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Notes on the River Mand, or Kara-Aghatch (the Sitakos of the Ancients) in Southern Persia.

By Lieut.-Col. E. C. Ross, H.M. Political Resident, Persian Gulf.

A RIVER which greatly interests us, from the absence hitherto of all accurate information about its real course and termination, is what, for want of any general modern name, I may call the ancient Sitakan or Sitakos, and which at its upper part is named, in Major St. John's map, the Kara-Aghatch (signifying "black-wood"). The identity of this with the river which flows, under the name of the Mand or Mund, or Kakee River, into the Khor Ziaret, in Dashti, may now be confidently asserted. It has, as laid down on the Haji's map, a course of at least 300 miles, and no doubt, if followed up from mouth to source, the distance would be found much greater.

The source of this considerable river is near Kодиан, north-west of Shiraz. My personal acquaintance with it consists in having, in common with all travellers along the Bushire-Shiraz road, crossed it at Khan-i-Zinyan, and again at Kewar, where it is known as the Kewar River. I also explored the creek of Khor Ziaret, where it debouches for 12 miles. Other European travellers who have crossed the same river are M. Rivadeneyra, in 1875, at Tadian, and before him Keith Abbott, at a point still further south, in the Kir district. Thence its career has been matter of conjecture, and it is only by the Haji's map that the gap is filled. The accompanying sketch of the river and its affluents is from that source.

With regard to the origin of the name Kara-Aghatch. No district of precisely this name having been known by European geographers hitherto, the derivation of the term, as applied to the river, has been in doubt. The Persian map of Haji Mirza Seyyid Hassan, however, has a locality south-east of Karzin named "Sahra-i-Karah-Aghaj,"

صحرا قره اغاج. I gather from a communication from Dr. Andreas, which is given below, that the form "Karah-Aghaj" is correct, and further that besides the primary meaning of "black-wood," the term also applies to the "elm-tree." "Sahra-i-Karah-Aghaj" may therefore be rendered as "Elm-tree Plain."

The following is the very interesting communication on this subject from Dr. Andreas above alluded to; I give it in his own words, being responsible myself only for the English rendering of the quotations from the Arabic authors.

"The name of the Kara-Aghatch River* is explained by the people, even without asking them, by 'Chob-i-Siyah,' i.e. black-wood, which

* A locality named Kara-Aghatch is also found in the Sarhad of the Kashgai near Dana.—F. C. A.

is a literal translation of the Turkish name; but besides this literal meaning, 'Karah-Aghaj' is the Turkish name for the elm-tree (*Ulmus*). As far as known, there is near the river no district or place which is called Kara-Aghatch, and from which its name could have been derived. But I think that the name must have originated from the fact that at some place near the river, most probably near its source, a greater number of elms is to be found, or was so in former times. An example of a locality named after trees of which now not a single one is anywhere to be found, is the 'Desht-i-Safiddar'—'the Plain of Poplars'—in the country of the Rustam Mammassani. With the exception of two or three solitary willow-trees, not a single tree is now to be seen in this place.

"The sources of the Kara-Aghatch River are to be found in a locality, as far as I have been able to ascertain, without fixed habitations, called Bun-ru, i. e. Bun-rud, a name sufficiently significant, and visited by members of the small group of Iliyat tribes known by the name of Chehar-Bonicheh.*

"The most important fact which I have ascertained through the information I have collected in different parts of the country is the identity of the Kara-Aghatch River and of the Khor-i-Ziaret, or, as it is called in the Dashti, the Mund River, and I hope to have the opportunity of proving by actual survey the justness of my conjecture. Abbott formerly suggested that it falls into the Persian Gulf between Kenghan and Assalu, and St. John points out 'Bardistan' as the most probable locality; but the right thing was already suggested by Kiepert, in his map of Western Persia, published in 1851.

"Captain Durand has shown me the map which accompanies your report of your trip to Shiraz. I see thereby that you too consider the 'Kara-Aghach' and the 'Khor-Ziaret' or 'Mund' to be the same river.

"With regard to the names by which the Kara-Aghatch river was designated in ancient and mediæval times, I have collected, as far as it is possible without a library, all the passages and combined them together.

"The earliest mention of it occurs in reference to the voyage undertaken by the fleet of Alexander the Great from the Indus to the Euphrates, of which two accounts existed in ancient times, one by the admiral of the fleet, Nearchus, the other by the pilot of the fleet, Onesicritus. In the first, an extract of which is preserved in Arrian's 'Indica,' the Kara-Aghatch River is called (chap. 38) 'Sitakus.† In the second, from which Pliny‡ has borrowed some details, not

* They comprise the Korani (Korooni), i. e. Bunrui, the Zanganah, the Ardashiri, and Vanda. The former two belong to the Lak tribes, the latter two are Lurs. The Chehar-Bonichah generally join the Kashgai.—F. C. A.

† This, and not Silakus, is the true reading, *t* and *l* being often confounded in Greek MSS.—F. C. A.

