

THE AFGHANISTAN OF THE AMIR AND THE ANCIENT MAZDAYACNÂNS.¹

“L’histoire de l’Afghanistan intéresse à la fois l’Inde et la Perse, car il a tour à tour oscillé dans l’orbite de l’une et de l’autre. Sous les successeurs d’Alexandre en particulier, sous les noms d’Arie, Arachosie, Paroponise, et Drangiane, il a été la siège d’un mouvement de civilisation très intense et très varié ; c’est de là que la civilisation grecque a rayonné sur l’Inde ; il a été plus tard le premier centre de l’empire indo-scythe ; quatre civilisations, quatre religions, le Mazdéisme, le Brahmanisme, le Bouddhisme, et l’Hellénisme, s’y sont rencontrés, s’y sont juxtaposés et semblent y avoir vécu en paix sous la tutelle des rois barbares.” (Professor James Darmesteter, in his “triannual Report of the work done by the Asiatic Society of Paris,” for the years 1888-1890. *Journal Asiatique*, Huitième série, Tome XVI, pp. 83-84. Vide pp. 69-70 of the separate Extract.

As Professor Darmesteter says, “the history of Afghanistan interests India and Persia at one and the same time, because it oscillates in turn in the orbit of one or the other. Under the successors of Alexander in particular, under the names of Arie, Arachosia, Paroponatus and Drangiana, it has been the seat of a movement of a very great and varied civilisation ; it was from there that the civilisation of Greece had radiated over India. It has been, later on, the important centre of the Indo-Scythian Empire. Four civilisations, four religions—the Mazdayacnân, the Brahmanic, the Buddhistic and the Hellenic have met there, have been in juxtaposition there and appear to have lived there in peace under the guardianship of uncivilised kings.”

It is the ruler of a country with such glorious past associations who visits our country now. His visit, as the friend of our august Emperor, our benign Government and our beloved country, has drawn towards itself the attention of all the various communities in general, and of the Mahomedans and Parsees in particular. The Mahomedans look upon this visit with particular interest, as the Amir is one of the three great potentates of Islamic faith. The Parsees look upon it with great interest

¹ This paper was contributed to the “East and West” of the late Mr. B. M. Malabari, at the time of the visit of India by the late Amir of Afghanistan in 1907.

for the reason that, as pointed out by Professor Darmesteter in the passage quoted at the top of this paper, his country was, at one time, the seat of their Mazdayaṣṇān religion and of their ancient Iranian civilisation. His Majesty's country of Afghanistan is a country which has many of the old associations of their history connected with it. It is a country which was, at one time, the cradle of their religion and the home of some of their early forefathers. It is a country over which, at one time, ruled many of the kings of the ancient dynasties of Iran. It is a country whose ancient history and geography are referred to in their old scriptures and in their later Pahlavi and Persian literature. It is a country a part of which was, according to Firdousi, ruled over, as feudal chiefs by the celebrated Rustam and Zal. It is a country which cherished, up to a late period, the ancient traditions of Iran which supplied to Firdousi a great part of the materials for his *Shâhnâmeh*. It is no wonder, then, if the monarch of a land, with which such of their old associations are connected, is looked upon by the Parsees with esteem and respect, and if, on his visit to this city, they give expression to their feelings of respectful welcome.

On the subject of the origin of the Afghans and of their language, there has been a difference of opinion among scholars. The Afghans themselves trace their descent from the Jews. We find in the *Asiatic Researches*¹, a letter from Henry Vansittart to Sir William Jones, giving an abridged outline of their early history, as given by the Afghans themselves in a work called *Âsrâr-ul Afâghinah* or the "Secrets of the Afghâns." We read there that, "the Afghans, according to their own traditions, are the posterity of Melic Tâlût (King Saul) who, in the opinion of some, was a descendant of Judah, the son of Jacob; and according to others, of Benjamin, the brother of Joseph." According to Dr. Bellew, "the traditions of this people refer them to Syria as the country of their residence at the time they were carried away into captivity by Bukhtunassar (Nebuchadnezzar), and planted as colonists in different parts of Persia and Media. From these positions they, at some subsequent period, emigrated eastward into the mountainous country of Ghor, where they were called by the neighbouring peoples 'Bani Afghan' and 'Bani Israîl,' or children of Afghan and children of Israel."²

