

Persian form of the word Magian, was interpreted by "a man having no ears" *ماگوش*, and from this conundrum the popular imagination built up the story related to Herodotus by his dragoman. Many popular legends have a similar origin. In this case, what proves that the story was current in the East is that we find it in Justin (i. 9), who consulted other sources than Herodotus, as is shown by his giving the real name of the usurper, Cometes (Gaumata), not preserved by Herodotus. At a later date the name Magus (Magian) was explained in the same way and applied to those who did not follow the oral tradition, who therefore had *no ears* (Darmesteter, *The Zend-Avesta*, vol. ii. p. 4). We might perhaps find that the other errors and legends reported by Herodotus have a similar origin.

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#### 4. MODERN NAME OF "UR OF THE CHALDEES."

SIR,—In p. 430 of the April part of the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, l. 3, it is said that the "the modern name of the ancient city of Ur, the great city of the Sumerian race, is Mughir," and in note 2 of the same page, Prof. Sayce, "Hibbert Lectures for 1887, p. 42," is represented as having given this name as "Mugh-ir."

May I be allowed to suggest, from memory alone, and from the long bygone days when my friends, Mr. Loftus, Mr. Churchill, and Colonel Williams (afterwards General Sir W. Fenwick Williams, Bart., of Kars, G.C.B., etc.), first visited the cemeteries of that ancient city, and unearthed some of the asphalted jars in which the dead were inclosed for sepulture, and when Mr. Loftus, in his interesting work on his expedition, first gave publicly, in about 1848, the name of "Mugheir" (I think) to the place, he being no Arabic scholar, I read the word, from inference, as being derived from the Arabic name for *bitumen*, *asphalte*, and *pitch*, *qīr* (قير). I took it to be the passive participle of the second

conjugation from that root, the word Muqayyer (مُقَيَّر), and to mean : asphalted, set in or coated with pitch, the pitchy place, the place of bitumen.

Whether this Arabic name of Muqayyer, pronounced by nomade Arabs in such a way,—Mugayyer, for instance,—as to induce a scientific English traveller, ignorant of their language, to write it, French fashion, “Mugheir,” and whether my inference of “muqayyer” be correct or not, seems to me to need further investigation, before Mr. Loftus’s “Mugheir” can be securely rendered into Professor Sayce’s “Mugh-ir,” and translated by Mr. Hewitt as meaning “the city (ir) of the Mughs,” with the addition “The Semitic Ir is evidently the same word as the Akkadian Ur,” and the further inferences that conclude the paragraph.

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