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A Sixth Journey in Persia (Continued)

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kindly and courteous manner in which you have listened to my address, and I desire especially to thank those gentlemen who have joined in the discussion. I may say that there are many points which they have raised with which I am in perfect agreement. The ideas suggested require to be developed and worked out, but it would have been utterly impossible for me (even if I had the ability to deal with those various branches) to give sufficient attention to such questions in one evening and in one paper. There is room, I think, for many papers of a more scientific character than the one I have attempted to prepare, to be written and read, before this subject can be adequately dealt with. I think one speaker rather misunderstood my ploughing scene slide. I merely used that slide as pictorially typical of the work that the white man is doing in Africa, viz. teaching civilization to the black man, and not as suggesting that cotton should be cultivated by white labour. I am quite well aware that cotton growing in Africa or anywhere else must be done by the natives themselves; but such natives must be taught how to do that work in the best way, and that can only come from European example and guidance. With regard to Indian cottons, I may say it is well known that cotton is grown in large quantities already in India, but it has been found, I believe, that the only portion of that country where they have so far been able to satisfactorily grow the long-stapled fibre is in the Scind district. Indian cotton is a short-stapled variety of very little use in Lancashire. When the native growers of India are induced to turn their attention to a different kind of seed, which produces a longer-stapled cotton, they get a much smaller crop, and it will take a long time to persuade the average native cotton grower to give up quantity for quality. This is, however, a very large and involved question.

A SIXTH JOURNEY IN PERSIA.*

By Major SYKES.

We quitted Astrábád, bound for Shahrud and Meshed, in gloomy weather, and it seemed probable that the famous Kuzluk pass might cause us some delay. Having ridden to its foot through the last lovely forest we were to see, we began a steep, winding ascent, during the course of which we were gladdened by the sight of holly bushes full of berries, boughs of which we took home for Christmas. After toiling uphill for nearly two hours we suddenly came upon a ruined caravanserai with a wooden house, and this, to our surprise, was the stage of Kuzluk, situated less than half-way up the pass. The night was fine and not very cold; but the next march was extremely trying for man and beast. The ascent continued for another two hours, and after a total climb of perhaps 7 miles from the foot of the pass, during which we had ascended some 4000 feet, we reached the crest, which is known as the Gardan-i-Aliábád, from a small caravanserai near the summit. The altitude was 7600 feet, and the pass, so far as my experience goes, has the longest ascent of any in Persia. The superb Shah Kuh, which dominates Shahrud, rose grandly to the south, and we descended to a frozen valley across a neck termed "Gardan-i-Jilang-Bilang."

* Continued from p. 19.

Finally, in intense cold, we crossed a second pass termed the "Gardan-i-Wajmanu," at 8600 feet, and descended to Tâsh, where again we found quarters in the telegraph office, and enjoyed a well-earned rest. This march worked out at 25 miles, and during it we had crossed the backbone of the great range which runs down from the Pamirs, across the heart of Asia to historical Ararat. Tâsh forms part of the Astrâbâd province and is the summer retreat of the Governor and Russian Consul. It was also the first stage at which, after twenty-one days of unsuitable food for the transport, barley, dried lucerne, and straw were all procurable in abundance. It appears that lucerne does not grow in the Astrâbâd district.*

From Tâsh a downhill march brought us to within sight of Shahrud ; but we turned off to the east of the road to visit Bostâm, formerly the chief town of the district of Kumis ; it has, however, now yielded its position to Shahrud. We anticipated a visit to its ancient buildings with keen interest ; but, in Persia, it is uncertain whether the custodians of a shrine will welcome the European or not ; however, in this case, possibly because the saint was a Sunni, we were shown everything. On passing through the chains which mark the sanctuary, we first examined the tomb of Amir Azam Khan, brother of Amir Shir Ali, Barakzai, who had died, some forty years ago, on his way to Tehran, where he hoped to secure the support of the then Shah Nasir-u-Din. But the fame of this shrine is due to the fact that in it lie the bones of the great Sufi, *Shaykh* Abu Yazid, more generally known as Bayazid Bistâmi, who died in A.H. 260 (874). The *Shaykh* is buried in the open, he having signified his wishes to this effect by means of a dream to the custodian of his shrine when a dome was erected ; the tombstone is of a white marble and elaborately carved. His memory is still kept green in India, in proof of which a sowar of the Meshed escort came to me that night in a state of great excitement and begged to be allowed to visit the shrine, as the *Shaykh* was the founder of the sect to which he belonged.