¹ Vol. II (1799) pp. 67-75. In this connection, *vide* also, "History of the Afghans" by Niamet Ullah, translated by Bernhard Dorn, Part I (1829).

² The Races of Afghanistan' by H. W. Bellew (1880) p. 15. For a brief outline of the History of the Afghans upto now, *vide* my Lecture in Gujarati, entitled "અફઘાનીસતાન અને અસલી માજદયરનાનો" in my "સાત પ્રસારક વિશેષો" Part III, pp. 1-23. For the Advance of Russia in Afghanistan" *vide* my Letters, entitled, "રશી અફઘાન સરહદ અને તેઓની પાસે પુરતકોમાં આવેલી બાબત" in the Jam-i Jamshed of Bombay of 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12 November 1887.

Captain Raverty says : " I am inclined to conclude—from the great affinity I have shown to exist between the Pushto and the Semitic and Irânian dialects; from the numerous traditions on the subject; from the Levitical customs still prevalent among the Afghâns, after the lapse of twenty-five centuries from the Jewish captivity; from their great and decided difference in feature from any other people. . . . and from the numerous proofs we possess of their gradually having advanced from the west of Asia—that the Afghâns are a remnant of the lost tribes of Israel."¹ Thus, we see that the Afghans are believed to be "a remnant of the lost tribes of Israel," and that they are believed to have "gradually advanced from the west of Asia." Mr. Fitzgerald Lee, in his recent book "The Greater Exodus and the Cradle of the Semitic Race," "tries to show that the cradle of the Semitic race is not in Western Asia as it is generally believed, but in America; that it was from America that the ancient Israelites migrated to Asia; and that it was in this migration from America to Western Asia *via* the Behring straits, that the Afghans were left in their modern country as an offshoot of the Israelites."

As to Pushtu, the language of the Afghans, the late Professor James Darmesteter, who had come to India in 1886-87, on a special errand to study Pushtu, and had stayed for several months at Peshawar and Abbotabad, came to the conclusion that the Pushtu belonged to the Iranian stock, and that it was, as it were, an offspring of the ancient Zend. It was the Zend of Arachosia. He says :—"Le phonétisme afghan ne présente aucun des traits essentiels de l'Inde et présente tous ceux qui sont essentiels à la famille iranienne. A l'intérieur de cette famille, il se rattache, non au rameau perse, mais au rameau zend; car dans les traits caractéristiques où le zend diffère du Perse, c'est le Zend qu'il suit; autrement dit, l'Afghan est le Zend de Arachosie".²

The Afghanistan of the present time is much reduced in area. It is not what it once was. As Dr. Bellew says, by the term Afghanistan we must understand "all that region which is bounded on the north by the Oxus, and on the south by Balochistan; on the east by the middle course of the Indus, and on the west by the desert of Persia."³ Up to the beginning of the

¹ "Dictionary of the Pushto" by Capt. Raverty (1860), Introductory Remarks pp. XVII-XVIII.

² The above Report p. 70.

