

myself crossed a part of the Bahabad desert where we did not once follow any of the roads used by caravans, and I found this country by no means one of the worst in Eastern Persia.

In the above exposition I believe that I have demonstrated that it is extremely probable that Marco Polo travelled, not through Naibend to Tun, but through Bahabad to Tebbes, and thence to Tun and Kain. His own description accords in all respects with the present aspect and peculiarities of the desert route in question. And the time of eight days he assigns to the journey between Kuh-benan and Tonocain renders it also probable that he came to the last-named province at Tebbes, even if he travelled somewhat faster than caravans are wont to do at the present day. It signifies little that he does not mention the name Tebbes; he gives only the name of the province, adding that it contains a great many towns and villages. One of these was Tebbes.

The next two geographical names we find in Marco Polo's book are Sapurgan and Balc, that is, the towns of Shibirkhan and Balkh in northern Afghanistan, but before he comes to Sapurgan he has travelled for six days through a country of "fine plains and beautiful valleys and pretty hillsides producing excellent grass-pasture, and abundance of fruits, and all other products." And here he finds "a goodly number of towns and villages, in which the people are worshippers of Mahomet. Sometimes also you meet with a tract of desert extending for 50 or 60 miles or somewhat less. . . . So after travelling six days, as I have told you, you come to a city called Sapurgan."<sup>1</sup>

From this it is apparent that the six days' journey of fine country were traversed immediately before Marco Polo reached Sapurgan. Sir Henry Yule says in a note: "Whether the true route be, as I suppose, by Nishapur and Meshid, or, as Khanikoff supposes, by Herat and Badghis, it is strange that no one of those famous cities is mentioned. And we feel constrained to assume that something has been misunderstood in the dictation, or has dropped out of it." Yule removes the six days of fine

<sup>1</sup> Yule's *Marco Polo*, p. 155.