

but in the brief style of our narrative we must expect such condensation.' [Polo, I., pp. 172-3.] Marco's great commentator was guided by equally true judgment when he recognized in the indications of this passage the same system of government that prevailed in the Oxus valleys until modern times. Under it the most of the hill tracts dependent from Badakhshan, including Ishkāshim and Wakhān, were ruled not direct by the Mir, but by relations of his or hereditary chiefs who held their districts on a feudal tenure. The twelve days' journey which Marco records between Badashan and 'Vokhan' are, I think, easily accounted for if it is assumed that the distance from capital to capital is meant; for twelve marches are still allowed for as the distance from Bahārak, the old Badakhshan capital on the Vardoj, to Kila Panja.

"That the latter was in Marco's days, as at present, the chief place of Wakhān is indicated also by his narrative of the next stage of his journey. 'And when you leave this little country, and ride three days north-east, always among mountains, you get to such a height that 'tis said to be the highest place in the world! And when you have got to this height you find [a great lake between two mountains, and out of it] a fine river running through a plain. . . . The plain is called PAMIER.' The bearing and descriptive details here given point clearly to the plain of the Great Pāmīr and Victoria Lake, its characteristic feature. About sixty-two miles are reckoned from Langar-kisht, the last village on the northern branch of the Āb-i-Panja and some six miles above Kila Panja, to Mazār-tapa where the plain of the Great Pāmīr may be said to begin, and this distance agrees remarkably well with the three marches mentioned by Marco.

"His description of Wakhān as 'a province of no great size, extending indeed no more than three days' journey in any direction' suggests that a portion of the valley must then have formed part of the chiefship of Ishkāshim or Zebak over which we may suppose 'the brother of the Prince of Badashan' to have ruled. Such fluctuations in the extent of Wakhān territory are remembered also in modern times. Thus Colonel Trotter, who visited Wakhān with a section of the Yarkand Mission in 1874, distinctly notes that 'Wakhān formerly contained three "sads" or hundreds, *i.e.*, districts, containing 100 houses each' (*viz.* Sad-i-Sar-hadd, Sad Sipang, Sad Khandūt). To these Sad Ishtragh, the tract extending from Dīgargand to Ishkāshim, is declared to have been added in recent times, having formerly been an independent principality. It only remains to note that Marco was right, too,