



## HAUMAVARGĀ

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**HAUMAVARGĀ**, a term distinguishing one of the three groups of Sakā tribes, *Sakā haumavargā* (like the *Sakā tigraxaudā* “with pointed caps” and the seemingly western *Sakā tayai paradraya* “beyond the sea” placed between Greeks and Thracians), in some of the lists of the peoples in the Achaemenid royal inscriptions: OPers. plur. *H-u-m-v-r-g-a* in DNa 25, XPh 26, A3Pb 14 (ungrammatical, used as sing.), cf. Schmitt, pp. 25 ff., 89 ff., 119 ff.; it is only restored in DSe 24 f., cf. Steve, p. 59; the OPers. plur. is rendered by El. *u-mu-mar-qa-ip* (DNa, A3Pb), *u-mar-qa* (XPh), and Babyl. *ú-mu-ur-ga-*’ (DNa, DSe, by which spelling rather a normalized form *vrga-* seems to be suggested), *ú-mar-* (XPh), *ú-mar-ga-*’ (A3Pb) respectively.

Traditionally the *Sakāhaumavargā* are equated with the *Amyrgioi Sákai* mentioned in connection with the muster of Xerxes’ army at Doriscus by Herodotus 7.64.2, despite the varying forms of the names that are made compatible only with the assumption of several irregular phonetic changes and internal shortening. These *Amyrgioi Sákai*, who are placed between Bactrians and Indians and, therefore, must belong to the easternmost Sakā tribes, are armed with indigenous bows, daggers, and battleaxes. The only scholar questioning this identification was A. K. Narain (p. 30b), for whom *Haumavargā* is the name of a group of Sakā tribes, whereas the *Amyrgioi* are one individual tribe.

As to the etymology of the name (and its potential translation), there is almost complete certainty only with the first element, OPers. *hauma-* (Av. *haoma-*, Mid. Pers., New Pers. *hōm*, Ved. *sóma-*), which in the Indo-Iranian languages is



the name of a plant, as well as of the intoxicating beverage produced from it by pressing (Indo-Ir. \*sau-) and of its deified representation (see HAUMA). Scholars have not succeeded, however, in identifying this plant. The second element of the compound, *-varga-*, is still rather enigmatic (see Holzer, pp. 208-11). Aside from unsubstantiated possibilities (requiring further assumptions) or mere constructions such as the association with Ir. \*varg- “to drink” (from IE. \*uelg- “to be damp, moist,” cf. Schmid, p. 21, thus “drinking *hauma*”), or Ir. \*barg- “to honor, praise” (from IE. \*bhergh-, comparing Khot. *aurggā-*, *orgā-* “reverence,” thus “praising *Hauma*”; cf. Gershevitch, 1969, pp. 168 f., improving on Duchesne-Guillemin, pp. 97 f.), or Ir. \*varg- “to treat solemnly, celebrate” (in Av. *var-əxədra-*, supposedly “ritual utterance,” thus “revering *Hauma*”; cf. Bailey, 1971, p. 15), or even Ir. \*hvar- (here enlarged by *-g-*) “to consume, to eat or drink” (cf. Gershevitch, 1974, pp. 56, 72 f., who gave up his former suggestion for this and thought of a “nickname” \**Hauma-hvarga-* “*hauma*-swiller”), there is only one interpretation worth considering, that of Karl Hoffmann, p. 612, n. 6, who compared *-varga-* with Av. *varj*, Ved. *varj*, *vrñakti* “to turn (over, away), to lay (around something),” especially with Ved. *vrnktá-barhiṣ-* “having laid the sacrificial grass around (the fire).” He thus interpreted and translated the entire compound as “laying *hauma*-plants (instead of the usual grass) around (the fire).” Bruno Jacobs (p. 78, n. 39a) changed this interpretation to refer to the Scythian custom of laying cannabis seeds on the blazing hot stones of their steam baths, by which they produced clouds of vapor having an intoxicating effect (see Herodotus 4.75.1).

All former proposals which had started from the reading *-varka-* (common until 1911) have to be abandoned, i.e., the connections with Ir. \**varka-* (Av. *varəka-*) “leaf” (Justi, p. 401: “[boiling] the *hauma*-leaves”) or Ir. \**vr’kta-* (Av. *vəhrka-*) “wolf” (*AirWb.*, col. 1735: “*hauma*-wolves,” specified by Wikander, pp. 64 f., as “[people] who change into werewolves while drunk with *hauma*”). Even if one could accept an etymological interpretation of this name as “praising *Hauma*” or the like, this would not allow one to connect it (as Holzer, p. 208, did) with the “function” of the priest according to Georges Dumézil’s theories about the trifunctional social structure of the ancient Indo-European peoples.

