



ESFARA

ESFARA, a district in the Fergana (Fargāna, q.v.) valley south of the Jaxartes which extends to the foothills of the Turkestan (Bottamān) range. The city of the same name in Tajikistan (40° 1' N 70° 4' E) stands 107 km east of Ҷojand on the Esfara river, which is used extensively for irrigation.

Esfara (also Espara, Esfarah, Esbara, Asbara) should not be mistaken with Asfara/Asbara of southern Kazakhstan, reconstructed as Ašpara following *A shi bu lai* in the Chinese sources (see e.g. *Ḥodūd al-ālam*, tr. Minorsky, p. 289; E. Chavannes, *Documents sur les T'ou-Kiue [Turcs] occidentaux*, Saint Petersburg, 1903, p. 10; Ebn Ҷordādbeh in BGA VI, p. 29; for the river Ašpara, see V. Barthold, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia*, tr. V. and T. Minorsky, 3 vols., Leiden 1956-58, I, p. 61, II, p. 51). "Asfara" is also noted as the name of a local Sogdian prince, the heir apparent to the king of Fergana, who controlled the rural district of Esfara, where he resettled in 103/721-22 the Sogdians who had emigrated eastward to avoid conversion to Islam. The district was known then as the Pass of 'EsĀm after 'Ešām b. 'Abd-Allāh al-Bāhelī who had been appointed as governor there by Qotayba b. Moslem (ṬĀbarī, II, p. 1440, 1442, III, 1554; tr., XXIV, p. 170, XXV, p. 91; Barthold, *Turkestan*3, p. 186; H. Gibb, *The Arab Conquests in Central Asia*, London, 1923, pp. 49, 62; cf. Spuler, *Iran*, pp. 37, 254, 302).

In the earlier Islamic era the name Esfara was applied to the district (not the town) located south of what has been the main road connecting Ūš to Ҷojand; its towns ṬĀmākoš and Bāmkākoš, one mile apart, were probably located slightly to the north of the present town (BGA I, p. 347; Barthold, *Turkestan*3,



pp. 160 f.). Ebn Ḥawqal (p. 515; tr. Kramers, II, p. 492) mentions the parti-colored mountains with coal mines in the locality (cf. EsĀṭakrī, p. 334; Yāqūt, Boldān [Beirut], I, p. 112). Coal was mined there then (as now), sold at the low price of three donkey loads for one derham, and burnt for heat; the ashes were used for bleaching cloth (Barthold, p. 161, cf. Spuler, *Iran*, pp. 387ff., 399).

The first author who mentions Esfara as a town, is Bābor (q.v.), according to whom the district (*welāyat*) of Esfara, one of the seven townships of Farḡāna (the others were Andejān, Ūš, Margīnān, Ḳojand, Aḳsī, and Kāsān), was in four subdivisions (*bolūks*): Esfara, Varūḳ, Sūḳ, and Hošyār (*Bābor-nāma*, tr. Beveridge, pp. 3-10). He says that the district and town of Esfara was inhabited by Persian-speaking Sārts (ibid, p. 7) while some other parts of Fergana such as Andejān had already been Turkified (ibid, p. 4). Bābor also praised the orchards and fruits of Esfara, especially its almonds (ibid., p. 7).

In the sixteenth century many mosques and madrasahs were constructed in Esfara. The ‘Abd-Allāh Khan and Now-gelēm *namāzghāhs* are still extant (*Īntsiklopedyai sovetii tojik*, 8 vols., Dushanbe, 1978-88, IV, pp. 249-51). In the eighteenth century Esfara was the seat of Khan of Ḳoḳand whose wars with Bokhara down to the Russian conquest in 1866 resulted in the destruction of some historical monuments, including the Qal’a-ye Bālā (which dated back to the Kushan period; for the results of excavations there, see E. Davidovich and B. Litvinskiĭ, *Arkheologicheskii ocherk Isfarinskogo rayona* [Archaeological report on the Esfara region], Stalinabad, 1955).

Esfara is still known for the cultivation of fruit and vegetables. In the late 1970s the population of the district (*raion*) was 94,000 and of the city about 30,000 (H. Očilov and Z. Mahmudov, “Isfara,” in *Īntsiklopedyai sovetii tajik*, III, pp. 54-55). The population of the town and most of the district is still Persian-speaking (*Atlas Tadzhiksoi*, Dushanbe and Moscow, 1968, p. 121; for the Persian dialects of the region, see T. Maqsudov, *Leksika va frazeologiyai ševahoi tojikoni Isfara* (Lexicon and Phraseology of the Tajik Dialects of Isfar)], Dushanbe, 1977; *Šahrhoi Tojikston: fehrasti adabiyot* ([Šahrhā-ye Tājikestān: fehrest-e adabīyāt), Dushanbe, 1967, pp. 20-23



BIBLIOGRAPHY

given in the text (for works not cited in detail, see “Short References”).