

Arab geographers and later writers clearly show, has to be looked for at some considerable distance from the present town of Mīnāb. The fort above the latter with its large ruined structures may, in view of its strong natural position, be safely assumed to mark Mīnāb town as the place whence the district from medieval down to comparatively modern times was administered. But there is no reason to assume that it was ever a large town. Iṣṭakhrī refers to Hormuz as a centre for the trade of Kermān and as a marketing-place, but distinctly mentions that 'there were not many dwellings there. The houses of the traders lie in the surrounding district: up to a distance of two *farsakhs* they are scattered in the villages.'⁷ Muqaddasī in his concise notice of the town states that 'Hurmūz lies a *farsakh* from the sea', and elsewhere indicates two postal stages as the distance from Hurmūz to the harbour.⁸

On my arrival at Mīnāb I had learned through information transmitted by the Consulate at Bandar Abbās that telegraphic instructions had been received there from the Governor-General of the Coast Province and sent on to the local officials at Mīnāb and elsewhere to afford me assistance in my work. It was probably in consequence of this helpful attitude at head-quarters that my inquiries about remains which might lead towards a safe location of the old harbour did not fail to secure useful guidance. The uniformly expressed local belief was that Shāh-bandar near Tiāb, where boats of any draught now unload at the head of a creek some 13 miles almost due west of Mīnāb town, did not represent the old harbour, and that the latter was marked by certain remains to be seen to the south-west at no great distance from a point where the main terminal channel of the river approaches the sea. Boats of light draught would still come up this channel for some distance, thus reaching somewhat nearer to Mīnāb. But, owing to the ground here being more liable to inundation after rain, Tiāb hamlet was said to be preferred as a landing-place.

In order to test this information, I moved on December 1st from Mīnāb to the south. For about 8 miles our way led by winding lanes past a continuous stretch of orchards and palm-groves watered by canals from the river. Its wide stony bed, dry at this season, was kept by us so far close on our right. Then, where it took a bend westwards we left it, and continuing south for another two miles and a half beyond the village of Bilēdī, passed across a wide belt of scrubby waste evidently liable to inundation at times of flood. Beyond a narrow stretch of date-palm groves fringing this dry marsh bed, and belonging to the hamlet of Gurāzū,

⁷ See Schwarz, *Iran im Mittelalter*, p. 243.

⁸ Schwarz, *ibid.*, quoting Muqaddasī, 473, 9, rightly points out that this estimate seems exaggerated, unless it were meant for the distance from the first settlements travellers would reach.

It is possible that here, as in Marco Polo's account, the distance is meant between the harbour and the entrance into the district if reached at Shamīl from the Kermān side; cf. above, p. 176.