

occurs in the combination Mian-desht, one of the stations on the Meshed road, it is quite appropriate, signifying simply "in the middle of the plain."

The Persian word *shur*, which means salt, is never used here for desert, but in Central Asia is synonymous with kevir. In Persia it occurs only in combination with a substantive, as, for instance, Ab-i-shur, Rudkhaneh-i-shur, Shur-ab, Shur-gez, etc. It is, then, in Persia an adjective, but in Central Asia a substantive. Polak mentions the word *shurtsar* for salt desert, and makes it synonymous with kevir.¹

Sand is called *rig* in Persian, and wherever this word occurs on the map one may be sure that there are belts of dunes. *Rigistan* = place of sand; *Rig-i-jin* = sand desert of spirits; *Rigan* = sandhills.

Most common of all are the terms *kevir* and *lut*, but on the etymology of these words opinions differ. Morier speaks of the Darya-i-kebir, "the great sea," which St. John corrects to "lake of salt mud." According to him, *kuweer* means "salt swamp." Richardson translates the word *caveer* by "salt ground where nothing grows." Fraser gives the meaning "salt desert, whether wet or dry."

Lord Curzon refers to Consul-General Houtum-Schindler's various attempts to find a plausible derivation. Schindler says that kevir is a salt swamp or a salt desert. Some authors have derived the word from the Persian *gâv*, hollow or depression, synonymous with *gôd* or *gôdal*, but hollows may be fruitful, while a kevir is always a salt desert entirely devoid of vegetation. "The origin of the word Kavîr is perhaps the Arabic *Ḳafr*, *Ḳafreh* (pl. *Ḳufûr*), which is the ordinary appellation for the deserts of Arabia and Africa. The word is seldom met with in older authors."²

Major Sykes supposes that the word comes from the Arabic *kafr*, and says that this word is still used unchanged in certain parts of Persia to denote desert. This circumstance is just what makes this derivation improbable in my

¹ *Persien, das Land und seine Bewohner*, vol. ii. p. 365.

² *Proceedings of the Roy. Geogr. Soc.* vol. x. (1888), p. 628, note.