

IV

ON SOME RIVER NAMES IN THE RĠVEDA

BY SIR AUREL STEIN, K.C.I.E.

THE historical interest presented by Hymn x. 75 of the Rġveda, the famous *Nadistuti* or "Song of the Rivers", has been recognized ever since the critical study of Vedic literature began. The numerous ancient river-names of North-Western India therein mentioned furnish an indication more definite than can be found elsewhere of the area once occupied by, or familiar to, the Indo-Aryan people, to whom we owe the oldest literary remains of India as contained in the Vedic Samhitās.

In the present note, which regard for manifold urgent tasks resulting from my third journey of exploration in Central Asia obliges me to keep short, I do not intend to discuss the entire list of those river names nor its quasi-historical import, but merely to put on record a few observations which occurred to me long ago while my work still lay in the Panjāb. They concern the river names recorded in a verse of the Hymn, which reads thus :—

इ॒मं मे॑ ग॒ङ्गे यमु॑ने सर॒स्वति शु॒तुद्रि॑ स्तोमं॒ सच॑ता प॒रुष॑णा ।
अ॒सि॒क्न्या म॑रु॒द्रुधे॑ वि॒तस्त॒यार्जी॑की॒धे शृ॒णु॒ह्या सु॒षोम॑या ॥

No question of text or interpretation affects the general meaning of the verse, which may be rendered as follows :—

"Attend to this my song of praise, O Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Sarasvatī, Śutudrī, Paruṣṇī; together with Asiknī, O Marudvṛdhā, and with Vitastā, O Ārjikiyā, listen with Suṣomā."

The identity of the first four rivers here enumerated

and also of the Vitastā is subject to no doubt. They correspond to the present Ganges, Jumna, Sarsuti, Sutlej, and Jehlam (the ancient Hydaspes, still called *Vyath* in Kaśmīrī). The order in which the first four are mentioned exactly agrees with their geographical sequence from east to west. Hence Professor Roth, who was the first to discuss the passage critically in his epoch-making treatise *Zur Geschichte und Literatur des Weda* (1846), pp. 136 sqq., was justified in looking for the three rivers *Paruṣṇī*, *Marudvrdhā*, and *Asiknī*, which figure in the list between them and the Vitastā, among those of the 'Five Rivers' of the Panjāb that intervene between the Śutudrī : Sutlej in the east and the Vitastā : Jehlam in the west. Guided by this sure indication, he succeeded in correctly identifying the *Asiknī* with the Chenāb or Candrabhāga, whose classical name *Akesines* is undoubtedly derived from the Vedic form by a kind of "popular etymology" attested in a gloss of Hesychios (ii. p. 1150, ed. Alberti : Σανδαρόφαγος [the exact Greek rendering of Candrabhāga] ὑπὸ Ἀλεξάνδρου πόταμος μετωνομάσθη καὶ ἐκλήθη Ἀκεσίνης).

No such definite evidence is available regarding the *Paruṣṇī*, in which Roth, following Yāska's *Nirukta*, ix. 26, was prepared to recognize the Irāvati, the present Rāwī. But until a survival of the name *Paruṣṇī* can in some way be traced, this identification, though probable, cannot be considered as certain. The main argument in its favour is that the Beās, the only other Panjāb river of any importance between the Sutlej and the Chenāb, is repeatedly mentioned in other Hymns of the Ṛgveda under its proper ancient designation of *Vipāś*.

As regards the *Marudvrdhā*, which figures in the list between the *Asiknī* : *Akesines* and the Vitastā : Hydaspes, and is nowhere else mentioned in Vedic literature, Roth had to content himself with the conjectural suggestion that by it may be meant the united course of the *Akesines* and the Hydaspes. For a record of other conjectures

equally unsupported by philological or geographical evidence Zimmer, *Altindisches Leben*, p. 12, and Macdonell-Keith, *Vedic Index*, ii. p. 135, may be consulted. It is unnecessary to discuss them in detail; for a reference to the map will show us a solution which seems to impose itself both by regard for geographical position and by the obvious explanation it furnishes for a local name surviving to the present day.

If we pay attention to the position occupied by the name *Marudvrdhā* in the list, and bear in mind the fact that the narrow Doāb between the Chenāb and the Jehlam leaves no room for any stream to descend independently to the Indus, it is obvious that we have to look for the *Marudvrdhā* either among the western main tributaries of the Chenāb or else among those which join the Jehlam from the east. Now, among all the affluents in question there is none comparable in importance and volume to the glacier-fed river which joins the right bank of the Chenāb or Candrabhāga, as it is still known in the mountains, in the alpine territory of Kishtwār, and which in the Survey of India maps is shown as the "Maroo-wardwan River". In its course of about one hundred miles it gathers, as can clearly be seen in sheets 28, 45, 46 of the 'Atlas of India', the greatest part of the drainage from the almost continuous chain of glacier-girt peaks which stretches from the big snowy massif of Amarnāth (17,900 feet above the sea), in the extreme north-east of Kashmīr proper, to the head-waters of the Bhutnā River, culminating in the ice-clad Nun-kun Peaks, well over 23,000 feet high. Narrow and deep-cut in its lowest portion, the valley of *Maruwārdwan* opens out above the point (*circ.* 75° 46' long., 33° 40' lat.) where its two main branches meet, and throughout a total length of about forty miles affords ample space for cultivation at an elevation of between 6,000 and 9,000 feet. On the west this portion of the valley

immediately adjoins the watershed towards the eastern part of the great Kashmīr valley watered by the Jehlam or Vyath (Vitastā).

