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THE LIBYAN DESERT FROM NATIVE INFORMATION.*

By W. J. HARDING KING.

THE information upon which the accompanying map is based was collected in Egypt during the winters of 1909, 1910, 1911, and 1912. My principal informant was an Arab guide, a native of Surk, in Kufra, a member of the Senussi sect, who, in addition to having travelled extensively in the Sudan and the desert, had been for about six years some sort of tax collector among the Bedayat for the Sultan of Darfur.

In constructing the map three main routes, all closing up on to places more or less accurately fixed, were first plotted; the remaining information was then fitted into them or plotted from reliably fixed points taken from other maps.

The three main routes were as follows:—

ROUTE I.—FROM TOLAB (IN KUFRA OASIS).

Three days south to Bushara, which lies in a valley among a cluster of rocky hills one day's journey in diameter.

Four days south to Asara; the road follows the dune belt.

Six days south-south-west to Tikeru, the first day being due south following the dunes, and the other five some distance away from them. The Arabs consider Tikeru the northern limit of the Sudan. The water here is good, though salt is got from the neighbourhood.

Half day west to Erwulli, where there is a sweet-water well, though there is a good deal of salt in the neighbourhood.

Three days west to Guru. After the first day's journey the road enters the dunes, and Jebel Kusu, which lies six days west from Erwulli, is sighted.

Three days south-west to Unguri.

One day south-south-west to Ertha, where there is a Senussi Zawia.

One day west to Bidau.

ROUTE II.—FROM TIKERU.

Three days south to Wanjunga Kebir. There is another Wanjunga to the east, one day distant, known as Wanjunga Sogheir; both are inhabited. This district, which is sometimes called Wanjungat, is said to have a language of its own. It is governed by a very old sultan called Mayna. There is a Senussi Zawia here.

Three days south to Bedadi, a Bedayat well where there are a few date and dom palms.

Three days south to Funfun. A Bedayat well. The water is close to the surface of the ground.

One and a half days to Wayta Sogheir, a well.

One short day south to Wayta Kebir; this is a district with many wells and rich vegetation in the dry weather. A swamp in the rains. A very unhealthy part, and in consequence no one lives here except in the winter. To the north the country is all rock, but fertile to the west and south. Wayta Kebir lies four and a half days north of Um Shaloba (Mushaluba), which has recently been fixed by the French.

One day east to Um el Atham, a Bedayat well. There is a "high mountain" between here and Ershai lake.

* Map, p. 320.

One day south to Baki, a Bedayat well. The road has the mountain on the east at first, and then goes through a pass with rocky hills on both sides of it. Wadi Ershai lies half a day to the west.

One short day to el Guttara, which lies in a valley in which there is a very high rock called "Wuguf," which has water in pools on the top of it.

Two days east to Ain el Baytha, which lies between two very high hills in an open plain containing many "Sunt" trees.

Two days east to Bau, a Bedayat well (pool) on a rock, below which is a fertile valley which always has people in it. This is apparently one of the chief Bedayat centres in winter.

One and a half days south to Kufara, an open valley with plenty of water.

One day east to Mejoures, a wadi.

Three days and two hours to Howar Wadi. The first two hours the road lies in the Wadi Mejoures. The Howar wadi is a long valley, said by the Arabs to be an old watercourse, that runs into the Nile slightly north of Dongola. It is a clay valley with much water in winter, but dry in summer; in places it is as deep and wide as the Nile valley. It is the boundary between the Zaghawa and the Bedayat. Starting from the Nile and going west, the following are the names of the wadis that are said to run into it:—

1. Musbut from the south. This wadi has a place in it called Bohuraz, and probably the wadi is also sometimes called Wadi Bohuraz. The old maps show, evidently from native information, a Wadi Abu Haras, and since Abu and Bu are interchangeable forms, this is apparently Bu Haras or Bohuraz. The name in the old maps is applied both to a big east and west wadi, and also to a small tributary of it from the south. Possibly the common mistake has been made of assuming that the main stream and the tributary are identical.

2. Shegig from the south. A small wadi.

3. Faruwiah from the south.

4. Mejoures from the north.

5. Sfayah from the south.

Two days south-south-east to Faruwiah Wadi. The wadi belongs to the Tuar branch of the Zaghawa. It contains many wells where the natives stay in summer.

