



CHOASPES

CHOASPES (or Coaspēs; Lat. form of Gk. *Khoáspēs*, rarely *Khóaspis*, probably from OIr. **hy-aspa-* “possessing good horses”; Late Av. *huu-aspa-* or *Huuaspā-* [Yt. 19.67], river flowing into Lake Hāmūn identified as the modern Rūd-e Kōspās north of Kāšrūd in Baluchistan [Stein, p. 22]; OPers. *uvasa-*, hybrid Pers. and Median *uvaspa-*), ancient name of three rivers.

1. The Choaspes of Susiana, “a very noble (large) stream (*amnis*)” (Solinus, *Memorabilia* 37.6) rising in southern Media in the land of the Uxians (Strabo, 15.3.4), corresponding in its upper course to the modern Karḳa river and in its lower course to the modern Kārūn river. Susa, the ancient Elamite capital, was located on its bank. The river is mentioned frequently in classical sources (e.g., Herodotus, 1.188.1-2, 5.49.7, 5.52.6; Strabo, 1.3.1, 15.3.4; Pausanias, 10.31.7; Tibullus, 4.1.140; Nicander, *Theriaca* 890; Ausonius, *Ordo urbium nobilium* 156; Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 23.277; Suda, s.v. Choáspēs; Eustathius, *Commentarii in Dionysium Periegetem* 1073, 1075). According to Pliny (*Natural History* 6.27.31.130; cf. Solinus, *Memorabilia* 37.6), it flowed into the Tigris above the so-called “Chaldean lakes,” whereas Strabo (15.3.4) thought that it flowed directly into the Persian Gulf near the Tigris estuary. Polycleitus, however, expressed the opinion that the Choaspes, the Eulaeus (Assyr. Ulai, the modern Dezful river in Kūzestān), and the Tigris all flowed into a lake (*límne*) before they reached the sea (apud Strabo, 15.3.4). Herodotus claimed that the Choaspes was navigable, but it is unclear to what part of it he referred. From the available evidence it is clear that the course of the Choaspes, its relation to the Eulaeus, and the overall hydrography of Elam



(modern Kūzestān) changed repeatedly in ancient times. Sometimes the Choaspes flowed directly into the Tigris; at others there was no connection between the rivers (*Pauly-Wissowa*, III/2, cols. 2354-55, VI/1, cols. 1061-63).

The Choaspes was renowned in antiquity for its fresh, clear water (Ctesias, apud Athenaeus [see [athenaios](#)], 2.23, in Jacoby, *Fragmente* III.C, no. 688, p. 485 fr. 37; Quintus Curtius, 5.2.9). Isidorus (*Etymologiae* 13.21.15) claimed that it took its Persian name from the wonderful sweetness of its water, supposedly the only water drunk by the Achaemenid kings; they carried boiled Choaspes water with them everywhere, in silver jars on four-wheeled wagons drawn by mules (Herodotus, 1.188.1-2). Pliny (*Natural History* 31.3.21.35) reported that the Parthian kings drank the water from both the Choaspes and the Eulaeus, though only the former is mentioned in most other sources (Plutarch, *De exilio* 6 [601d]; Lucian, *Menippus* 7; Aelian, *Varia historia* 12.40; Solinus, *Memorabilia* 38.4; *Suda*, s.v. Choáspeion húdōr). The precious stone *choaspītis*, known for its greenish-golden luster, was said to have taken its name from this river (Pliny, *Natural History* 1.37.56, 37.10.56.156; Isidorus, 16.7.16).

2. The Choaspes in northern Persia, mentioned only by Ammianus Marcellinus (23.6.40). Wilhelm Eilers has suggested that it was a mountain stream flowing into the Caspian Sea parallel to the Gyndes, Amardus, Cyrus, and others (pp. 186-87 and n. 22).

3. The Choaspes south of the Hindu Kush, a great river (Quintus Curtius, 8.10.22) that became known to the Greco-Roman world after Alexander the Great crossed it, not without difficulty, in the autumn of 327 b.c.e. (Arrian, *Anabasis* 4.23.2: Chóēs; cf. Hesychius, *Lexicon*, s.v. Choáspēs: “river of India”; Ravennas anonymus, *Cosmographia* 2.12, mss.: Coapis; Eustathius, *Commentarii in Dionysium Periegetem* 1140). It is mentioned only in sources directly connected with Alexander’s Indian expedition or taken from accounts by those who accompanied him. According to Aristotle (*Meteorologica* 1.13.16), it rose in the Paropamisus range (mss.: Parnassus), as did the Bactrus, Araxes, Indus, and other rivers; Strabo (15.1.26) reported that it flowed through the regions of Bandobēnē and Gandarītis (i.e., Gandhara, OPers. Gandāra) and past the city of Gōrys before emptying into the Kōphēn (the modern Kābolrūd) near Plēmúrion (*Pauly-Wissowa*, III/2, cols. 2355-56). It is usually identified with the modern (Āb-e) Konār, which originates in [Chitral](#) and flows into the



Kābolrūd near Jalālābād.

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