It does not require elaborate philological argument to prove that in the name *Maruwārdwan*, which according to the information received by me in Kashmīr is borne by both the valley and its river, we have the direct phonetic derivative of a form closely linked with the Vedic *Marudvṛdhā*. Among all my Kashmīr tours I never managed to visit the valley in person—a fact which the absence of any reference to it in Kalhana's *Rājataranginī* may help to excuse. But I have reason to believe that the form of the name recorded by the Survey of India during its Kashmīr operations in the late fifties of the last century is a substantially correct rendering of the name as used by the neighbouring hill population.

Leaving aside the ending *-wan* to be accounted for presently as a determinant derived from Skt. *vana* "forest", we clearly have the correct phonetic derivative of *Marud*, the first part of the compound, in *Maru-*. In *-wārd* it is equally easy to recognize the derivative of a Vṛddhi form **vārdha* in which *dh* has become disaspirated in agreement with a phonetic rule of Kāśmīri (cf. Sir George Grierson's *Phonology of the Modern Indo-Aryan Vernaculars*, ZDMG., l. p. 9).

The use of this Vṛddhi form may possibly be connected with the fact that the second half of the compound, in the form *Wārdwan*, is applied independently to the chief group of hamlets in the western or main branch of the Maruwārdwan valley, while *Maru*, the first half, is used in a corresponding fashion for the inhabited lower portion of the eastern branch of the valley drained by the Fariābādī tributary. I owe the confirmation of the record presented by the 'Atlas of India' to the kindness of that veteran geographer and scientist Colonel H. H. Godwin - Austen, F.R.S., who conducted the survey

operations in this part of Kashmir territory more than half a century ago, and who still accurately remembers all the essential features of their topography.

To this splitting-up of the local name *Maru-wārdwan* we have an exact parallel in the use of the names Candra and Bhāga for the two main branches of the Candrabhāga at its head-waters, as attested by the Survey of India maps. In the same way, far away in the south, the two main feeders of the Tungabhadra River each bear one-half of the name, being known respectively as the Tunga and the Bhadra. I cannot spare time to trace further this curious bifurcation of river-names, prompted by a kind of "popular etymology". But I have little doubt that it is widely spread and could be illustrated outside India.

It is equally easy to account for the addition of the determinant *-wan*, Skt. *vana*, at the end of the compound. The name *Maru-wārdwan* applies primarily to the valley, and it seems quite appropriate that the latter should be designated as the "forest of the Marudvṛdhā", seeing that its lower and middle portions have their sides clothed with dense forests of deodars and firs duly marked in the Survey map. Skt. *vana* always takes in Kāśmīrī the form *wan* (see Grierson, *Phonology*, etc., ZDMG., l. p. 12; also my notes on modern Kāśmīrī forms of local names containing Skt. *vana*, *vanikā*, in *Rājat.* viii. 1438, 1875-77), and this we find duly in *Maḍⁱwāḍwan*, the Kāśmīrī form of the name *Maruwārdwan* as heard by me in Kashmir and probably used by the Kāśmīrī-speaking population of the valley. Kś. *Maḍⁱwāḍ-* represents the correct phonetic derivative from a Skt. **Marudvārdha* through intermediary forms **Marduwārdha* > **Maḍḍu-wāḍḍha*, since Skt. *rd* > Pkt. *ḍḍ* becomes *ḍ* in Kś. and Skt. *rdh* > Pkt. *ḍḍh* similarly results in Kś. *ḍ* (cf. Grierson, *Phonology*, loc. cit., §§ 53, 86, 87). Attention must also be paid, as Sir George Grierson points out to me, to the

undoubted fact that there is continual interchange between dentals and cerebrals in Kāśmīrī.

Before leaving the riverine system of the Chenāb I may here conveniently call attention to another tributary, the name of which, perhaps, also claims an ancient ancestry. I mean the *Ans* River, which receives the southern drainage of the Pīr Pantsāl range between the Rūprī and Gulābgarh passes and joins the Chenāb above Riassi just where it makes its final southward bend to reach the Panjāb plain. The mere fact that the bed of the Ans River forms a straight continuation northward of the line followed by the Chenāb after the bend just mentioned suffices to attest the relative importance of this tributary. Is it possible that we have in its name a lingering trace of the ancient designation *Asiknī* once applied to the whole river where it emerges from the mountains?

