



IŠKATA

IŠKATA, in the Avesta the name of a mountain (*Yt.* 19.3; *Y.* 10.11) and in *Yt.* 10.14 that of the land (situated in the Hindu Kush region) which is dominated by this mountain. It is mentioned in the list of the mountains of the Iranian countries at the beginning of *Zamyād Yašt* (*Yt.* 19.1-8); in stanza 3 the words *iškatā-ca upāiri.saēna* obviously must be interpreted as a dvandva compound in nom. dual “and (Mt.) Iškata (and) (Mt.) Upāirisaēna” (cf. Humbach and Ichaporia, p. 70), and *iškatā* is neither nom. plur. nor an epithet to *upāiri.saēna* (*pace* Hintze, p. 418). The same dual dvandva is found in *Hōm Yašt* (*Y.* 10.11) in a passage enumerating all the mountainous regions which the birds bringing the haoma cross in flight: *auui iškata upāiri.saēna* “over (Mt.) Iškata (and) (Mt.) Upāirisaēna.” Both times Iškata is connected with the name of the Hindu Kush range, Upāiri.saēna (cf. MPers. *kōf ī Apārsēn* in *Bundahišn* 12.9), which only by folk etymology is understood as meaning “(the mountain) above the eagles’ (flight)”; despite the close parallel of Ved. *upariśyena*– it actually goes back to an original like **upārisaina*– “covered with juniper” (cf. Humbach, 1995; Humbach and Ichaporia, 1998, p. 71).

In addition, Iškata is attested in a passage of *Mihr Yašt* describing the lands surveyed by the god Mithra, where “the entire Aryans’ abode” (*Yt.* 10.13 *vīspəm . . . airiiō.šaiianəm*) is named first, after which the names of several particular countries follow, beginning with *ā iškatəm pourutəm-ca* “Iškata and Pouruta” (*Yt.* 10.14; no common noun *iškata*– “rock,” as Bartholomae, *AirWb.*, col. 376 has it). In this list, Iškata seems to be the name of a land (as does the coordinated Pouruta, which *pace* Gershevitch, 1959, p. 81, is no ethnical



adjective). As to the comprehension of that passage, Gnoli (1966, p. 72; 1967, pp. 83 f.; 1980, p. 86, n. 148) was the first to interpret the preceding *ā* as resuming the verbal prefix *ā-* of *ādiδāiti* “he surveys” (in stanzas 13 and 15) and thus to understand the lands Iškata, etc., as not being included in the “Aryans’ abode.” Neither Iškata nor Pouruta is the plural of an ethnonym at any rate, as Christensen (1943, p. 68) had proposed. Besides, Pouruta is usually identified with the names of the Aparýtai (Herodotus 3.91.4) and/or the Paroûtai (or Párautoi) located in Areia next to the Hindu Kush by Ptolemy (6.17.3).

There has been some dispute as to the correct form of the name Iškata, because in all of the three passages the various manuscripts have variant readings, with *š´* (thus one reads, e.g., in *Yt.* 19.3 *iš´atā-ca* in Geldner’s edition after F1) or with the ligature *šk* quite similar in appearance (the two signs being confused even in good old manuscripts and actually being interpretable in either way) or with *šk* written as separate signs (see, e.g., Hintze, pp. 76 f.). As Humbach and Ichaporia (1998, p. 71) recognized, the Pahlavi rendering by *škuft* “hardness” (though being erroneous) makes clear by its initial *šk-* that *iškata-* and not *iš´ata-* is the correct reading. In consequence the reading *iš´(ii)ata-* and the etymology based on it (IndoIr. **īč-īa-ta-* “[widely] visible”), which Hintze (1994, p. 77) had suggested, must be given up. For the time being, there is no alternative to Karl Hoffmann’s admittedly somewhat strange proposal “house/home of refreshments” (see *ibid.*; Humbach and Ichaporia, 1998, p. 70).

Iškata must be located to the south of the western Hindu Kush, on the slope where the Helmand has its source; so it may probably be identified with Kūh-e Bābā (see Marquart, 1905, p. 74; Gershevitch, 1959, p. 175; Gnoli, 1980, p. 85; see AVESTAN GEOGRAPHY). Gershevitch even went further and supposed that it is the country located between Haraiva and Gandhara, viz., ancient Sattagydia (OPers. *ataguš*). The alternative identification as proposed by Eggermont (1982; 1991, pp. 22-37) with the mountain range of the *Askatá(n)kas*, along which the Massagetae live in the land of the Sakas (thus Ptolemy 6.13.1, 3), is in every respect unfounded. Christensen (1943, p. 69) suspected that the name Iškata is also preserved in *Kyréschata* (only in Ptolemy 6.12.5), the name of the most north-easterly town of Cyrus’s empire on the Iaxartes River (otherwise called CYROPOLIS, q.v.), which he consequently understood as “Kura of the Iškatā.” A more convincing etymology of the name *Kyréschata*, however, was proposed by Benveniste (followed by Gershevitch,



1959, p. 175, n. †; most recently by Bernard, 1999, pp. 276 f., n. 2), **Kuru(š)-kaθa-* (or possibly **Kurauš kaθa-*) “Cyrus’s town,” which is supported by the Transoxanian toponym *Kurkaθ* known from Arab geographers (cf. Barthold, *Turkestan*^{2,3}, p. 166) and the Persian *Hoḏūd al-‘ālam* (tr. Minorsky, p. 115).

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