conquered by the Albanians, probably after the defeat of Tigranes the Great in 69 b.c. (see ALBANIA).

According to the so-called Armenian Geography (a.d. 7th century) of Pseudo-Movses of Khorene (par. 21, ed. Soukry, p. 39; ed. Saint-Martin, p. 359; cf. Markwart, *Ērānšahr*, pp. 116, 118; Hübschmann, p. 211 and n. 5; Eremian, p. 57) K'ambēčan was situated on the river Kur in Albania so it must have been smaller than ancient Cambysene. The province is also mentioned by the approximately contemporary Movsēs Kałakantuac'i (1.18; 3.10, ed. Arākelian, pp. 50, 305; tr. Dowsett, pp. 29, 197).

Although K'ambēčan was conquered by the Arabs in the 1st/7th century, around the turn of the 3rd/9th century it formed with Šakē (to the east) a vast territorial unit ruled by the Armenian Sembateans, vassals of the Bagratids. The population was mostly of Armenian origin and Armenian-speaking (on all these questions, see Ter-Łevondyan).

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