The shaking minaret was next inspected, and two men shook it, with the result that a brick set on edge fell down. It is about 40 feet high, composed of brickwork, and decorated with geometrical patterns, and two belts of Kufic inscription. The shrine with its little court and the minaret were erected by Muhammad Khudabanda, a descendant of Hulagu Khan, at the beginning of the fourteenth century.

The friendly *Shaykh* Ahmad, who claims descent from the Saint, himself took us to see what is termed the Kashâna, in which, according to the legend, an "unknown sultan" lies buried. This mosque is a polygonal tower constructed of bricks with each course throwing out a salient angle. Its height was about 40 feet, and its circumference rather more : it is surmounted by a dome from which the tiles have fallen. The term Kashâna which signifies a "hall," is somewhat difficult to explain ; but Fraser, who

* *Vide* paper by General Beresford Lovett in the *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, vol. 5, No. 2, for February, 1883.

was allowed to examine the interior, read an inscription, according to which the mosque had been built in A.H. 700 (1301) by order of Sultan Khan Kasan. This is undoubtedly a different form of Ghazan Khan, the correspondent of Edward I. of England, and is the probable explanation of the name "Kashana."

From Bostám to the modern town of Shahrud is about 4 miles, and upon completing the stage we found our camp pitched at some distance from the town, which is infested by the dangerous *Argas Persicus*, the bite of which undoubtedly causes fever. It is curious to learn that this bug is believed on good authority to still exist in Canterbury cathedral, to serve as a memento of mediæval travel! Shahrud is thriving and increasing in importance, as it is the collecting centre for cotton and other exports, not only from the vicinity, but even from distant Kermañ and Yezd. The town, however, appears to be dilapidated and ruinous, and its life now centres mainly in a new quarter which has been built outside the Meshed gate.

Shahrud is the halfway stage between Tehran and Meshed, and there was comparative animation as we hastened eastward on our return journey. The first stages were famous as the "Marches of Terror," so graphically described by many travellers; indeed, the numerous low ranges and broken ground formed ideal haunts for Turkoman to lie in wait, of which, even since my journey, they have taken advantage. The caravanserais, notably that at Miándasht, are very fine, containing accommodation for hundreds of wayfarers, and it is difficult to overestimate their value when travelling in the winter. Between Miándasht and Abbásábád we found numerous heaps of slag, when riding off the track, in which connection Fraser mentions the existence of a copper-mine which had been worked as late as the reign of Nadir Sháh. At Abbásábád, the inhabitants are descended from Georgians posted there by the great Sefavi monarch; they not only pay no revenue, but receive allowances from the Persian Government. At night, there was a wedding in the village, and a procession with torches and lamps fetched the bridegroom, the whole party dancing with great vigour to the sound of horns and drums. Later, the same procession fetched the bride, who, covered with a white shawl or *chaddar*, held on to her husband, the whole party dancing as if possessed.

From the stage of Mázínán, we rode 10 miles south-east to visit the ruins of a town termed Badghus, which I have been unable to identify.* Thence we went on to our stage at Mihr and, after changing horses, rode north up the valley to examine the ruins of Pá Kala, distant some 5 miles. This fort is small, and is built on a mound composed of conglomerate; and the only traces visible consisted of a wall of uncoursed stones and fragments of mediæval pottery. In the next valley to the east are said to be the ruins of a town termed Shuru. Mihr is undoubtedly a

* Coins of the fourteenth century of our era and metal ornaments were found there.

centre of the greatest importance to Zoroastrians as it is the site of the third sacred fire, known as *Atur Burzhin Mitro*, or "The Fire of the Labouring Classes." A few miles further east, too, is Rivand, the village which gave the name to Mount Raivant, the general nomenclature for the range on which the fire temple was situated. It is possible that a week spent in examining these ancient sites, which are locally considered to have been built by Gabrs or "infidels," might result in interesting discoveries, as the whole district is connected with the birth of Zoroastrianism, Miândasht, to give a single instance, being the site of the final victory of the Khorasanis (who, under their King Gushtasp, had embraced Zoroaster's tenets) over the hated Turanians.

