



## ČAĶĀNSŪR

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**ČAĶĀNSŪR**, principal town of the large *Ķāšrūd* delta oasis in northeastern *Sistān*. Immediately downstream from the oasis the complex of *Sistānī* playas begins with a large floodplain covered by a dense halophytic steppe, which provide seasonal pasturage after the spring floods: the *aškān* (*ašken*) of Čaĳānsūr (Maitland, p. 80). Despite the long history of human occupation in the region, attested by abundant archeological remains and the traces of old irrigation networks, the toponym Čaĳānsūr does not appear before the 13th/19th century. Perhaps the town is to be identified with ancient *Sarūwār/Sarūzān* (*Eštakrī*, p. 245), as proposed by H. C. Rawlinson (p. 286); the connection with *Kada*, suggested by J. P. Ferrier, (p. 417), must be rejected, however, for the latter locality still exists about 30 km northeast of Čaĳānsūr. In the English 19th-century sources Čaĳānsūr is referred to under various forms, which have led to a number of different interpretations. Particularly noteworthy are Conolly's (p. 713) popular derivation of "Chukhnasoor" from "Khanehsoor" (?), signifying "the house of marriage" and Rawlinson's (p. 286 n.) scholarly interpretation of "Chaghān-sūr" as "the mound of marriage." Both authors relate the name to a tradition concerning the marriage of Rostam's daughter. The form *Sheikh Nassoor* (Ferrier, pp. 415ff.) is also found, as is the spelling *Chaknāsūr* (probably a misreading of *Chukhnasoor*), which Bellew interprets (p. 269) as a highly conjectural composite of Arabic and Brahui: "the fort of birds." Furthermore, according to M. Weiers, the form *Čaĳānsūr*, still attested in some Afghan sources at the beginning of the 14th/20th century (*Ĥayāt-Allāh Khan*, p. 89), would be equally readable in Mongol (apud Fischer, p. 11). Today only the spelling Čaĳānsūr is used.



Čaĳānsŭr, once the seat of a local dynasty of *mŭrs* (Tate, p. 210), passed into the hands of the Sanĳarānŭ Baluch at the beginning of the 13th/19th century and became the center of their northernmost principality. At that time an imposing fortress stood there and at its feet a town containing in 1845 “between fifteen and eighteen hundred houses, a bazaar, five public baths, two caravanserais, and a mosque” (Ferrier, p. 417). Several families of Hindu merchants were established there (Peacocke, p. 28). At the time of the amir Ŗŕ-‘Alŭ Khan (1285-96/1868-79) the Sanĳarānŭ *sardār* (ruler) of Čaĳānsŭr, Ebrāhŭm Khan (d. 1311/1893), shifted his allegiance to Kabul. In practice, however, he remained independent until 1299/1882, when the new amir, ‘Abd-al-Raĳmān, drove him out and annexed his territory after a brief military expedition led by the Afghan governor of Farāh. The Baluch town was then deserted. The new Afghan administration was established less than a kilometer to the southeast in a new village which was named from the local representative of the amir (Deh-e Nāyeb Aĳmad Khan) before the name Čaĳānsŭr was readopted.

This new town, two days’ journey by horseback from Farāh (Tate, p. 212), became the capital of Afghan Sŭstān, itself a district (*ĳokŭmat*) of the province of Farāh. After the administrative reform of 1343 Ŗ./1964 this district became an autonomous province under the name Nŭmrŭz, and its capital was transferred to Zaranĳ, which is more centrally located, about 46 km by track southwest of Čaĳānsŭr. The latter then entered on a phase of decline, which was accelerated by construction in the 1350s Ŗ./1970s of a direct gravel road between Delārām and Zaranĳ, bypassing Čaĳānsŭr at some distance. Today the town is only a secondary administrative and commercial center, the main town of a simple district (*woloswālŭ* of AŖl-e Čaĳānsŭr, 9,660 km<sup>2</sup>), without urban status. Its *bāzār*, constructed on a linear plan, includes no more than a few dozen poorly stocked shops (Grŭtzbach, p. 137).

There are no population estimates for the town of Čaĳānsŭr. At the beginning of the 14th/20th century the district is supposed to have had about 24,000 inhabitants, of whom 43 percent were sedentary and 57 percent nomadic (Tate, pp. 334, 360). In 1978-79 the same region (*woloswālŭ* of AŖl-e Čaĳānsŭr and ‘*alāqadārŭ* of KāŖrŭd) contained approximately 36,000 inhabitants, of whom only 9 percent were nomads.



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- (Daniel Balland)