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The Upper Salwen, or Lu-tze-Kiang River

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CORRESPONDENCE.

The Upper Salwen, or Lu-tze-kiang River.

October 13th, 1883.

SIR,—I observe that Colonel Prejevalsky in his last work (see the German translation of a portion thereof in Petermann's 'Mittheilungen,' Parts ix. and x.) has decided on definitely adopting the theory that the Nak-chu-ka river of Tibet is the upper course of the Salwen. The idea occurred to me several years ago on first reading the Pundit Nain Singh's narrative of his journey across Great Tibet from Noh to Lhasa, but the gaps in the chain of information then available were too great to enable me to arrive at any very confident conclusion on the subject. The chief difficulty seemed to me in reconciling the enormous drainage said by the Pundit to be absorbed by the Nak-chu-ka river in flood season, with the comparatively modest dimensions of the Salwen. For a better comprehension of this point it is necessary to refer to the Pundit's map, and I am almost afraid that it is not readily accessible in this country. The extremely interesting report with its accompanying maps was, I believe, suppressed by Lord Lytton's order in 1877, and the solitary copy which found its way to the library of the Royal Geographical Society has, I observe, no maps. However, from the smaller edition published in the Journal of the Royal Geographical Society for 1877, it will be seen that though no precise idea of the area of the catchment-basin of the Nak-chu-ka can be derived therefrom, yet at least fourteen lakes of different sizes, varying up to one of about one hundred miles in length, drain into this river, and that its farthest source appears to lie as far west as $83^{\circ} 30'$ E. of Greenwich, or something like 500 miles from the point where the Peking road crosses it. Several of its tributaries crossed by the Pundit are described by him as "considerable, one hundred paces in width, &c."; and when we remember that his journey was in the autumn and winter, it will be realised how large the bulk of the combined streams must be in spring or early summer.

The question of the future course of this large river seemed to be so important, that I ventured to call the attention of the late Major W. Gill to the point, and asked him as to the respective dimensions of the Mekong and Salwen, and also whether he could throw any further light on the matter.

I need no apology for reproducing the reply of so distinguished an explorer.

1, EDINBURGH MANSIONS, VICTORIA STREET,
21st October.*

DEAR SIR,—I crossed the Lan-Ts'ang or Mekong river on the 10th October, 1877. The bridge is at an altitude of 4000 feet above the sea, and is 50 yards long.

The river seemed to me to be full, it was as wide as the bridge was long; it was flowing swiftly—a rolling stream without broken water; it had the appearance of considerable depth; it was muddy, and ran between desperately steep hillsides, giving me the idea of a big river choked up by the narrowness of the gorge.

I crossed the Lu, or Lu-tze, or Salwen river on the 15th October, 1877. The bridge is at an altitude of 2500 feet above the sea, and is in two spans, the eastern

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* 1878.

73, and the western 52 yards long. There was no water under the western span; the eastern was tolerably full, the water was broken, and therefore could not have been very deep; it did not give me the impression of carrying as much water as the Lan-Ts'ang, but it clearly was not full at the time of my visit.

To turn to the Pundit's paper. A route going nearly due east from Nak-chu-ka must cross the Chin-Sha-Chiang,* and may cross the Lu-Chiang and the Lan-Ts'ang-Chiang.

There can be no doubt that the great river Di-Chu, of which the Pundit speaks, is the great river of China, the Chin-Sha. I have crossed the whole drainage lower down, and there is nothing else that could be indicated.

Thus far we get with certainty, and now we have two other streams on the west of the Di-Chu.

The Pundit says that the Sha-Chu and the Nak-chu-ka both flow to Chiamdo.

If this is true they are both branches of the Lan-Ts'ang (otherwise called the Mekong) river; for we know certainly that Chiamdo is on the Lan-Ts'ang.

If, however, this is true we cut off the Lu-Chiang (or Salwen) and give it a very small area whence to draw its supplies. We cut it off at about the latitude of Chiamdo, at which point we have already given to the Lan-Ts'ang two big rivers.