To resume, a long march of 32 miles brought us to Sabzawar, the only object of interest on the road being a fine minaret, which is all that is left of Khusrugird the former capital. Sabzawar struck me as a rising town, both from the size of its bazaars, and the activity which reigns there. Like Shahrud and, in a lesser degree, Nishapur, the output of cotton is steadily increasing, and as the export trade in cotton, wool, dried fruits, and other commodities now exceeds the imports from Russia, these towns are certainly more prosperous than at any period since the Mongol cataclysm.

As Christmas was very near, we only halted the night, and pressed on to Nishapur, which is referred to in detail in the second part of this paper.

Three stages were all that remained for us to accomplish, and, upon leaving Nishapur, we rode to Kadamgâh, where a shrine was built by Shah Abbas to cover the footprint of the *Imam* Riza. This shrine is surrounded by fine stone pines, and is being repaired by the custodian, who apparently makes a considerable profit from the pious task.

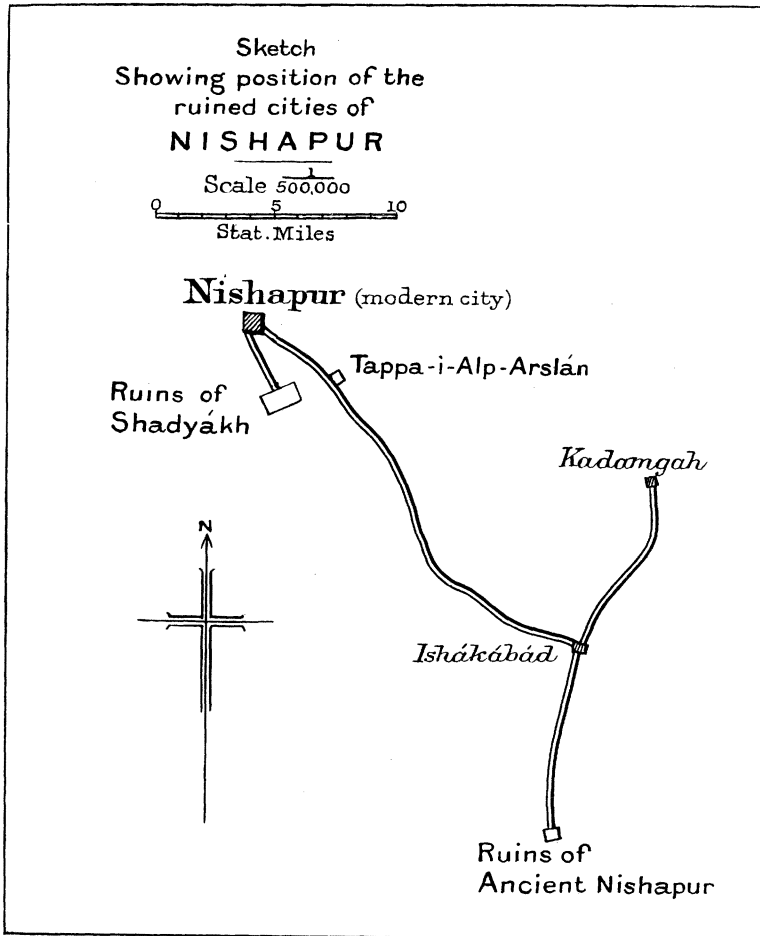
To conclude, the last two stages * lay across snow, and, on December 22, we reached Meshed, and thus concluded a most interesting tour of 880 miles round ancient Parthia.

The objects of the second tour, which I am about to describe, were twofold. In the first place, I had been informed on good Persian authority that the ruins of a city of Nishapur, older than those situated 3 or 4 miles from the modern site lay somewhere to the south-east of the present city. As the existence of an ancient Nishapur has never been discovered by previous travellers, and as the importance of that historical capital was so great, it seemed most desirable to examine this question in the light of this information. My second object was to visit the district of Turshiz, and to examine, among other sites, what were said to be the ruins of the

* A few miles west of Sharifabad, the last stage to Meshed, are situated the ruins of Pawajân; the range, too, bears the same name. It is of interest to note that this is probably the Ojajan of Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo, where the ambassadors received the messengers and invitation of Shah Rukh. (*Vide* Hakluyt Society, 'Embassy to the Court of Timour,' edited by Sir Clements Markham.)

city of Turshiz, which succumbed to the might of Tamerlane, and has, since that date, lain desolate.