Any connection with *hauma-* has been denied, however, by H. Kothe (pp. 76 f.), who takes Herodotus’s *Amyrgioi* as his starting point, which is understood as “of the great king”; S. Parlato, (pp. 224-26), who considers a derivation from the name of *Amórgēs* (OIr. \**Humarga-*; Ctesias, in Jacoby, *Fragmente*, F 9 secs. 3



f., 7 f.), the Sakā king against whom Cyrus went to war; and Harold W. Bailey (1985, pp. 69 f.), who assumed a *vṛddhi* formation from an alleged *\*hu-margu-* “truly bold”). All these proposals must be rejected at least from the morphological point of view; moreover, it remains quite doubtful whether the ethnonym *Amyrgioi* is actually connected with the name of *Amórgēs*.

As for the locality of the *Sakā haumavargā*, it is of importance to note that they are always mentioned in a pair together with the Tigraxaudā (with the pointed caps) Scythians (*Sakā tigraxaudā*; cf. Junge, p. 83), and thus they must be their neighbors; but it can not be decided whether the former were to the east or west of the Tigraxaudā Scythians. Boris A. Litvinskiĭ (1969; idem, 1972, pp. 158-74) surveyed all the suggestions made previously with regard to the locality of the various Sakā tribes. There seems to be a certain agreement, though there is not the slightest hint of this in the sources, that their home has to be sought in the region between the Caspian Sea and the Pamir mountain area, more restrictedly between modern Tashkent and Dushanbe around Farḡāna (q.v.), at any event, somewhere beyond the Oxus River/Āmu Daryā (q.v.) in the neighborhood of the Bactrians and Sogdians. Ilya Gershevitch (1974, pp. 54-56) even tried to identify the Haumavargā with the Turanians (Av. *Tūra-*), who in his view, dwelt in the Tashkent-Farḡāna region. Apart from his unsubstantiated etymology (starting from *\*Hauma-vāragan-*) of the ‘Ahnonym’ term, F. Cornillot (1994a, pp. 104, 185 and 1994b, p. 52) interpreted also the toponym Marákanda as “Haumavarga-ville” and even its modern avatar Samarkand as *\*Saka-Haumavarga-kanθā* “City of the Haumavargā Sakā,” from which he inferred, in addition, that the Haumavargā inhabited a vast territory extending at least from Marv to the upper Oxus River (1994a, p. 106, addenda ad line 84). From the fact that both Av. *haoma-* and Ved. *sóma-* are said to have grown on the mountains, A. K. Narain (p. 30b) drew the conclusion, that the Haumavargā Sakā lived in the mountainous region from Altai to the Pamir range of mountains, that is, in the far northeast of the Achaemenid Empire. On the other hand, Georg Morgenstierne (pp. 439-44), led by linguistic arguments, offered the thesis that the modern district of Monjān (in the upper Kokča valley) was their country. He considered it possible that the name Monjān (older Mongān) and its Yidgha (*Bray-ayo*) and Kati equivalent (*Mṛūgul*) may be related to that of the Haumavargā Sakā.

Pictorial representations of the Haumavargā Sakā are found with certainty only in the figures of the throne-bearers on the facades of the Achaemenid royal tombs of Naqš-e Rostam and Persepolis, where they can be surely



identified by the relevant captions. As to their clothes, the features of their faces, and their hairstyle, the Haumavargā Sakā portrayed there are similar to the Sogdians. Whether there are any other representations of the Haumavargā is a moot question. Neither any particular one of the “minor” throne-bearers at the door-frames of the so-called Tripylon and the Hundred-column Hall in Persepolis, nor any particular delegation of the tribute-bearers at the east front of the Apādāna, could be convincingly attributed to the Haumavargā. This is true also for those figures portrayed with a battleaxe in the hand (like throne-bearer no. 22 at the Tripylon) or bringing battleaxes as a gift (like tribute-bearer no. 17).

See also [HAOMA](#); [SAKA HAUMAVARGĀ](#).

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