

NOTE 1. ["The present road from Kermán to Kúbenán is to Zerend about 50 miles, to the Sár i Benán 15 miles, thence to Kúbenán 30 miles—total 95 miles. Marco Polo cannot have taken the direct road to Kúbenán, as it took him seven days to reach it. As he speaks of waterless deserts, he probably took a circuitous route to the east of the mountains, *viâ* Kúhpáyeh and the desert lying to the north of Khabis." (*Houtum-Schindler, l.c.* pp. 496-497.) (Cf. *Major Sykes*, ch. xxiii.)—H. C.]

NOTE 2.—This description of the Desert of Kermán, says Mr. Khanikoff, "is very correct. As the only place in the Desert of Lút where water is found is the dirty, salt, bitter, and green water of the rivulet called *Shor-Rúd* (the Salt River), we can have no doubt of the direction of Marco Polo's route from Kermán so far." Nevertheless I do not agree with Khanikoff that the route lay N.E. in the direction of Ambar and Kain, for a reason which will appear under the next chapter. I imagine the route to have been nearly due north from Kermán, in the direction of Tabbas or of Tún. And even such a route would, according to Khanikoff's own map, pass the *Shor-Rúd*, though at a higher point.

I extract a few lines from that gentleman's narrative: "In proportion as we got deeper into the desert, the soil became more and more arid; at daybreak I could still discover a few withered plants of *Caligonum* and *Salsola*, and not far from the same spot I saw a lark and another bird of a whitish colour, the last living things that we beheld in this dismal solitude. . . . The desert had now completely assumed the character of a land accursed, as the natives call it. Not the smallest blade of grass, no indication of animal life vivified the prospect; no sound but such as came from our own caravan broke the dreary silence of the void." (*Mém.* p. 176.)

[Major P. Molesworth Sykes (*Geog. Jour.* X. p. 578) writes: "At Tun, I was on the northern edge of the great Dash-i-Lut (Naked Desert), which lay between us and Kerman, and which had not been traversed, in this particular portion, since the illustrious Marco Polo crossed it, in the opposite direction, when travelling from Kerman to 'Tonocain' *viâ* Cobinan." Major Sykes (*Persia*, ch. iii.) seems to prove that geographers have, without sufficient grounds, divided the great desert of Persia into two regions, that to the north being termed Dasht-i-Kavir, and that further south the Dasht-i-Lut—and that Lut is the one name for the whole desert, Dash-i-Lut being almost a redundancy, and that *Kavir* (the arabic *Kafr*) is applied to every saline swamp. "This great desert stretches from a few miles out of Tehrán practically to the British frontier, a distance of about 700 miles."—H. C.]

NOTE 3.—I can have no doubt of the genuineness of this passage from Ramusio. Indeed some such passage is necessary; otherwise why distinguish between three days of desert and four days more of desert? The underground stream was probably a subterranean canal (called *Kanát* or *Kárez*), such as is common in Persia; often conducted from a great distance. Here it may have been a relic of abandoned cultivation. Khanikoff, on the road between Kermán and Yezd, not far west of that which I suppose Marco to be travelling, says: "At the fifteen inhabited spots marked upon the map, they have water which has been brought from a great distance, and at considerable cost, by means of subterranean galleries, to which you descend by large and deep wells. Although the water flows at some depth, its course is tracked upon the surface by a line of more abundant vegetation." (*Ib.* p. 200.) Elphinstone says he has heard of such subterranean conduits 36 miles in length. (I. 398.) Polybius speaks of them: "There is no sign of water on the surface; but there are many underground channels, and these supply tanks in the desert, that are known only to the initiated. . . . At the time when the Persians got the upper hand in Asia, they used to concede to such persons as brought spring-water to places previously destitute of irrigation, the usufruct for five generations. And Taurus being rife with springs, they incurred all the expense and trouble that was needed to form these underground channels to great distances, insomuch that in these days even the people who make use of the water don't know where the channels begin, or whence the water comes." (X. 28.)