³ The Races of Afghanistan, by H. W. Bellew (1880), p. 12.

eighteenth century, Afghanistan was included in the general name of Khorasan. Dr. Bellew says "that both (Afghanistan and Baluchistan) were divisions of an extensive geographical area known by the name of Khorassan. The word Khorassan itself is said to be a mere euphonism of Khoristan or 'the country of the sun', 'the place of Light' or, in other words, 'the East,' 'the Orient as being the easternmost or Indian province of the ancient Persian Empire of Cyrus and Darius'"¹

The name Afghanistan comes from one Afghâna, who was believed to be their ancestor. Tradition attributes to him the same sort of semi-miraculous birth as that attributed to the Iranian hero Rustam, whose home and country, as mentioned by Firdousi, were Jaboul and Kaboul in Afghanistan. It is said of Rustam that, on the advice of the Simurg, his mother Roudabeh had to go through a surgical operation to give birth to Rustam, whose body had overgrown the usual size of a child in the womb of his mother. When relieved of her pains after the birth of the child, the first word she is said to have uttered was "Rastam," i.e., "I am relieved (of pains)." This word is said to have given the name to the child. A similar story is said of Afghâna. The first word that his mother is said to have uttered on her being relieved of her pains was "Afghâna," a word of complaint or lamentation from Pers. *fighân*, expressing a feeling of "relief from pains." This word gave the name to the child.

Now coming to the question of the ancient history of the country of Afghanistan and its connection with the ancient Iranians or Zoroastrians, we find that we have, at the very frontiers of Afghanistan, many traditions about the ancient Iranians. For example, when going to the fort of Ali Masjid in the Khyber Pass in 1877, I heard that the fort of Jamrud, situated on this side of the Khyber, had its name associated with the name of King Jamshed, who is also known in Parsee books by the name of Jam, the later equivalent of its Avesta form Yima.² The tradition of the Jehân-numâi Jâm (i.e., the world-showing cup) of Jamshed and Kaikhosru is connected with a *tâlâb*, i.e., a pond, said to be in the neighbourhood of this fort. This cup of Jamshed reminds one of the cup of Joseph in Egypt (Genesis, xlv. 2, 5), of the cup of Nestor in Greece, of the cup of King Kaid in India, and of the Holy Grail of Christ.³

¹ "Afghanistan, and Afghans" by H. W. Bellew (1870) pp. 181-82.

² Vide my paper, "L' Etymologie populaire des noms des étapes entre Pichaver et Kabul", read before La Société Asiatique de Paris, Séance du 8 Novembre 1889 (Journal Asiatique, Huitième série, Tome XIV (1889) p. 527. Vide my "Asiatic papers" Part I pp. 261).

³ Vide my paper in Gujarati "Shah Jamshed and Jam-i-Jamshed" pp. 75-92.

Again, we find that many of the towns and localities of Afghanistan are mentioned in the Avesta. Though scholars differ in the identification of some places, there is no doubt that many of the cities, mentioned in the first chapter of the Vendidad, belonged to Afghanistan. For places like Sughdha, Bâkhdhi, Haroyu, Vaêkereta, Urva, Haravaiti and Haetumant, mentioned in the Vendidad,¹ one has to look to the East and to the country of Afghanistan. They have been identified with several towns of this country.

Coming to the Yashts, some of the places of worship mentioned in the Aban Yasht as those where some of the grandees of ancient Iran prayed for strength of body and mind to attain their objects of desire, are the places of Afghanistan, notably the Paesanangha (the modern Peshin) valley and the Frazdâna lake, places connected with the name of Keresâspa and King Gushtâsp. For most of the places mentioned in the Meher Yasht, such as Ishkata, and Pouruta, we have to look to the Paroponessus, which is connected with Afghanistan. The Zamyâd Yasht gives a long list of the mountains of Ancient Iran. Some of these, such as the Ushidarena, Ereziphyra, Vaiti-gaêsa, and Ishkata, have been identified with the mountains of Afghanistan. The mountain Khanvant of the Tir Yasht is identified with the Bamian mountains of Afghanistan.

