



DRANGIANA

DRANGIANA (or Zarangiana), territory around [Lake Hāmūn](#) and the Helmand river in modern Sīstān. The name of the country and its inhabitants is first attested as Old Persian *z-r-k* (i.e., Zranka) in the great [Bīsotūn iii](#) inscription of [Darius I](#) (col. I l. 16), apparently the original name. This form is reflected in the Elamite (Sir-ra-an-qa and variants), Babylonian (Za-ra-an-ga), and Egyptian (*srng* or *srnḳ*) versions of the Achaemenid royal inscriptions, as well as in Greek Zarángai, Zarangaíoi, Zarangiané (Arrian; Isidore of Charax), and Sarángai (Herodotus) and in Latin Zarangae (Pliny). Instead of this original form, characterized by non-Persian *z* (perhaps from proto-IE. palatal **γ* or **γh*), in some Greek sources (chiefly those dependent upon the historians of [Alexander the Great](#), the perhaps hypercorrect Persianized variant (cf. Belardi, p. 183) with initial *d*-, *Dranka (or even *Dranga?), reflected in Greek Drángai, Drangé, Drangēné, Drangi(a)né (Ctesias; Polybius; Strabo; Diodorus; Ptolemy; Arrian; Stephanus Byzantius) and Latin Drangae, Drangiana, Drangiani (Curtius Rufus; Pliny; Ammianus Marcellinus; Justin) or Drancaeus (Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica* 6.106, 6.507) occurs. Gherardo Gnoli (p. 43) has suggested that the form with initial *z*- attested in the royal inscriptions was the official one, which had first entered the administrative nomenclature of the Medes (p. 46), whereas the Persianized *d* form first appeared in the work of Ctesias, who lived at the royal court, and belonged exclusively to the spoken language. It is more likely, however, that Zranka is distinct from the many Median borrowings in Old Persian, as it does not conform to the customary use of the Median or Persian forms observed without exception in the different versions of the Bīsotūn inscription; it must thus be regarded as an



East Iranian form that entered Old Persian directly.

The etymology of Zranka/*Dranka is far from clear. Whereas most scholars prefer a connection with Old Persian *drayah-* (Av. *zraiiāh-*, Mid.Pers. *zrēh*, NPers. *daryā* “sea, lake”) and, because of the location in the Hāmūn basin, have interpreted it as “sea land,” that interpretation raises serious morphological problems; Georg Morgenstierne (p. 43) linked Zranka with New Persian *zarang* “mountain peak” (Bal. *d(ə)rəng* “precipice”) and suggested that it may have been “originally the name of the mountain, which dominates the province: Kōh-i Khwāja.” The ancient name Zranka lived on in the toponym Zarang (Ar. Zaranj), name of the medieval capital of Sīstān, now the ruins of Nād ‘Alī (Ball, pp. 189-90 no. 752).

According to Strabo, the northern part of Drangiana was bordered both on the north and the west by Aria, whereas most Drangian territory extended south of the Parapamisus and was bordered on the west by Carmania, on the south by Gedrosia, and on the east by Arachosia. Strabo also reported that the province formed a single tax district with Aria, information that applies only to Parthian times (11.10.1, 15.2.9). The land was characterized as rich in tin (Strabo, 15.2.10), and the inhabitants were said to imitate the Persian way of life but to have little wine. The most detailed description, though riddled with errors, is that of Ptolemy (6.19), according to whom Drangiana was bounded in the west and north by Aria, in the east by Arachosia, and in the south by Gedrosia; a river, supposedly a branch of the Arabis, flowed through it. Ptolemy also mentioned individual tribes living there: the Darandae near the Arian border, the Batrians near Arachosia, and the inhabitants of Tatakēné (or the like) between, perhaps reflecting the subdivision of Drangiana in Seleucid and Parthian times (cf. Tomaschek, col. 1666, correcting the first and third names to Drangae and Paraitakēné respectively). He listed a number of towns and villages, of which Prophthasía (cf. 8.25.8) and Ariáspē are known from other sources as well: Strabo (11.8.9, 15.2.8) and Pliny (*Historia Naturalis* 6.61) named Prophthasía, located on or near Lake Hāmūn on the network of major roads, and Stephanus Byzantius (s.v. Phráda) knew its pre-Alexandrian name Phráda; both this city and Ariáspē were mentioned as rich and illustrious by Ammianus Marcellinus (23.6.71). Isidore of Charax (*Mansiones Parthicae* 17) mentioned only Párin (to be emended to Zárin) and Korók among Drangian towns. From all these reports Paolo Daffinà (p. 30) concluded that in the Hellenistic period Drangiana was not restricted to the lower Helmand basin but extended northeast toward the Hindu Kush. Pliny listed the Zarangians



among a large number of peoples living between the Caucasus and Bactria, side by side with the Drangians (*Historia Naturalis* 6.48, 6.94), obviously confusing information on a single people taken from different sources.