I was fortunate enough to have Mr. Rennie, first Secretary of the Legation, as a fellow-traveller as far as Nishapur, and, leaving Meshed on November 4, 1909, we marched to Jághark. That lovely hill valley was even more beautiful than in the summer, as the autumnal tints were gorgeous with their rich colouring enhanced by the deep blue of the Persian



sky. The pass over the main range was crossed in fine weather, and, from an elevation of 9400 feet, we looked back on to the valley of the Kashaf Rud, and clearly descried the golden dome, which appeared to emit flashes. The descent to the important village of Darrud was particularly trying, and one mule fell down the hillside and was killed.

Darrud is situated at a point where the hills open out, and can boast of some wonderful *chinar* or oriental planes. A few miles below it, we

struck the Meshed-Nishapur postal route at Kadamgāh, which I had visited when returning from Astrabad on the previous year. We crossed the main route, and camped some 8 miles to the south of it, at Ishākābād, as this village was the nearest to the ancient site we hoped to find on the following day.

Upon riding towards our goal, we entered a *chaman*, or meadow, and crossed an almost dry river flowing west, termed the Kal-i-Shur or Salt river. Here we found the ruins of a stone bridge, which fact is of some importance. Passing Janatābād, a hamlet, situated on the southern edge of the *chaman*, we rose very slightly, and traversing a bare, gravelly plain, reached the site at some 7 miles from Ishākābād.

What we saw was a ruined wall which had almost sunk down level with the ground ; but which, in the shape of a low bank some 6 feet high, showed clearly enough that it had once enclosed an area of 310 yards from north-east to south-west by 260 yards from north-west to south-east. At the northern angle, and some 60 yards from it, were the ruins of the fort raised on a mound some 20 feet high, on which were the traces of a wall measuring 60 yards square. To the south-west of the city, and a quarter of a mile distant was a second even lower mound, of which only the north-east side, measuring 720 yards, with faint traces of other walls at right angles, was visible, everything else having been reabsorbed into the soil. Fragments of reddish and of blue glazed pottery, broken bricks, a red bead and a solitary coin were all that was found on the site first described. On the second site, nothing was found.

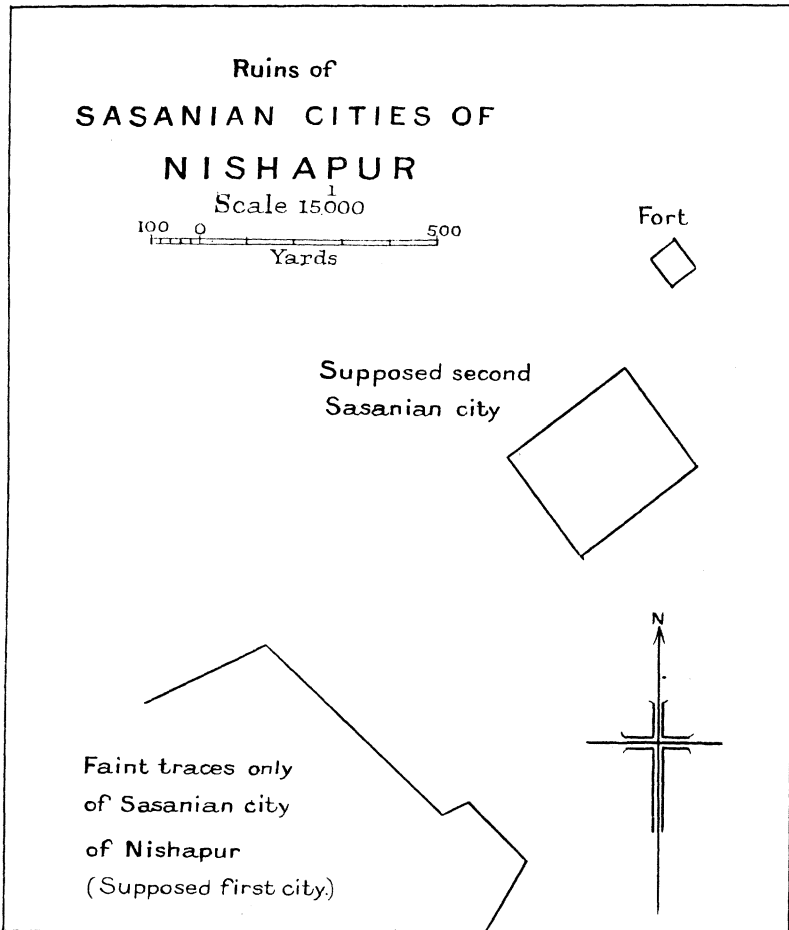
I now propose to turn to what can be gleaned from other sources. Nishapur is undoubtedly derived from the old Persian Niv-Shahpur, signifying "the good deed of Shahpur," and according to the Arab writers, it was founded by Shapur I, son of the founder of the Sasanian dynasty, who held the viceroyalty of Khorāsān under his father. After Shapur's death the city, which was badly situated, from the point of view of agriculture, fell into ruins ; and was rebuilt about a century later by Shapur II. It is mentioned that Nishapur was small, and of no great importance at that period.