Coming to the Pahlavi treatise known as Afdiya va Sahigiya i-Sistan,² one has to look to Afghanistan, and especially to Seistan for the identification of most of the places mentioned in it. Many of the places, associated therein with the name of Zoroaster, are to be found in this part of the country. It was the very cradle of Zoroastrianism. According to Dr. Stein, the well-known traveller of Central Asia, even now there lives a tribe called Kiânian on the banks of the Helmund, which is the Haêtumand of this Pahlavi Treatise, the Haetumat of the Avesta, and the Etymander of the Greeks. Lakes Frazdân and Kânsu, referred to as the residences of the apostles, Hoshedar and Soshyos, the mount Hosh-dâstar, referred to as the holy mountain of the inspiration of the prophet, all belong to this part of Afghanistan. The region of Frazdân was the first place in Seistan where Gushtâsp is said to have promulgated the religion of Zoroaster.

The Pahlavi treatise of Shatroihâ-i-Îrân throws a good deal of light on the question of the connection of the ancient kings

¹ For the identification of these names, *vide* my "Dictionary of Avestic Proper names".

² *Vide* my Transliteration and Translation of "Aiyâdgâr-i-zarîrân, Shatroihâ-i-Aîran va Afdih na Sahighih-i-Seistan."

and heroes of Iran with Seistan, which forms an important part of Afghanistan. According to Dr. F. Goldsmid, "it is somewhat embarrassing at the present day to define the limits of the province of Sistan. We may suppose two territories, one compact and concentrated, which may be termed 'Sistan Proper,' the other detached and irregular, which may be termed 'Outer Sistan,'"¹ According to Dr. Bellew, "Nimruz (which was another name of Seistan) included the modern Sistan, which represents but a trivial portion of the area included in the Sakistân of the Greeks and the Sajestân or Sijistân of the Arabs. Further, the whole of Sijistan country is included in the more extensive region of Khorassan."² As to the name "Nimroz" *i. e.*, "half a day," applied to Seistan, tradition says that it "was once entirely under water, but having been drained, in the short space of half day by the Genii, it hence received the name of Nimroze."³

According to the above mentioned Pahlavi treatise, Kâbul (modern Cabul) was at one time considered to be a part of Seistan. The Arab geographer Ebn Haukal⁴ supports this statement. According to Edrisi,⁵ another Arab geographer, no king could assume the title of Shah until he was enthroned at Kabul. The above Pahlavi treatise attributes its foundation—and in the case of many of the towns referred to by it, by 'foundation we must, at times, also understand re-building or embellishment—to Artashir-i-Spendadât, *i. e.*, Bahaman, the son of Asfandyâr, the son of Gushtâsp. Some scholars identify the Vâkereta of the Vendidad, and some the Urva of the Vendidad with Cabul⁶. I think it is the latter. It is the Ortospâna of the writers who describe the travels of Alexander the Great. Another name of this Ortospâna was Carura.⁷ According to Ptolemy, this Carura later became Caboura, which again latterly became Cabul.⁸ Tabari indirectly supports the statement which connects Bahman Asfandyar with Cabul. According to Maçoudi,⁹ this Bahman had founded in Seistan the fire-temple of Kerakeran. It is the fire-temple of Kerkoe, referred to in the Âtash Niâyash. It is the locality of this fire-temple that was lately discovered by an English civil officer doing duty in Seistan.

¹ "Journey from Bunder Abbas to Meshed by Sistan" by Sir J. J. Goldsmid. Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society, Vol. XXII. p. 88.

² "From the Indus to the Tigris" by Dr. Bellew, pp. 262.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Ousley's Oriental Geography p. 207.

⁵ Géographie d'Edrisi, par Jaubert I p. 183.

⁶ Vide my Gujarati "Geography of the Age of the Avesta"

⁷ Strabon, traduit en Français Prem-partie p. 267.

⁸ Vide the "Invasion of India by Alexander the Great" by M'Crindle p. 331.

⁹ Macoudi, traduit par Barbier de Meynard, Vol. IV, p. 73.