The Drangians were listed among the peoples ruled by the legendary King Ninus before the Achaemenids (Diodorus, 2.2.3, apud Ctesias in Jacoby, *Fragmente* IIIC, p. 422, fr. 1, par. 2.3). There is no evidence on the situation of the country during the Median period; it may well have belonged to the Median empire, but it may instead have belonged to an eastern Iranian state centered on Marv and Herat (Henning, pp. 42-43, based on Herodotus, 3.117.1). Herodotus, perhaps following Hecataeus, reported a large plain ringed by mountains and bordered by the Choras-mians, Hyrcanians, Parthians, Sarangians (Dran-gians), and Thamanaeans (surprisingly omitting the Arians); from it flowed the *Akes*, perhaps the modern Harīrūd, which irrigated the fields of all these peoples before the Persian conquest. This plain may indeed be sought somewhere in *Chorasmia*, Herat, or Drangiana/Sistān, but “with the clues given it fits no more easily on a map than the Garden of Eden” (Cook, p. 195).

In Achaemenid royal inscriptions Drangiana is listed as a separate province, but its position varies; it was located either between Parthia and Aria (DB, DPe, and the restored portion of DSm), between Chorasmia and Arachosia (DNa, the restored portion of DSe, and the late tomb inscription A?P), or even, owing to an awkward rearrangement of the text, before Parthia and Aria and after Armenia (XPh). On the other hand, in Herodotus’ tribute list (3.93.2) the Sarangians, Sagartians, Thamanaeans, Utians, Mycians (i.e., all the peoples living in the lands extending from the Iranian central desert through Baluchistan to the Persian Gulf), and neighboring islanders were included in the fourteenth tax district, required to pay the relatively high amount of 600 talents annually. In Xerxes’ army the Sarangian contingent was led by Pherendátēs, son of Megabazus; the men were armed with Median bows and lances and wore brightly colored clothes and knee-high boots (Herodotus 7.67.1). Barsaë’ntēs, satrap of Arachosia and Drangiana, was one of the accomplices of the usurper *Bessos* against the last Achaemenid king, *Darius III* (Arrian 3.21.1; cf. Curtius Rufus, 6.6.36); the combination of these two provinces in a single satrapy cannot be dated exactly.

Alexander the Great came to the capital of Drangiana in pursuit of Bessos and his followers (Arrian, 3.25.8; cf. Diodorus, 17.78.4; Strabo, 15.2.10) in the winter of 330-29 B.C.E. and subdued the entire satrapy (Arrian, 3.28.1, 7.10.6, who



used the forms Drángai and Zarángai or Zarangaïoi interchangeably; cf. Justin, 12.5.9). Early in the summer of 325 B.C.E. Alexander sent Craterus with part of the army from India via Arachosia, Drangiana, and Carmania (Arrian, 6.17.3; cf. Strabo, 15.2.5). At that time Stasanor of Soli was satrap of Aria and Drangiana, having succeeded one Arsames (Curtius Rufus, 8.3.17; Arrian, 6.27.3; cf. Justin, 13.4.22); his appointment was confirmed by Perdikkas after Alexander's death (Diodorus, 18.3.3). Unlike Craterus Alexander himself made a dangerous march across the Gedrosian desert, ordering racing camels and pack animals sent to him in Carmania from "Parthia, Drangiana, Aria, and the other countries bordering on the desert" (Diodorus, 17.105.7). As part of the great mingling of Greco-Macedonian and Oriental customs and institutions initiated by Alexander, which culminated in the famous mass wedding ceremonies at Susa in 324 B.C.E., Zarangian, Bactrian, Sogdian, and Arachosian cavalry units were included in the royal horse guards (Arrian, 7.6.3).

In 321 B.C.E., when Antipater redistributed the satrapies, Stasander of Cyprus received Aria and Drangiana (Diodorus, 18.39.6, 19.14.7). According to Polybius (11.34.13), after the Greco-Bactrian king Euthydemus had subdued the Sogdians, Arachosians, Drangians, and Arians (Justin, 41.6.3), Antiochus III marched against him; he returned in the winter of 206-05 B.C.E., crossing Arachosia, the Erymanthus (i.e., the Etymand(r)us or Helmand) river, Drangiana, and Carmania in turn. Some time in the mid-2nd century B.C.E. Drangiana became part of the Arsacid empire under Mithridates I. Ammianus Marcellinus (23.6.14) incorrectly listed Drangiana, between the Paropamisus and Arachosia, as one of the provinces of the Sasanian empire.

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