

which there are holes broken in here and there, perhaps undermined by the stream, at which you can get sight of it. It has an abundant supply, and travellers, worn with the hardships of the desert, here rest and refresh themselves and their beasts. You then enter another desert which extends for four days; it is very much like the former, except that you do see some wild asses. And at the termination of these four days of desert the kingdom of Kerman comes to an end, and you find another city which is called Cobinan." "When you depart from this city of Cobinan you find yourself again in a desert of surpassing aridity, which lasts for some eight days; here are neither fruits nor trees to be seen, and what water there is is bitter and bad, so that you have to carry both food and water. The cattle must needs drink the bad water, will they nil they, because of their great thirst. At the end of those eight days you arrive at a province which is called Tonocain. It has a good many towns and villages, and forms the extremity of Persia towards the north."

The three names are still found in all maps of Persia, and the only differences are that Kerman is not a kingdom but a province, Kuh-benan not a large town but a village, surrounded by mulberry trees and gardens, and the province Tun-o-Kain is now called Tun-ve-Tebbes. As regards the intervening desert tracts, Marco Polo's description is as correct now as in the year 1272. The row of holes or wells he mentions is, of course, an ordinary irrigation canal or kanat. The water in the wells is often as deleterious to the stomach now as then.

From the brief description three geographical points stand out, but which way Marco Polo followed between Kuh-benan and Tun-o-Kain is hard to say. Yule assumes that he made his entry into Tun-o-Kain through Tebbes. Lord Curzon supposes that he took the eastern route and crossed the northern part of the Dasht-i-Lut.¹

Sir Frederic Goldsmid expresses an opinion that Marco Polo's route from Kuh-benan to Tebbes and farther northwards "may well be supposed to take in something of *kavir*." He considers that Marco Polo's description of

¹ *Persia*, vol. ii. p. 248.