Two days south-east to Musbut. This is said to be on the continuation of the Derb El'arbain. (See also above.)

Two hours south to Bohuruz (see above). Belongs to the Tuar branch of the Zaghawa.

Two days south-east to Formah, a Zaghawa well.

Two days east to Kafut. Beyond this point the route has been surveyed.

ROUTE III.—FROM DONGOLA.

Five days south-west to Bu Senata.

Four days west-south-west to Medob.

Five days west to Bu Zibad.

Three days west to the Howash valley.

The position for Medob and the Howash valley from this route are much in error when compared with those fixed by actual survey. It is possible that my informant got the name of the Howash valley wrong. His description of it, however, is interesting. He said it contained ruins of burnt brick (? meroitic) and had wall paintings on its sides. Also that there were many statues (apparently

colossi) and pits in the ground containing ashes (? human remains) covered with stone slabs.

The information upon which the remainder of the map is constructed is embodied in the following list of places, which also gives any other miscellaneous data collected. My informants were all Arabs, so the names are those in use among the Beduin, and may differ from those used by the Tibbus, Bedayat, and other Sudanese. Many of the names apply both to wadis and to the principal wells or settlements in them.

The *Bedayat*, sing. *Ebday*.—The Bedayat country runs for seven days north from the Zaghawa, and from Wayta Kebir in the west to Merga in the east. It is mainly rock which weathers into “rusuf” (*i.e.* sand-grooved stone), with many low rocky hills (*garas*), and contains many fertile valleys below. As “rusuf” is a form of erosion that does not appear on a sandstone formation, but only in hard rock, it is possible that the limestone reappears in the south of the Libyan desert. In the wet season the rainfall forms pools and lies on the top of the rock, but sinks into the porous soil of the valleys below, unless they happen to have a clay bed. In the dry season most of the pools dry up, and water can only be found in the clay valleys. There are reported to be many rock inscriptions, stone-built ruins (“ders”), and “Roman” (*i.e.* artesian) wells like those in the western oases of Egypt.

The Bedayat have the following tribes:—

I. The Hurri, living round the Hirri lake.

II. The Kowora tribe (a very large one), under a sheikh called Kabir.

III. A tribe under a sheikh called Fatanu, having the watering-places of Bau, Baskari, and Ershai.

IV. A tribe under sheikh Jahr en Nebi Husain, position unknown.

Birket el Thiour.—A lake which dries up in summer. It is one day across each way. It lies three days north-west from Mushaluba, and three days south-east from Win.

Bir Bu Buzeerig.—A well near Bir Zirhen, two hours distant (? direction); it is “three hours to the dunes.”

Bir el Ghard.—A well giving very little water, below a sand-dune, two days west from Erbayana.

Bir Jedayid.—A well one day north-east from Kufra. All the firewood used in Kufra comes from near here.

Darfur.—There is said to be a small white lion and a very big hyena called a “murhayeen” in Darfur.

Demi (also called *Ed Demi*).—A Bedayat well three days east-north-east from Wanjunga (taken to be Wanjunga Sogheir), and three days south-east from Tikeru. There is no water on the road to Tikeru, but sand and scrub. There is red (rock) salt at Demi.

Dendura.—This is Rholf’s alternative name for Zerzura oasis (*q.v.*) It is said to lie seven days due west from Bu Mungar. A very large “sif,” *i.e.* longitudinal dune, which is almost impassable, is said to lie just to the east of it.

It may be under the lee of one of the three big longitudinal dunes mentioned under the heading of “Dunes,” or of a shorter “sif” that has not come down to the direct road between Dakhla and Kufra.

Dour.—Lies three days south-east from a place, name unknown (? Tikeru), that is twelve days south of Kufra. It lies to the north of Wadai. There is a Senussi Zawai here, and it is an important market.

