



FARĀHRŪD

FARĀHRŪD (Nahr Farah, Ar. translation of Farāhrūd, in Eṣṭakrī, pp. 244, 247; Ebn Ḥawqal, p. 420, tr. Kramers, p. 410; Moqaddasī, p. 329), river in southwestern Afghanistan, rising at about 3,300 meters above sea level in the Band-e Bayān (ĠŪōr), and, after a course of 712 km in a south-western direction, ending in the Hāmūn-e Šāberī (Sīstān) at an altitude of 475 m. It is the ancient Fradaθā (*Yt.* 19.66-67; *AirWb.*, col. 982), or Ophradus (Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 6.94; Gnoli, p. 28; Pauly-Wissowa, XVIII/1, col. 665), and takes its present name after Farāh (q.v.), the main town on its bank, lying at 543 km from its source.

The Farāhrūd drains an area of 28,015 km². It receives two major tributaries, both on the left bank, the Ġōr (234 km) and Mālmand (88 km) rivers. Up to the junction of the Ġōr, it runs through a narrow valley forming gorges, with a steep average slope (0.65 m/100 m). Below this point and up to Farāh city, the river flows through a wide and more gently sloping valley (0.22 m/100 m), with some narrow sections. Below Farāh it flows over a flat plain (*dašt*) with an average slope of only 0.10 m/100 m, and its channel becomes less clearly marked.

The hydrology of the Farāhrūd is not very well known, since only two gauging stations, both in the middle section of the river, are operating along its course: one at Farāh (data available for the period 1953-78) and the other one 115 km upwards, at Pēč Tangī (1961-78). The peak flows occur in March-April (both months above 100 m³/second on average), showing a regime determined by both rainfall (maximum in February-March) and snowmelt (March-April) in



the Gōr mountains. Lowest runoff is recorded in September (3.4 m³/second at Pēč Tangī) or October (0.1 m³/second at Farāh). Seasonal and annual irregularity is high and increases downstream: at Pēč Tangī 91 percent of the mean annual runoff occur in the semester January-June, a proportion which increases up to 96 percent at Farāh; between these two stations the ratio of maximum to minimum annual discharge is 9:14. Floods may be impressive and destructive: 2,207 m³/second were recorded at Farāh on 5 March 1956, against a mean annual discharge of 41.5 m³/second and a highest mean monthly discharge of 167 m³/second (April). Nevertheless, periods with no flow at all are also frequent; at Farāh they may last from a few weeks almost any time in the year (e.g., 1 to 15 March 1961, 1 to 13 November 1968), to several months in summer and early autumn (6 months in both 1970 and 1971). Below Farāh, they are supposed to occur every summer on account of intensive diversion of water for irrigation upstream (22 percent of the gross flow of the river, i.e., about 12 m³/second on annual average; Garbovskiĭ, p. 112).

Insecurity is therefore a permanent threat to rural communities established along the river and depending on it for irrigation. In the 1970s a preliminary study was conducted by a French society (Société Grenobloise d'Étude et de Applications Hydrauliques) with a view to build a large reservoir dam near Baḵšābād in order to regulate the flow, to improve and extend irrigation downstream, and to generate hydroelectricity. Feasibility was proven to be good and potential economic benefits were projected to be high (the irrigated area was planned to increase from 26,000 to 61,000 ha), but political instability prevented its implementation.

Farāhrūd is also the name of a small locality which has mushroomed at the point where the modern paved Qandahār-Herāt road crosses the Farāhrūd river by a bridge (326 m long) near the ruined fort of Dawlatābād (Todd p. 344; Hamilton, pp. 180 f.), which is the administrative center of the Bālā Bolūk district (*woloswālī*) of the Farāh province. Following a destructive overflow of the Farāhrūd in Farāh, the civil administration of the province was also temporarily transferred there between 1972 and 1974 (Grötzbach, p. 134 n.). In 1356 Š./1977-78 the locality was described as “a small place with 24 houses (170 people), the Waleswal [sic] Office (300 staff), the Road Maintenance Unit, a rural school and a nice hotel. The Farahrod bazaar with 69 shops and restaurants is 1.3 kilometers far away” (Radojicic, p. 8). It is a purely artificial service center without any agricultural activity.

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