

Middle Ages «Sea of Bascon», from the «island of Abaskun», there had probably been a contamination between the two names

It is true that the name of «Sea of Abaskun [or Ābaskun]» has sometimes been given in Persian, in Arabic and in Turkish to the whole or to part of the Caspian (cf. BARBIER DE MEYNARD, *Dict. hist.* I; QAZWĪNĪ, *Juwaynī*, II, 115; *Ber*, III, 66, 183; *Mi*, 386; BROCKELMANN, 240 [with an abnormal form «Abysgun»]; HERRMANN, in *Imago Mundi*, 1935, 23, No. 13). But the «Sea of Bascon» is without authority. Odoric speaks of the «Sea of Bachuc»; CORDIER found in the French version of Odoric «Bascon» instead of «Bachuc» and supposed that «Bascon» stood for «Abascun» (*Y*, I, 59; *Y*¹, II, 105); but Odoric's French version has no value independent of the original Latin text, and «Bascon» has been simply altered from «Bachuc». As to «Abacu» or «Abaco», I hold it to be one of those copyists' errors to which we owe such readings as «Abraaman», etc., for «Braaman», «Amien» for «Mien», «Assara» for «Sara», etc. In some cases, misinterpretations of the Italian *da* as *d'A* may account for these errors. But I am convinced that Polo said «Bacu» like all his contemporaries, the only other form of the name being «Bacuc». «Bacu» and «Bachu» are the forms used by Jourdain Cathala, a Genoese document of 1374, the Catalan Map of 1375, Fra Mauro, Clavijo, J. Barbaro, etc.; «Bachuch», «Bacuk», «Bacuc» are given by Odoric, Pascal of Vittoria, and Marignolli. The final *-c* (*-k*, *-ch*) of this second form remains unexplained; it can hardly be a survival of the ancient form Bākūh with a final weak *-h*.

The oldest form of the name is Bākūh; but the modern spelling بākū occurs at the end of the 10th cent. in the *Hudūd al-Ālam* (*Mi*, 411); the naphtha wells were then already famous (cf. also *Y*, I, 49; add Jourdain Cathala, ed. CORDIER, 94; LE STRANGE, translation of the geographical part of the *Nuzhat al-Qulūb*, 198, 278; PETRUŠEVSKIĪ, in *Izvestiya Ak. Nauk*, 1937, 906).

Polo also calls the Caspian the «Sea of Gel or Chelan» (see «Gel or Chelan»), and the «Sea of Sarai» (see «Sarai»).

The «Mare Abacuc sive Mare de Sala» on Waldseemüller's map of 1516 combines wrong forms of «Bacu» and «Sarai»; the name of the Prophet Habacuc helped perhaps in creating «Abacuc».

Among mediaeval Western authors, Simon of Saint-Quentin and Rubrouck are the only ones to call the Caspian the «Sea of Shirvān», a name which, among Eastern writers, I have only met with in Ḥajjī-Ḥalfa's *Jihān-numā* (cf. DORN, *Caspia*, 100). The most common Eastern name is «Sea of the Ḥazar». The name of «Sea of Khvalis» in ancient Russian texts is a corruption for «Sea of Ḥwarēzm». Cf. DORN, *Caspia*, 44, 100-102; BARTHOLD, *Zur Erforsch. des Orients*, 100; *Rev. des ét. slaves*, IX [1929], 120-123; FERRAND, in *JA*, 1924, I, 206; 1925, II, 112, 269; *LS*, 180-181.

The Chinese name in the 13th cent. is 寬田吉思海 «The K'uan-t'ien-chi-ssü Sea» (once K'uan-ting[定]-chi-ssü); cf. WANG Hui-tsu², 40, 11a. *T'ien-chi-ssü* is of course Turk. *tängiz*, «sea»; I do not think that *k'uan* means here «broad»; it must be a transcription, theoretically *kön* or *köl*; *köl* means «lake» in Turkish, and **Köl-tängiz* would be literally the «Lake-Sea». A Mongolian form **Gün-dängis*, «Deep Sea», good from a semantic point of view, is objectionable phonetically.