Further, Chiamdo must lie at an altitude of at least 10,000 feet; if the Nak-chu-ka flows to it, it must be a very gentle stream, and one would think that a road would be found by it, in preference to the awful tracks described by Huc. I am therefore of opinion that the Nak-chu-ka is the Lu-Chiang and that the informant of the Pundit was wrong when he said it went to Chiamdo.

Further, we have two big rivers, and two big rivers only, the Lan-Ts'ang and the Lu-Chiang; it is quite certain that there are no other big rivers. It seems probable that they both rise north of the latitude of Nak-chu-ka.

Does it not therefore seem rational to assume that the two rivers crossed by the route are the two rivers, the Lan-Ts'ang and the Lu?

Captain Trotter has applied the term Ya-Lung to the Di-Chu of the Pundit, and in the next sentence speaks of the *Eastern* Jha-Chu as the Yang-Tzū. I am at a loss to understand how he can have fallen into such an error.

The Ya-Lung-Chiang is a well-known tributary of the Yang-Tzū crossed by me at Ho-K'ou, and runs into the Yang-Tzū at Kia-Ting-Fu, being a tributary on the left bank of the Yang-Tzū and not on the right bank as placed by Captain Trotter.

If this route of the Pundit's has any existence then the Eastern Jha-Chu would be the Ya-Lung-Chiang, the only river of importance between Bath'ang and Ta-Chien-Lu.

Where Chering Chitshum and the Eastern Ma-chu of the Pundit may be I cannot say, but there is a direct northern road from near Ta-Chien-Lu to Chiamdo, and there is no reason why another still more northern should not exist; Chering Chitshum is clearly, according to the Pundit, on a river of no importance, and might be either one or another of the streams that join the Yang-Tzū, it might even be the Ta-Chien-Lu stream itself—but the names are puzzling.

I have assumed that the Pundit's route does not go into the valley of the Huang-Ho or Great Yellow River of China, because all the rivers appear to flow from north to south, but this is not too clear and might be worth looking into.

It is worth noting that Huc only mentions one river of importance between

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* The Chin-Sha-Chiang or golden sand river, known lower down as the Yang-Tzū-Chiang or ocean river and called by the French the Blue River (why no one can say).—[W. G.]

Lhasa and Chiamdo, and this would on my theory be the Nak-chu-ka or Lu-Chiang, or as it is also called Lu-Tze-Chiang, or further down the Salwen.

Huc's map must not even be looked at for he clearly knew nothing of the geography of the country he visited.

Believe me to be, dear sir,

Yours very truly,

WILLIAM GILL.

Setting aside the minor question of the particular route referred to by the Pundit, it will be seen that the late Major Gill quite fell in with the theory of the identity of the Nak-chu-ka and the Salwen, although the apparently inferior body of water conveyed by the latter river as compared with the Mekong, might have made him hesitate before ascribing so extensive a catchment-basin as the Nak-chu-ka possesses, to the smaller stream. The explanation of this difference of bulk may however be found in the probability that the Salwen derives its upper waters (according to the theory we are going upon) from a drier though larger area than the Mekong. During the melting of the snows one would expect the condition of things to be reversed.

Klaproth's map of Central Asia shows the connection between the Khara-ussu and the Lu-kiang, and Mr. T. Saunders, in his map of 'The Himalaya and Tibet' to the second edition of Mr. Markham's 'Tibet: Bogle and Manning,' adopted this view in 1879.

Moreover, there is another eminent authority on the same side, Baron F. von Richt-hofen. In the first volume of his 'China' (see pages 129 and 263, note) the Baron states, apparently without any doubt, that the river, the Mongolian name of which is Khara-ussu and the Tibetan Nam-chu (this seems to be a mistake for Nak-chu; Nam-chu means "sky-water," not "black water" which Khara-ussu and Nak-chu both mean), flows out of a chain of steppe lakes, and is one of the head streams (*Quellflüssen*) of the Lu-kiang or Salwen. And this conclusion of the Baron's is the more remarkable, as he would not seem to have been then aware of Nain Singh's researches, owing to the above-mentioned suppression of the report, though it was printed some time before the publication of 'China.'