Taking, then, the above facts into consideration, and the fact that the walls of various cities, such as Tus, deserted six or more centuries ago, are still standing, whereas here we simply have the lowest of mounds ; taking also the unanimous local opinion on the subject into consideration, I would suggest that it is probable that the ruins we discovered are those of the first and second Sasanian cities of Nishapur.

To resume, a short march brought us to Nishapur, where we were able to examine the mediæval Arab cities, which are situated some 3 or 4 miles to the south-south-east of modern Nishapur.

In the early days of Moslem rule, Nishapur was termed Naysabur, and in the third (ninth) century it became, under the Tahiri dynasty, the capital of Khorāsān, which then included Merv, Balkh, and Herat, its eastern limits being the river Oxus. In the fourth (tenth) century it

was one of the great cities of Asia, measuring a league every way. It was also famous for its commerce, cotton and silk, both raw and manufactured, forming its chief exports. It continued to be the capital of the "Great Seljuks," Tughril Beg and Alp Arslan; the memory of the latter is perpetuated by the fort in the older Arab city, termed Tappa-i-Alp Arslan or the "Mound of Alp Arslan."



It was during the zenith of its prosperity that Omar Khayyam lived and died in Nishapur; and his tomb was pointed out in a shrine sacred to Mohamed Mahruk, which was built some four centuries after his death by the great Sefavi monarch. Later on, in the twelfth century, the calamities of Nishapur commenced with an earthquake, followed by massacres inflicted by the Ghazz tribe, when the city was devastated. The surviving inhabitants removed to the neighbouring suburb of Shadyakh,

