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A
GENERAL, HISTORICAL, AND TOPOGRAPHICAL

DESCRIPTION

OF

Mount Caucasus.

WITH A CATALOGUE OF PLANTS INDIGENOUS TO THE
COUNTRY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

TRANSLATED FROM THE WORKS OF
DR. REINEGGS AND MARSHAL BIEBERSTEIN,
BY CHARLES WILKINSON.

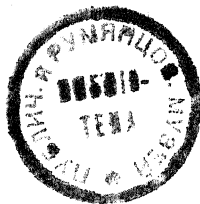
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A .

GENERAL, HISTORICAL, AND TOPOGRAPHICAL

DESCRIPTION

OF

CAUCASUS.

GEORGIA.

The Provinces of Kaget and Kisik.

IF history be worthy of credit, the whole tract of country, stretching from the left bank of the Kurr to the Caspian, was formerly styled Albania. But the name would scarcely be remembered at present, if the Zaar Herakleus did not take it as one of his titles. I shall only mention those provinces which are under his sovereignty, and reckoned with Georgia.

At the conflux of the rivers Arakui and Kurr, where the ancient boundary between Albania and Armenia was fixed, ranges of mountains, of unequal elevation, are seen

rising towards the S. E. They are separated by fertile valleys, and gradually sink into an immeasurable plain, where the Kurr winds its course in a south-eastern direction.

Hallawar, a small city, and the fortrefs of Medegh, stand in this plain, on the left bank of the Kurr; and are connected with Teflis by means of a bridge over the river. Hence they are considered as its suburbs. They lay waste for thirty years, and it is only since the year 1780, that the Zaar Herakleus began to rebuild them; and the population increases considerably.

The plain along the left bank of the Kurr, northward as far as the river Mindoristkali, (~~Waters~~ of the Desert,) is called Lillo, and only used for grazing of cattle. To the eastward it receives different names, which are borrowed from the streams, marshes, or the villages. To the N. E. some Assyrian, or Kurdic, families have settled, and they call it Kurdis-Mindori, Jesidis, or Afuris-Mindori; further E. it is styled Lofchini, after some Ossic families who inhabit it; and due S. twenty hours' journey from Medegh, it is denominated Niphtlik, on account of a spring of petroleum, from which a small

a small neighbouring village also takes its name.

From Niphtlik as far as the river Kabre, or Yori, and to its junction with the Alafan, it is called Karajoes, (Black Eye,) on account of its fine pasture. And as the snow seldom lies more than three hours, it is frequented by a large Tatarian horde, who keep their flocks there in winter. They are called Terrekemme, which only means *Nomade*, but the real name of the tribe is Serawan.

They state, that they were formerly more numerous, and dwelt on the other side of the Araxes near Uramia; whence, some centuries after, they retired hither. From which, I should presume that they are descendants of the nation, whom Strabo mentions as living on the same spot, near the *Maffagetes*, (perhaps Mafis-Getæ,) and calls *Saraparar*. For, the meaning, according to Strabo, of *Sar-oder* and *Saraparar*, (Beheader,) is Scythian, or Tatarian; and the *Serawan*, which in Persian implies the same, understand that business admirably.

At the end of the plain N. E. of Teflis, only forty versts distant, begins the province of Kaget, near one of the front ranges of

Caucasus, and is bounded to the S. by another, called Kifik. Both formerly composed part of Albania; afterwards fell under the Armenian dominion; and were, at last, given in fief to the noble Jewish family of Bagarat, from which the reigning Zaars of Georgia and Iberia pretend to be descendants. The royal family, therefore, style themselves *Bagrations*; and have, every thing considered, much of the *Jew* about them.

None of the old geographers knew Kaget or Kifik by these names. Moses Choronenfis speaks of Saget and Schaket, by which he probably understood Kifik, unless some error in writing or printing has crept in. The Georgian Chronicle does not mention them under their modern names; for it calls the inhabitants of the lower mountainous region, *Ku-geti*, (mountaineers,) and those who live nearer the main ridge, *Mu-geti*, (dwellers on the rocks.) From the former, the present name of the province might very well be derived; but when the other began to be called Kifik is unknown.

Every where we see empty villages, and fortifications and cities in ruins; visible proofs of a former extraordinary population.