Dunes.—The dunes run parallel to the Tolab-Tikeru road, to the east of it, the whole road being sand-free. All the dunes of the Libyan desert are said to run

from north to south in long lines. In the neighbourhood of Dakhla they were found to run 352° mag., and since they are parallel to the Tolab-Tikeru road, they appear in reality to converge slightly towards the north in such a way that if the lines of the dunes were continued they would eventually meet in about 41° N. lat. and 25° E. long. There is said to be a belt close to the west of Kebabo, in Kufra, about one day wide from east to west. Taiserbo, Buseima, and Erbayana all lie west of this belt. These dunes go to the Sudan, and die out in the vegetation of Wanjungat. Dunes extend from Siwa to Bir Battifal, and die out five days to the south of Siwa, and three hours south from Bir Zirhen. Half the distance from Dakhla to Kufra is over sand, and on the last day there are three (I have also heard, five) enormous "sifs," *i.e.* longitudinal belts of an A section, that are very difficult to cross. Practically the whole of these dunes are stopped by the plateau shown in the map of the *Geographical Journal* for February, 1912. A dune-belt runs down by Owana, and dies out about two days further to the south. A belt also runs past the hill by the "Egyptian oasis," and dies out near Bir Natrun; this belt starts in the Dakhla group. The dunes begin about two hours west of Erbayana, and go for three days—I have heard four—to the west. These dunes are easy to cross. The dunes begin about two hours west of Erwull, and run for about three days further west. This, though approximately the same width as the belt further north, is, perhaps, sand that is banked up by the Tibesti hills, for the belt to the west of Erbayana is said to die out before reaching the latitude of Bushara.

Duss.—A Zaghawa place where there are a few houses and a market on Monday, "if they have anything to sell." It lies two days north of Musbut, two days north from Furuwiah, two days north of Bohuruz.

"*Egyptian Oasis.*"—An Ebdai—a friend of one of my guides—told him he had gone with two "hagins," *i.e.* riding-camels, for five days due north from Merga, "following the dunes," and had then climbed a very high black hill in the sand, from which he had seen in the distance a very large oasis, containing a number of olive trees and much "terfa." He was too far off to see if it was inhabited, and was afraid to go in because he said it was an "Egyptian oasis," and he would be killed. Another Arab told me that a cousin of his was riding along the top of a scarp about eight days from Dakhla, when he saw below him a very large oasis, containing a number of olive trees, palms, and wells. It contained one very big ruined town which was uninhabited, and a few "ezbehs," *i.e.* hamlets, in which a few people seemed to be living. It is probably from this oasis that the migrant birds mentioned in the *Geographical Journal* for February, 1912, got the olives that were found in their crops.

Endon.—An east-and-west wadi, which is one of the Bedayat watering-places, three days south from Hurri lake, on the road to Ershai lake. Also described as a well.

Erbayana lies in the Wadi el Fardi.

Erbayana, Oasis west of.—Six days west of Erbayana there is an uninhabited oasis—name unknown—which contains many palms. The people from Kufra go there to get dates. The road from Erbayana for the first four days is over easy dunes and without population. The last two days there are many high rocky hills and wadis (apparently part of the Tibesti range). There is sometimes water in the wadis; it apparently lies in the wadi Ko'ur.

Ershai.—A lake surrounded by mountains; also a wadi which runs into it. The lake contains crocodiles, which seize camels when they come down to drink. The lake is about 3 miles across, of sweet water; it lies seven days south from Hurri lake, the road lying all over stone desert, dry in summer, but with plenty

of water in the rains. The lake is one long day north-east of el Guttara. There is a high mountain between Um el Atham and the lake. Half a day west from el Guttara lies the Ershai Wadi, where there is cultivation and always a number of Bedayat. It runs north and south. Baki lies half a day east from the Wadi, which is two days west of Ain el Baytha and four days west of Bau. After entering the Ershai Wadi from el Guttara the lake lies three days away to the north. The lake and wadi belong to the tribe under Fatanu.

Fardi, Wadi el.—Another name for the wadi Tibbu or Bahr el Ghazal. A wadi—said to be an old river course—running through Guru, Erbayana, Buseima, Taiserbo. It crosses the Jalo-Taiserbo road four days south of Jalo, and then is said to run through Jarabub, Siwa and Bahrein to the Nile. A large number of branch wadis are said to discharge into it from the Tibesti range. These wadis support a large population of Tibbus, but as these are among the chief followers of the Senussya, no definite information could be got of this district. Several wadis are shown, however, on other maps as starting in Tibesti and running in this direction.