Phonetically the suggested derivation would present no difficulty. Under the influence of the stress accent thrown on the first syllable (see Grierson, *Phonology*, ZDMG., xlix. pp. 395 sq.) *Asiknī* would be liable to assume the Apabhraṃśa form **Asnī*. This again, through phonetic changes well-attested in the development of modern Indo-Aryan vernaculars, might become **Assī*, and finally, with the nasalized long vowel often resulting from the simplification of a double consonant, take the form *Ās*, which I assume to be the true pronunciation of the name recorded as *Ans* in the Survey maps (cf. Grierson, ZDMG., l. p. 22; thus, e.g., Skt. *nīdrā* > Pkt. *nīddā* becomes *nīd* in Hindī).

Of the river names mentioned in our verse there still remain two for discussion. The last of them is *Suṣomā*, found likewise in a few other Ṛgveda passages, and for this Vivien de Saint-Martin has long ago indicated what appears to me the right identification. He took it to be the present *Sohān* River (also spelt *Suwan*), which flows from the outer Hazāra Hills through the Rawalpindi District and reaches the Indus north of the Salt Range

(cf. V. de Saint-Martin, *Étude sur la géographie, etc., du nord-ouest de l'Inde*, 1860, p. 35). The Greek form of the name, Σόαρος or Σόαμος, as recorded by Megasthenes (see Arrian, *Indika*, iv. 12; Schweinbeck, *Megasthenes*, 31), proves the antiquity of the change of medial Skt. *ṣ* into *h*, so common in the vernaculars of the north-west of India. For the reduction of the *ō* into *ā* in the second syllable of the name, Grierson, *Phonology*, ZDMG., xlix. p. 409, may be compared. Possibly the correct pronunciation of the name is *Sohān*, which would represent a closer approximation to the original.

With the Suṣomā : Sohān we have reached the extreme west of the Pañcanada or Panjāb proper. If we are right in assuming for the remaining *Ārjīkīyā* the same exact geographical sequence from east to west observed in the preceding river-names, we must clearly look for it between the Vitastā in the east and the Suṣomā in the west.

There is no river or even stream of any importance crossing the much-broken plateaus and low hill chains of the Salt Range which fill the area between those two rivers. Hence we are led to look for the *Ārjīkīyā* among the chief tributaries which the Vitastā receives on its right bank before it emerges from the mountains above the town of Jehlam. Of these there are two of considerable size. One is the Kishangangā, the Kṛṣṇā of the *Rājataranginī*, which drains the high snowy ranges north of Kashmir and at the confluence near Muẓaffarābād rivals the Vitastā in volume. The other is the Kunhār River, Albērūnī's *Kuśnārī*, which gathers the mountain streams of the big Kāghān Valley in the north and joins the Vitastā some five miles below Muẓaffarābād. Both Kishangangā and Kunhār would be important enough to figure in our Vedic "Catalogue of Rivers"; but I am quite unable to trace in the case of either any designation ancient or modern that might be connected with the name *Ārjīkīyā*.

None of the R̥gveda passages which mention the Ārjikiyā again or give the obviously related ethnic designation of Ārjikas and Ārjikiyas (cf. Macdonell-Keith, *Vedic Index*, i. pp. 62 sqq.) help us to a definite location. Professor Hillebrandt, when discussing these names in his *Vedische Mythologie*, i. pp. 126 sqq., thought that he could locate them near Kashmīr, owing to the connection he assumed between Ārjika and the chief Ἀρσάκης, whom Arrian mentions as the brother of Ἀβισάρης, chief of the Abhisāras, i.e. the tribes occupying the outer hills south of Kashmīr between the Chenāb and the Jehlam. But this supposed connection fails us, since I have shown elsewhere that by Ἀρσάκης is meant the chief of Uraśā or Hazāra, the name of whose territory figures as Ἀρσα or Οὐάρσα in Ptolemy's Geography (cf. my note on *Rājat.* v. 217).

I may conclude this note with a brief general observation. The analysis of the river names given in our R̥gveda verse has proved that, leaving aside the still uncertain Ārjikiyā, they follow each other in strict order from east to west. The exact geographical knowledge thus indicated, ranging over a great extent of country, might at first sight cause surprise, since it seems impossible to suppose that the composer of the *Nadīstuti* could have had before him a topographical record in the shape of either text or map. Yet the difficulty is easily removed in the light of actual travel experience. During my Central-Asian explorations I have again and again come into contact with men, whether Turkīs of the Tārīm Basin engaged in long journeys as traders and caravan men, or nomadic Mongols, who, wholly illiterate and unable to keep any but mental records, could yet without any apparent effort give a brief but reasonably accurate account of the successive stages, with passes, streams, and other important natural features, which they had passed on journeys extending over far more than a thousand miles.

It is probable that in India also, in spite of all modern changes, similar geographical knowledge of a wholly empiric kind might still be gathered from pilgrims, traders, and others accustomed to distant peregrinations. It is safe to assume the same facility of obtaining exact information in ancient times: so that the only difficulty which the composer of the Hymn is likely to have experienced, when recording the river names, was how to fit their sequence with his metre.