Next to Cabul, Kandhar, or Khandhar is another important city of Afghanistan. Some scholars have identified it with the Khanent of the Vendidad, the last part 'har' being a later addition. According to Maçoudi,¹ it was also known as Rahput. So, it seems to be the city of Ravad spoken of in the Pahlavi Shatroiha-i-Iran², as founded by Reham of Godrez, after his having killed a Turanian officer. Perhaps, it is the Raibad of Firdousi's Shah-nâmeh according to which, in the well-known fight between the eleven heroes of Iran and the eleven heroes of Turân, Rehâm and Godrez killed Barmân.³

Bost is another principal city of Afghanistan referred to in connection with the ancient Zoroastrians. Ebn Haukal,⁴ Maçoudi⁵ and Edrisi⁶ consider this city to be one of the principal cities of Seistan. It is the town which, according to the Shâhnâmeh,⁷ Kaikhosru gave to Rustam as a gift on his retirement from the throne. It was, situated on the Helmand, which, according to Maçoudi, is also known as the river of Bost. According to D'Anville,⁸ Kinneir,⁹ and Malcolm,¹⁰ it is the Abeste of Pliny. According to Dr. Bellew,¹¹ on some excavations being made there at the time of his travels, two or three fire-altars and some Sassanian coins were found. This town of Bost had derived its name from Bastvairi of the Farvardin Yasht,¹² the Bastur or Nastur of the Shâhnâmeh,¹³ who founded it. According to the Pahlavi treatise of the "Cities of Iran," it was founded, or rather rebuilt and embellished, "at the time when king Vishtâsp was in the adjoining district of lake Frazdân to promulgate the religion of Zoroaster."¹⁴ Vishtasp (Gushtasp) and his other family-chiefs are said to have belonged to this city. Saêna Ahum Satudân of the Farvardin Yasht, who had flourished 100 years after Zoroaster and who was the preceptor of a hundred disciples whom he had brought to the fold of Zoroastrian religion, belonged, according to another Pahlavi treatise,¹⁵ to this city. It was the centre of the promulgation of the Zoroastrian religion in its early years.

¹ *Ibid.* p. 372.

² *Vide* my Translation of this treatise p. 89.

³ Mohl III p. 589.

⁴ Ousley's Oriental Geography p. 207.

⁵ B. de Meynard II pp. 79-80; V 302.

⁶ Edrisi, par Jaubert, I p. 417, 442.

⁷ Mohl IV p. 252.

⁸ D'Anville's Ancient Geography II p. 64.

⁹ Kinneir's Persian Empire p. 190.

¹⁰ Malcolm's History of Persia.

¹¹ From the Indus to the Tigris, p. 175.

¹² Yt. XIII, 103.

¹³ Mohl IV, p. 418.

¹⁴ *Vide* my Translation, p. 91, *Vide* also p. 124.

¹⁵ Afdiya va Sahighiha-i Sistan. *Vide* my translation, p. 125.

The Pahlavi treatise the "Cities of Iran"¹ attributes to Rustam the formation of two cities of Afghanistan. They are Fariāv, the Fariab of Firdousi,² and Zāvulastān, the Zaboulasthan of Firdousi. It speaks of Rustam as the Shah of Javulastān. According to Arab writers,³ this Fariab was founded by Kai-kobad. This city seems to be the Ferah of Ebn Haukal.⁴ It is the "Parrah mentioned in ancient geography, capital of the Parthian province of Anaban and at that time a place of great splendour and extent.⁵ As to Zavulastan or Zaboul, the district round Gizni and Cabul was then known by that name.