There are a number of native reports of dried-up river-beds in various parts of this desert, but as some of them are known to be without foundation, information of this kind must be regarded with suspicion. The Wadi Howar (*q.v.*) is perhaps unreliable, but the Wadi el Fardi sounds more authentic, for wadis have already been reported to exist in all the points mentioned by my informant in its course. In the southern portions of the Tibesti range there must be a considerable rainfall; the ultimate destination of the water which falls on the northern and eastern sides is still unknown. It is possible, though hardly likely, that this water may break back through the range and discharge to the south. If not, it must flow somewhere between north and east. A plentiful supply of water is known to exist in the Kufra group of oases—more than the extremely scanty rainfall of the desert could possibly supply. In the western Sahara the large oasis groups are fed by wadis of this description; the oases in the Twat depression by the Wad Saura bringing down the water from the Atlas mountains, and the Wad Rirh group by the Wad Ighargha from the central Sahara. It seems quite possible that the Wadi el Fardi and the Kufra group of oases are their counterparts in the eastern desert. Possibly, too, the artesian water which irrigates the oases of Dakhla, Farafra, and Kharga comes from the same district.

Jebel Hareega forms the watershed between Wadi Howar and Wadi Howash. This district is ruled by a sultan called Abderrahman.

Hurri, the name of a Bedayat district three days east of Wanjunga, the road from which lies over sand and rock. It contains a lake of good water more than a gun-shot across from north to south and an hour's journey from east to west; there are settlements at the east and west ends of the lake, where there are a few trees, palms, and some cultivation. The two settlements quarrel. Kowora—"Kabir's town"—lies seven days south-south-west from Hurri, with scrub and "water from the stone" in winter on the road. Ershai lake lies seven days south from Hurri. This road is all over stone desert with a great deal of water after the rains, but dry at other times. Three days from Hurri on this road is Wadi Endon, an east-and-west wadi. One day further is a north-and-south wadi called Messu, which lies slightly east of the direct road. One day before reaching Ershai lake is the wadi Lifu running east and west. There is little water in Lifu.

Iddaila.—A road is said to run from here to Kufra; three days along this road there is said to be a big oasis. A road is said to also run west from Iddaila,

hidden for some distance under the dunes. This is said to go to a hattia, two days due west from Iddaila.

Jebel Namus.—Lies two days south-east from Terhuni. There is said to be grass and may be water here. My informant had not been there. Owana lies to the south-east. Jebel Namus seems to be J. en Nari under another name; the old road said to run from J. en Nari towards Egypt perhaps goes through Owana, which would be the "uninhabited oasis" of the old maps. An old road running from Dakhla towards Owana has been found (see *Geographical Journal*, February, 1912).

Jebel Kusu.—The Tibbu name for a mountain six days west from Erwulli. The Arab name is J. Yusu. It is said to be the biggest mountain in Tibesti. It is three days round and covered to the top with forests; two wadis meet to the south of it and form the wadi Tibbu, or Bahr el Ghazal.

Kittibiddi, one day due west from Unguri, in the wadi Tibbu.

Kowora.—An important Bedayat district under a sheikh called Kabir. After one day east from Kowora the desert is all "serir" (*i.e.* sand and pebbles). West of the "serir" it is all rock.

Merga.—The "Hattia of the Bedayat;" contains a small fresh-water lake fed by a spring (? artesian well), surrounded by palms with much scrub—"argoul" and "terfa"—beyond. It is not regularly inhabited, but the Bedayat come up there in the season to take the dates. It is about 10 miles across each way. It lies three to three and a half days south-west from Lagia, and two and a half days north-west from Bir Natrun. (This is probably the place that Miana calls Ptolemy's lake of the mud tortoises.) Two and a half days south-west from Merga there is a pass through a scarp leading to the valley of the Bedayat (*q.v.*).

Nether.—A water-hole on the top of a high rock in the Derb el Arbain, four days south-south-west of Bir Natrun.

No'on.—A small lake, with some cultivation, at the foot of J. No'on, one day west of J. Kutum; a road leads south from the lake, and another road north-east.