I may mention one point which has caused a little confusion, i. e. the occurrence of the word Tsiampo. The Pundit was informed that the Nak-chu-ka river flowed to Tsiampo, a statement which misled Captain Trotter and apparently Major Gill as well, as it was assumed that Tsiampo on the Upper Lan-Ts'ang-chiang was meant. There are more than one, if not several Tsiampdos in Tibet, and I believe the word only signifies a confluence of two streams (= Coblenz). It appears to me quite possible that the Pundit's informant may have used the word in its physical and general sense, and not necessarily intended to denote a town.

There is, it will be seen, an enormous *lacuna* in our geographical knowledge of the river if it may be permitted to speak of it as one and the same. From the point where the Pekin road crosses it, just to the east of the Nak-chu or Nap-chu village, to where Mr. Margary and Major Gill crossed it on the way to Bhamo, there is very little known of this great river, though the Abbé Huc must have passed over it, and of late years the French missionaries have contributed some slight information about its course near the latitude of Batang.

The new and important journey made by the late Pundit's former pupil, will no doubt throw much light on the question, for he must have crossed the river more than once. One could well understand that rivers flowing in such straitened gorges as seem to exist on the south-eastern confines of Tibet, would not impress a casual spectator as being anything of very great importance, but an experienced surveyor

like the native explorer (whose identification, alas! is more hopeless than ever, for from a mere initial it has now been whittled down to nothing at all!), would be pretty sure to collect all possible data and not to trust to the mere appearance of a river. I am sure most geographers will join in hoping that the results of this remarkable journey may soon be given to the world. One indirect result would doubtless be to throw light on the course of this river which partly runs through British territory and which, if the above theory is correct, must be over 2000 miles in length.

I am, sir,

Your obedient servant,

CHARLES E. D. BLACK.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL SECTION OF THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION.

SOUTHPORT MEETING, 1883.

[*Concluded from p. 625.*]

The following papers were read to the Section:—

A Visit to Mr. Stanley's Stations on the River Congo. By H. H. JOHNSTON.—Printed *in extenso*, with map, in the preceding number of R. G. S. Proceedings.

On the Athabasca District of the Canadian North-West Territory. By the Rev. ÉMILE PETITOT.—This paper, with accompanying maps, received by the Society from the author (to whom the Bask Grant was recently awarded), is printed in full in the present number. See *antea*, p. 633.

On the Hot Springs of Iceland and New Zealand, with Notes on Maori Customs. By CUTHBERT E. PEEK, F.R.G.S.—The author commenced by giving a description of the hot springs of Iceland and New Zealand, both of which have been recently visited by him. Several most important differences were noticed in their composition; in the case of the hot mud wells of Iceland, there is so much copper suspended in the mud that several companies have been started to work them commercially; while the mud springs of New Zealand are so full of Infusoria that in time of famine the natives manage to sustain life on a diet chiefly consisting of mud. Some of the New Zealand springs contain a very large percentage of mineral (over 121 grains per gallon, chiefly chloride of sodium, in one of the most powerful). The hot springs of New Zealand appear to extend from Mount Tongariro, at the south-west end of the system, to White Island, at the north-east extremity. On April 25th Tongariro was observed to be giving out more smoke than since 1870, when a considerable eruption took place.

Notes on the Territory of Arizona. By LITTON FORBES, M.D., F.R.G.S.—The author, after alluding to the general ignorance as to the rich territory of Arizona, pointed out that it was now practically opened up for the first time in its history, by the completion in the last days of May 1883 of the new Atlantic and Pacific Railway, which will probably revolutionise before long the existing lines of travel, not only to Australia, but also to China and Japan. This new line, which may be considered an extension westward of the great trunk line of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fé, runs from the old Spanish-American city of Albuquerque in

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