



DRÁPSAKA

DRÁPSAKA, Greek name of a Bactrian city in northern Afghanistan, the first town captured by Alexander the Great after crossing the Hindu Kush (Arrian, *Anabasis* 3.29.1). Shorter forms (< ancient Iranian *drafša*- “banner”) include Dárapsa (Strabo, 11.11.2), Ádrapsa (Strabo, 15.2.10), Drépsa (Ptolemy, *Geography* 6.12.6, confusing its location with that of Marakanda-Samarkand, probably because the rivers flowing near them were both called Dargamánēs, designating the Qondūz river and the Dargom channel), and Drepsa (Ammianus Marcellinus, 23.6.59). The name also appears in the great foundation inscription from Surkh Kotal (Sork̄ Kotal; Ball, I, no. 1123; Harmatta, pp. 453-55) in the Bactrian form Lrafo, referring to the citadel where the “gods” (i.e., statues) were transported when the temple was temporarily abandoned during the 2nd century C.E.

Since Franz von Schwarz first made the suggestion in 1893 there has been a consensus that Drápsaka should be identified with the Bālā Ḥeṣār at Qondūz (Ball, I, pp. 222-23 no. 931; cf. Holt, p. 28 n. 67), which is the correct distance from [Alexandria](#) sub Caucaso (probably Begram) to correspond to the fifteen-day march mentioned by Strabo; an archeological survey (Gardin and Lyonnet, pp. 135-36) has revealed an Achaemenid occupation there. Nevertheless, two even larger fortified sites situated farther upstream should perhaps not be excluded, as they lie closer to Surkh Kotal: They are ‘Alīābād (with evidence of occupation from pre-Achaemenid times; Ball, I, p. 34 no. 29) and Qal‘a-ye Ġūrī (near Surkh Kotal but still unsurveyed; Ball, I, p. 207 no. 846).



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(For abbreviations found here, see “Short References.”) W. Ball, *Archaeological Gazetteer of Afghanistan*, 2 vols., Paris, 1982.

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[W.] Tomaschek, “Darapsa,” in Pauly-Wissowa, IV/2, col. 2152.

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