Owana.—A place halfway along a road from Merga to Kufra. It consists of a well, the landmark for which is two dom palms. After rain there is much green grass near here, on which wild asses and "bekker el wahash" (probably Barbary sheep) feed. North of the well is a cliff with a pass that takes two hours easy travelling to traverse, and on the top is a small high-level oasis, the landmark for which is two rocky hills that look like one from the north. The scarp runs north-north-west and south-east from the well. Owana is said to lie south-east from J. Namus. The hill "D" (see map, *Geographical Journal*, February, 1912) is reported to be visible from near here. There is no vegetation round the well itself. Possibly the scarp here joins up to J. Namus, and the scarp north of the "Egyptian oasis."

Owanat (plur. of *Owana*).—A name sometimes used for the whole district described under the heading "Owana."

Tehuni.—A place on the road between Bushara and Asara, where there is dried grass, two days north-west of J. Namus. To the east there is high ground that slightly diverts the dunes; it is called Jebel Terhuni.

Terkaz or *Terkasi*.—A hattia "like Kairowin," two or three days north-north-east of Demi. It is the last Bedayat well to the north, and apparently little frequented.

Valley of the Bedayat.—Two and a half days south-west from Merga. There is said to be a pass leading up on to a plateau which runs from north to south. Half a day further west over the plateau there is another pass leading down into a large depression, which is bounded by this scarp on the east, but open towards

the west, "like Kharga oasis." The valley stretches for two days from east to west, and about six days from north to south, the northern extremity being about due west from Legia. There are many settlements here where the Bedayat live in "tukls," i.e. huts of straw or brushwood. There are many dom palms, wells (? artesian), flowing into pools, and a great deal of scrub.

Win, four days west of Wayta Kebir, and three days north-west of Birket el Thiur in the Wadi Tibbu or Bahr el Ghazal.

Zerzurah.—It is doubtful whether any place of this name exists. "Zerzur" is Arabic for a small bird, so "Zerzura" would have some such meaning as "the place of small birds," and appears somewhat fantastic. *Zerzura* seems to be a generic name applied to any undiscovered or traditional oasis. In addition to *Dendura*—Rholf's *Zerzura*—I have heard it applied to the "Egyptian oasis," and also to some reported ruins west of Mut.

REVIEWS.

EUROPE.

PARTSCH'S SILESIA.

'Schlesien, eine Landeskunde für das deutsche Volk auf wissenschaftliche Grundlage,' bearbeitet von Dr. Joseph Partsch, 2 vols. Breslau: F. Hirt, 1896-1911. *Maps and Illustrations*. Price M.34.

THE publication of the third and last volume of the second part of Dr. Partsch's 'Schlesien' marks the completion of an important monograph which, whatever its defects, now makes Silesia one of the better-known provinces of the German Empire. The first volume of this great work appeared in 1896, and was reviewed in the *Geographical Journal*, vol. 7, 1896, p. 417. The three volumes of the second part were published in 1903, 1907, and 1911 respectively. The general plan of the monograph, as given in 1896, has been consistently followed by the author, who devotes the successive volumes of the second part to a detailed account of Lower, Middle and Upper Silesia. These sections of the province are further subdivided into natural regions for convenience of description, and the settlement and development of each from the point of view of natural and social conditions are discussed in a manner which exhibits the author's minute researches into the history of his country.

In his book on Central Europe published in English in 1905, Dr. Partsch enumerated the principal results of his geographical study of Silesia, and his various points may now be found elaborated in his *Schlesien*, Part II. In the first volume the author compares the early condition of Upper Silesia with that of Ireland, and describes the changes which the discovery of coal, iron, lead, and zinc, and the rise of industry have effected within the region. He gives interesting details of the great wealth of the Upper Silesian coalfield, which has contributed so largely to the development of the ore-mining and smelting industries in the adjoining territory and to the rapid growth in recent times of Königshutte, Bentzen, and a host of smaller towns. The main interests of the second volume, on Middle Silesia, lie in the author's description of the mountain industries of the west, where a small coalfield lies at the foot of the Eulengebirge; in his account of the sugar industry of the central plains; and in his story of Breslau, the capital of Silesia, the great market town of the middle ages. The third volume, on Lower Silesia, contains the author's more

THE LIBYAN DESERT

to illustrate a paper by
W. J. HARDING KING

Scale 1: 7,500,000 or 1 inch = 118.4 Stat Miles

Reference

Longitudinal dunes.....
Crescentic "
Previously fixed points to which Mr. Harding King has adjusted his
information are shown thus
Place-names from native report only are shown in brackets



<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>A</i>
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