The next important city of Seistan is Dooshak, which is the Zerenj of the Pahlavi treatise of the "Cities of Iran."⁶ It is the Zeranđj of Tabari⁷ who calls it the capital of Seistan, Zarinje of Ebn Haukal⁸ who calls it the largest city of Seistan, and Zarend of Edrisi⁹ who calls it the principal city of Sedjestan or Seistan. It is the Zaranga of Ptolemy. At first Ram Šheristan¹⁰ on the banks of the Helmund was the capital of Seistan, but the river having changed its course from there, later on, Zarang or Dooshaka on the Helmund was made the capital. The fire-temple of Karkoe referred to above as being founded in Seistan was situated in this city.¹¹ In its early history, the name of Afrasiāb is connected with it. King Kaikhosru added splendour to it. Ardeshir Babegān (Artaxerxes), the founder of the Sassanian dynasty, is said to have rebuilt and embellished this city.¹²

The river Ardvīčura, whose praises are sung in the Ābān Yasht, is identified by different scholars with different rivers of Central Asia. I agree with Dr. Geiger in taking, that it is the Oxus, a large part of which runs from the dominions of the Amir. The name Oxus is derived from Aksu, one of its principal tributaries, and I think, that the name Aksu has some connection with Ardvicu(ra). We learn from Col. Gordon, that the district

¹ S. 37. *Vide* my Translation p. 91.

² Mohl III p. 506.

³ "Dictionnaire Geographique &c., de la Perse," par B. de Meynard. p. 414.

⁴ Ousley's Oriental Geography p. 208.

⁵ Kinneir's Pers. Empire p. 193, D'Anville's Ancient Geography II, p. 65.

⁶ S. 38. My Translation p. 92.

⁷ Tabari par Zotenberg III, p. 517.

⁸ Ousley's Oriental Geography pp. 203 and 207.

⁹ Edrisi par Jaubert I p. 442.

¹⁰ Dictionnaire Geographique par B. de Meynard.

¹¹ Mağoudi, par B. de Meynard IV, p. 73, Shatroiha-i Iran S. 38. My Translation P. 92.

¹² *Ibid.*

of the Pamirs, whence the Oxus flows, had a Zoroastrian population as late as about 700 years ago. He says :

“ According to Shighni accounts, the family of the Shah of Shighnan originally came from Persia, and the first arrival from that country (said to have been between 500 and 700 years ago) was the Shah-i-Khâmosh, who was a Syud and a Fakir. The country was at that time in the hands of the Zardushtis (ancient Guebers, fire-worshippers), a powerful and learned race. The Shah-i-Khamosh commenced to teach these people the Koran. There were already at this time Musulmans in the neighbouring country of Darwaz, and many of them flocked into Shighnan as followers of the Shah-i-Khamosh. In about ten years he had converted large numbers of the people, and a religious war commenced, which ended in this leader wresting the kingdom from Kahakuh, the ruler of Shighnan and Roshan under the Zardushtis, the seat of whose government was then at Balkh. After this the teaching of the people continued, and in ten years more all had been converted to the Shiah form of the Muhammadan faith. If this be true, it is probable that proselytising expeditions were sent into Wakhan and the neighbouring hill countries, and extended their operations even to Sirikol and Kunjut, gaining all over to the Shiah faith which they now profess. The ruins of three forts, said by the natives to have been erected by the “ Âtashparastân ” (fire-worshippers), still exist in Wakhan; one called “ Kahkaha ” in the Ishtarak district; another named “ Maichun ” in the vicinity of Khandut; and the third, Kila Sangibar, close to the hamlet of Hissar. The first was the residence of the ruler of the Zardushtis.”¹

Lieut. Wood, who travelled in the Pamirs in 1837, supports Gordon. He says : “ Since crossing the Pass of Ish Kashm, we had seen the ruins of three Kaffer forts, which the natives believe to have been erected by the Guebers or fire-worshippers, one called Sumri, in the neighbourhood of Kundut; another in the vicinity of Ishtarak, named Kakah; and the last, Kila Zanguabar, close to the hamlet of Issar. I have elsewhere mentioned the repugnance with which a Badakhshi blows out a light. Similar lingering remnants of Zoroaster’s creed are to be detected

¹ “ The Roof of the World ” by Col. Gordon (1876) pp. 141-42.

