



‘ASKAR MOKRAM

‘**ASKAR MOKRAM** (lit. Mokram’s encampment), a town of the medieval Islamic province of Ahvāz (Ḳūzestān) and also the name of the district of which it was the administrative center. The Arabic sources give various tales concerning the origin of the name. According to Balāḍorī, *Fotūh* 3: p. 383, it was named after Moḥammad b. Moṭarref (al-Bāhelī?), a commander of Moṣ‘ab b. al-Zobayr, who was sent to suppress the revolt of Ebn Ḍabyār; other sources, such as Yāqūt (Beirut, IV, p. 123), attribute its foundation to Moḥammad b. Me‘zā’ al-Ḥāretī, a general of the famous governor of Iraq and the east, al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsof. The only common factor in these accounts seems to be a foundation date towards the end of the 1st/7th century.

‘Askar Mokram was situated on the northern part of the Ḳūzestān plain on both banks of the Nahr Masrūqān (modern Āb-e Gargar) just above where it now joins the main course of the Kārūn river (medieval Doḡayl) (though in the 4th/10th century, according to Ebn Serapion, the Nahr Masrūqān did not join the Doḡayl here but flowed parallel to it down to the tidal estuary). It was clearly a place of significance in Sasanian times, and the Arabic sources say that it was named Rostāq Kavād (Arabic Rostaqobād). Its favorable situation in a highly fertile region made it an important market center, whose population in Sasanian times seems to have been in part Christian, and its strategic position, covering approaches into the mountains of Lorestān, made it a military center also. In the 4th/10th century there were two bridges of boats across the river at ‘Askar Mokram, and according to Ebn Ḥawqal, p. 253, tr. Kramers, pp. 249-50, a permanent bridge made of bricks. A bridge there had to



be broken down by the caliphal troops in 266/879-80 in order to prevent the Zanġ rebels (who had sacked ‘Askar Mokram only four years previously) from crossing to the east (Ṭabarī, III, pp. 1910, 1937).

In the 4th/10th century, the geographers describe the town as highly flourishing, and we possess coins minted there from ‘Abbasid times (299/911-12) and Buyid ones (340-44/951-56, reign of ‘Azod-al-dawla) (E. von Zambaur, *Die Münzprägungen des Islams, zeitlich und örtlich geordnet* I, Wiesbaden, 1968, p. 177). Eṣṭakrī, pp. 91-92, and *Ḥodūd al-‘ālam*, p. 130, record that it was the center for the Ahvāz sugar industry, to which cane grown elsewhere was brought for processing into red and white sugar and into refined sugarloaf. On the other hand, many authors mention the deadly scorpions (*ġarrāra*) found there. Moqaddasī, pp. 409-10, describes how the town spread over both banks of the canal, but with the more important part of it on the western, Iraq side bank, where the Friday mosque and the principal markets lay. The town was famous both for its fine textiles, including *ṭerāz* manufactories (R. B. Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles, Material for a History up to the Mongol Conquest*, Beirut, 1972, pp. 45-46), and also for its scholars. Theological disputation (*kalām*) was a hobby of the townspeople, although Moqaddasī criticizes them for their Mo‘tazelī tendencies; according to Ebn Ḥawqal, even the porters discussed abstruse question of Qur’ān interpretation and *feqh* as they hauled their loads. ‘Askar Mokram certainly produced several noted scholars (who bore the *nesba* of “al-‘Askarī,” cf. Sam‘ānī, *Ketāb al-ansāb* (Leiden), fols. 390b-391b, (Hyderabad), IX, pp. 297-304), the most notable being the philologists Abū Aḥmad al-Ḥasan b. ‘Abdallāh al-‘Askarī (d. 382/993) and his pupil Abū Helāl al-Ḥasan b. ‘Abdallāh (d. after 400/1010).

The town was still flourishing in the 8th/4th century, for Ḥamdallāh Mostawfī describes it as large and as being formerly called in Persian Laškar (> Ar. *al-‘Askar*) (*Nozhat-al-qolūb*, p. 112, tr. p. 110). Subsequently, however it fell into ruin, and the name of the town has disappeared from the map. The site is now marked by extensive surface ruins and is known as the Band-e Qīr “Bitumen dyke.”



BIBLIOGRAPHY

See also C. Ritter, *Erdkunde* IX, pp. 182-83, 191-93.

P. Schwarz, *Iran*, pp. 377-86.

Le Strange, *Lands*, pp. 236-37.

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