And

And yet these provinces do not want men. Could they be brought from their scattered and insulated caves into a larger community, they would more efficaciously withstand the Lefghaes, and soon multiply, owing to greater security. But want of order is the cause; and we must lament, at the sight of such a desert, that the government has not courage, inclination, and penetration, to unite the common good with their own interest, and to suppress the numerous body of monks and priests, which the subjection of the prince and people tends to establish.

The road from Teflis to Kaget runs N. E. through Martcopi, an open, well inhabited, and opulent town, twenty versts from Hal-lawar. The archbishop is always called Rostweli. Nineteen versts more eastward, runs the rapid river Yori, or Kabre, (*Cassius Plinii*,) on whose left bank stands the village of Jafchme. Seven versts north lies the village of Batara-Zeul; and ten versts E. stands Nino-Zminda, (the holy Nino,) a village with a convent, and a small stone church, containing the body of the Saint, and a monument of some of the Georgian Zaars. The archbishop of this convent is always styled Nino-Zmindeli. A few versts further N. E.

by E. clay huts are scattered on the banks of almost every stream. Further N. is the village of Sageredscho, abounding with corn, wine, and fruits; it contains but few stone houses, the rest are mere huts.

Kudala, Melani, and Magara, are at present poor villages, though formerly beautiful cities. Fine wheat is grown there, and a great deal of wine is made.

Waschiri, a populous village, is five and thirty versts from Nino-Zminda, and stands at the parting of the road. The left leads to inner Kakhet over the woody mountain of Kumbet, and continues eastward as far as the Alafan, a distance of forty versts. On its banks stands Zikani, the last Georgian village, in sight of the Lesghæes of Pelekan. Around its springs, to the northward, live some Duffchic families, who are reckoned as Georgian subjects belonging to Kakhet, and are called Schilde, Sapul, Korell, Gawar, and Makram.

To the N. W. on the right bank of the Alafan, lies Quareli, a large village, at present almost deserted: yet it has a stone church; a convent; monks; and an archbishop, who always styles himself Nekrestli.

Old

Old and new Kremm, N. W. of Quareli, are well situated, strong, but nearly half-deserted towns, surrounded with indestructible walls, and containing a few huts, which belong to the convent; the archbishop of it takes the title of Kremmleli.

Allahwirdi, more S. W. of Kremm, is a fruitful and well inhabited district; and abounds with churches, archbishops, bishops, and monks. Its wines are preferred to all others in Kaket. The only remarkable place is Tellaw, (city of limes,) a fortress impregnable to an enemy without artillery. It is in three divisions, each separated by a solid, high wall, and surrounded with a ditch, thirty feet deep and one hundred and eighteen broad. The middle and largest fortress belongs to Prince Herakleus, and is called Padonis-Zighe, (castle of the lords.) The second, to the eastward, belongs to the family of Kurtſchi Bej; and the third to the successors of Wagoscho Swuili.

From this last family descends a Georgian monk, of the name of Cajus, who, after twelve years instruction in Russia, returned to Georgia in 1780, and established a seminary in Tellaw. His unwearied zeal awakened the abilities of his countrymen, and

produced an insatiable desire for information. But, just as the institution promised the greatest success, that diligent and active Archimandrite was, in 1783, recalled to Russia with the most flattering views. The seminary, to the great injury of Georgia, was given up, and the youths lamented their return to their former barbarism. He remained two years in St. Petersburg, without learning why he was recalled. In 1786, he was obliged to follow Prince Potemkin to Krement-schug; still he learnt nothing of his future destination, and remained till 1788, forgotten and almost in misery. In 1789, he accompanied the archbishop of Jekatri-noslaw to Jassi. In 1792, he was again called to St. Petersburg, and presented to the archbishop of Newsky. A monthly stipend of 100 roubles was settled on him, which the honest monk now expends in inactivity, and pining after his native land.

Kaket, north-west of Tellaw, is the most populated, and best secured against the inroads of the Lesghaes. The whole of this anterior range is finely wooded. Single houses are scattered along the banks of every stream, and extend westward by the river Alazohni through forests of fruit trees.

Ahmed

Ahmed is a very remarkable spot; it produces good wine; the meadows are delightful, and the inhabitants very opulent.

The village of Waschiri, above mentioned, stands at the parting of the roads; the left leads to inner Kaket, and the right along the mountain of Ziwi. It is of considerable height, flat on the summit, and covered with wood and fine grass. Sheep are fed there mostly during the summer.