‡ Nat. Hist., vi. 26.

directly, but secondhand, from a book of King Juba, the name assumes a slightly different form, 'Sitioganus.'* The difference of the names 'Sitakos' and 'Sitioganus' is easily accounted for. It frequently happens that Greek writers, when they come across a foreign name which in its form bears some resemblance to the oblique case of a Greek noun, transform it into a corresponding Greek nominative. In this case Nearchus, no doubt, heard the name pronounced 'Sitakon' or 'Sitakôn,' and this would be in Persian ستکان 'Sitakan,' and he himself, or perhaps Arrian, accordingly formed a nominative 'Sitakos.' In 'Sitioganus' the *us* is a Latin ending. The *g* instead of *k* is due to a phonetic change very common in Persian, and can only be looked upon as a difference in pronunciation; the only real difference consists in the *i* following the *t*, but here a very simple and easy emendation gives the right form, viz. instead of 'Sitioganos' read 'Sittoganos.' This form with double *t* will be supported by another combination to be mentioned further on; so that Onesicritus has been a trifle more accurate than Nearchus or Arrian.

"Pliny, that is Onesicritus, says that on this river one navigates up to Pasargadæ in seven days. This of course is not true. But such a statement is not to be wondered at, when we consider how frequent fabulous accounts of the origin and course of rivers are to be found in the history of geography. It only shows that people at the mouth of the river knew that its course was very long, and that it came from somewhere up country, perhaps not far from the royal cities of Fars. They may also have combined it with the Pulvar.

"Next comes Ptolemy,† whose knowledge of the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf is evidently based on log-books from the time of the Ptolemean dynasty in Egypt, and of the first Roman emperors. He mentions‡ at the place where we would expect the Khor-i-Ziaret, the mouth of the river Brisoana ('Brisoana Potamon enbolai'). Brisoana must be in old Persian 'Berezvan' or 'Berezhvana' (Epzend, Berezhvant), and signifies 'The Mighty' (river); the name being only an appellative. Marcian Heracleensis copies faithfully Ptolemy. I am not aware that any other mention is made of the Kara-Aghatch River in Greek writers.

"But the Arabic geographers know the river quite well, and described its course with great accuracy. It will only be necessary to quote Istakhri's 'Kitab ul Memalik val Mesalik.'§

* This is the reading of the best MSS. Some write Sitiogadus and Sitiogagus, which is wrong, but generally met with in older books.—F. C. A.

† Second cent. p. Chr.

‡ Geog. vi. 4.

§ Ibn-Haukal's 'Kitab-ul-Mesalik' (Ar. text edited by De Goeje, Leyden, 1873) is only to be considered as a new edition of Istakhri, with additions and corrections. The passage on the rivers of Fars is almost identical in both.—F. C. A.

“As to the river ‘Sakkan,’ it issues from the lands* of El-Ruweyhan† from a village called ‘Sha’fari,’ the fields of which it waters. Then it flows to the district‡ of Siah, and waters it; thence to Kewar, and waters it; thence to Khabr, and waters it; thence to El-Simakan, and waters it; then to Karzin, and waters it; then to a village named Sakk. And (the name of?)§ this river|| is referred to Sakk. Then it falls into the sea. Now there is no river of Fars more fertilising than this river.’ (Edit. de Goeje, Leyden, 1870, p. 120. Comp. Ibn-Haukal, p. 191.)

“And the road from Shiraz to Jennabeh; from Shiraz to Khan-el-Asad,¶ which is on the river El-Sakkan, six farsakhs, and from the Khan to Dasht-i-Arzan Khan, four farsakhs.’ (Ibid., p. 130.)

“These passages leave no doubt as to the identity, and I have therefore only to add a remark on the name ‘Sakkan,’ of the ‘Kara-Aghach,’ and ‘Sakkan.’ Every one who has read old Arabic MSS. knows that when *s* is preceded and followed by *d*, *t*, and *c*, the latter stroke is very easily left out, the copyist not being over anxious to make a stroke more or less, especially as the diacritical points are generally omitted in proper names.

“Being acquainted with the old name of the river ‘Sitakan,’ or ‘Sittakan,’ I think it would be one of the easiest emendations to read instead of ‘Sakkan’ سکان ستکان, ‘Sitakkan,’ or as the teshdid on the *k* is quite anomalous, ‘Sittakan.’ This I believe to be the true form of the name corresponding exactly to the ‘Sittogan’ of Onesicritus in the MSS. of Istakhri; the *t* inadvertently was dropped by the copyist, but the teshdid belonging to it was preserved and transferred to the *k*.

“For completeness’ sake I may mention that Hammer, and following him Ritter,** identifies the Sittoganus, for which he reads Sitiogagus, with the ‘Sitarejan’ of the Arabic geographers. But the ‘Sitareja’ (Istakhri has ‘Shazkan,’ Ibn-Haukal ‘Shadkan,’ evidently a better reading) is, and can easily be ascertained by the text of these authors, one of the rivers belonging to the northern parts of Dashtistan.”††

* I have simply copied the text of De Goeje, without making any corrections. Instead of “El-Ruweyhan” I read with Edrisi “Ruijan,” which is certainly connected with Rud, Ru in Bunru-siah now Siakh-Khabr, now Khafr.—F. C. A.

† “Rustak,” a cultivated place, also border district.—E. C. R.

‡ Rustak.

§ Compare with course of river on sketch map accompanying the Administration Report for 1875-76. The Arabian writer leaves in the lurch just where we most require information.—E. C. R.

|| “Wadi” in original, which also means “valley.”—E. C. R.

¶ Khan-el-Asad, now Khan-i-Zinyan.—F. C. A.

** ‘Geography of Asia,’ viii, p. 763.

†† Not Dashti. These two names are not identical.—F. C. A.