I think my conjectures are not ill-founded, when I state, that Kifiki is part of *Sacafena*, unknown even in Strabo's time. In the ancient Georgian language, this province is styled Kambitschan and Kambatschowa, Moses of Chorene calls it Kambidza; and the modern Armenians, Komtschein. Strabo has justly denoted it *Cambyfena*. It is mountainous and devoid of water; but important with regard to the original division of the countries, as the boundary between Albania, Iberia, and Armenia. But its mountainous nature does not affect the fertility in the least, there being sufficient, and, in many places, superabundant, quantities of loam; which may be employed to great advantage in the fields, gardens, and vineyards, and require no watering. Yet only the hills in
the

the interior are inhabited, because the neighbouring Lesghaes, by their ravages, prevent all cultivation and population in the plain. They must penetrate secretly into inner Kikik; the ingress to large bands of them being impossible, as there are but *three* ways, which are naturally strong, and might be effectually defended.

The *first* is by Zminda Stepanida, (holy Stephana,) a village quite in ruins, except a handsome stone church. Thence a barren plain, five and twenty versts in width, extends as far as the Alafan. This plain can only be tilled in the neighbourhood of the village, as a strong guard would be requisite, at seed-time and harvest, to protect the husbandmen against the incursions of the Lesghaes.

The *second* road leads, N. E. of Kumbet, through a long and hilly valley, highly cultivated and well peopled. It was formerly protected by Fort Tschoet, which the Turks have destroyed, and afterwards rebuilt under the name of Top-Karagatsch. At present, there being no Turks, it lies desolate. The view from it is delightful; we observe with pleasure the scattered habitations of the Lesghaes, and forget our hatred towards them, as long as the eye is feasted with the majestic

jestic course of the Alasan. Very excellent cotton is grown in Kumbet, and the charming woods and gardens in the vicinity are well known.

The *third* road is by Tfiandghe, that opens to the south of the plain, and lies between the Yori and the Alasan. Here Kifili, a strong place, merits attention, which has the best land for tillage, vineyards, and gardens; and, on account of the particularly fine meadows, the breed of sheep and horses is very considerable. To the N. W. lies Anafgis-Kari, a rugged, steep glen, through which one may pass, but with great difficulty, from Karajoes to Kifik.

In the interior of the province stands Padonis-Ghew, a village surrounded with a thick wall, containing few inhabitants. The figs there have a peculiarly pleasant flavour. Segnak is also remarkable; for, as about twenty years ago, the Lesghaes made very extraordinary irruptions in Kaket and Kifik, the Zaar Herakleus had some of the mountains and valleys fortified, where the people might retreat and be more secure; it was, therefore, called *Segnak*, (place of refuge.) But it was labour in vain; for the fortified parts remain depopulated, though belonging to

to the Zaar. The Lesghaes have concluded a particular treaty with the inhabitants, by which the former are not allowed to sell a man after being stolen from Kifik or Kaket, if he is able to ransom himself with two *tumanns*; and though the prisoner should be of ever so high birth, yet that sum is never exceeded. But, if a Lesghae is taken, he must redeem himself with three Georgian slaves; and if he be unable, his life is sacrificed to his inadvertence, or he must seek some other means of liberating himself, without becoming burthen some to his family or to the tribe.

Observations on the Quality of the Soil, Air, Productions, Population, Manner of Living, Occupations, and Superstition of the Inhabitants of Georgia,

Kifik wants water; and the few springs there are being brackish, can only be drank by those who are accustomed to them. Besides, water is not always to be had, for the villages are often some versts distant from the springs; the natives are, therefore, obliged

obliged to alleviate their thirst with fruits or wine. The springs are conducted with great care into brick or wooden cisterns, from which the cattle are watered; and the overflow water is reserved for the mills. A miller places, in an inclined direction, over a wheel three feet broad, a pipe rather more than an inch thick, and about ten feet long. The water flowing from it is immediately caught for the next, and used in the same manner. But, as very little corn can be ground at a time, on account of the smallness of the mill-stones, the number of water-mills supplies the deficiency. We may reckon eighty in the valley, which is nearly fifteen miles long; and three and forty in Anafgis-Kari. After supplying the mills, and the inhabitants and their cattle, the water is so much diminished, that at the end of the valley only the traces of a stream can be perceived.

The air in Kifik is purer than in Kaket. The inhabitants appear healthy and ruddy-cheeked; and the brackish water increases their appetites. The two provinces contain about 18,000 Georgian-Christian families; the Mahommedans are few; and Jews are not tolerated, though they are very numer-

ous