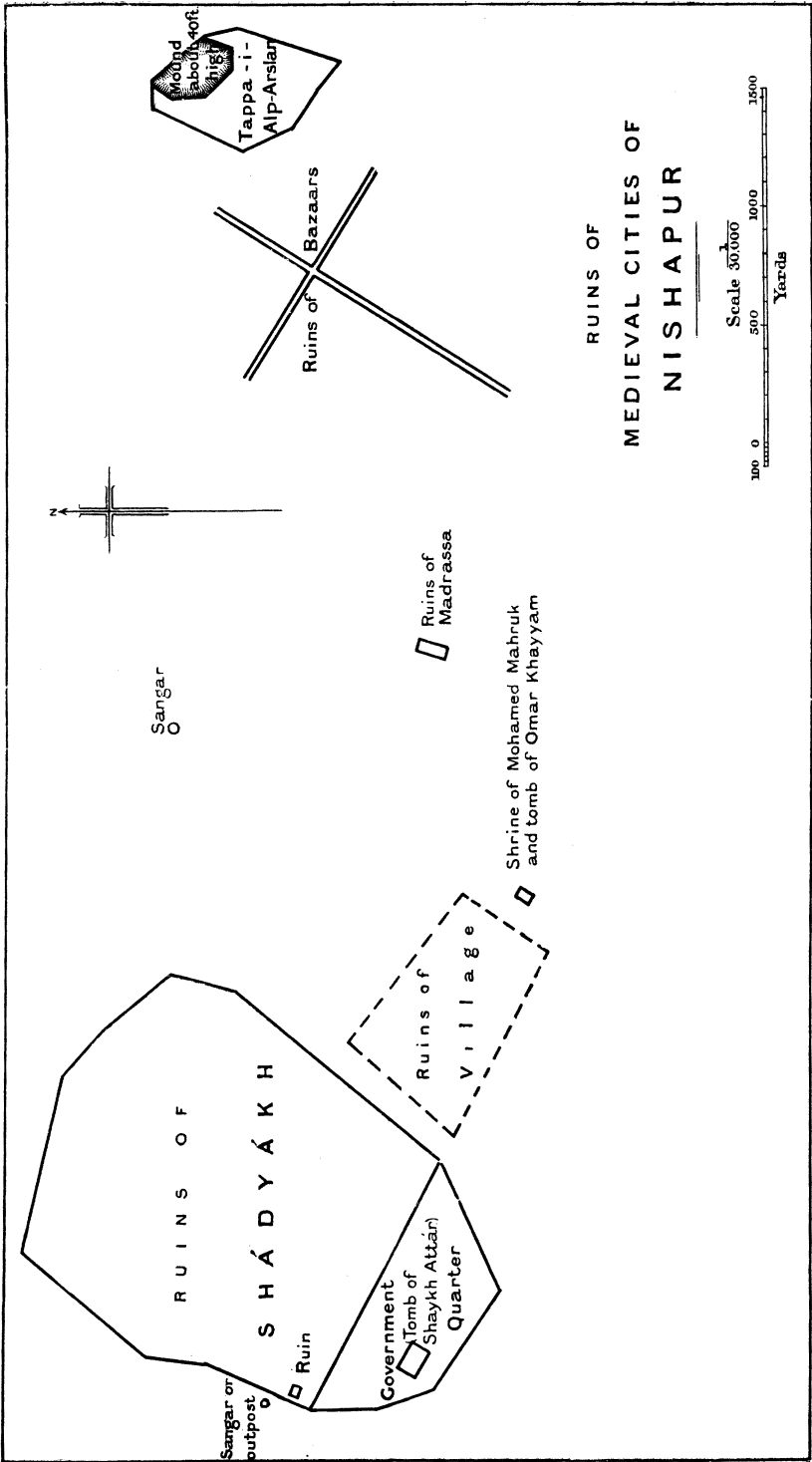
a short distance to the west ; and a wall was built round what now became the capital, which is still extant, with an interior wall dividing off the Government quarter. On the west side, and also the east, are the ruins of two *sangars* or outworks. The tomb of *Shaykh* Attar, the great mystic poet, whose didactic poem the *Pand Nama* is, I understand, a text-book in Mohamedan schools in India, lies in the Government quarter of Shadyakh ; it has recently been repaired by His Highness the *Nayir-u-Dola*.

The most appalling calamity now befel Shadyakh when, in A.H. 618 (1221), it was stormed and sacked by the Mongols who, according to the Persian historians, drove out the citizens in batches and slaughtered them like sheep, the only men spared being forty skilled artificers who were enslaved. The irrigation channels were dammed up and then let loose upon the devoted city ; and the force of the water swept away all the buildings, after which the site was sown with barley, as, indeed, it is to-day.

It is difficult to be sure where the next city of Nishapur, which was described by Ibn Batutah in the eighth (fourteenth) century, stood. Possibly, as the interior of Shadyakh contains no ruins whatever, the site of the older city was again used ; and this is rendered probable by the fact that it is possible to trace the lines of an old bazaar, a short distance to the west of the Tappa-i-Alp Arslan ; there are also the ruins of a *madressa*, a little further to the west of the ruined bazaar. Nature, however, in the form of earthquakes, vied with the violence of man in destroying this famous city, and now there remain but a few mounds in a cultivated area to mark it ; and the site of modern Nishapur is 3 or 4 miles to the north-north-west of Shadyakh.

To summarize, 24 miles to the south-east of modern Nishapur sites of what are, I believe, two Sasanian cities were discovered by us. Between these and the modern city, some 4 miles south-south-east of the latter, lie the ruins of Nishapur, the famous city of mediæval times. In close juxtaposition is Shadyakh, founded as a camp by the Tahiris ; but afterwards promoted to be the capital, when, owing to earthquakes, the older site was abandoned. It was Shadyakh which was sacked by the Mongols and literally levelled to the ground. The later city probably occupied a portion of the great city, and the modern city is situated some 4 miles to the north-north-west. To conclude, as this question has never, so far as I am aware, been gone into before, its solution is, I venture to think, of some historical importance.

Leaving Nishapur for the district of Turshiz, the track skirted the ancient city and ran south through a very rich strip of country ; and indeed the Baluk-i-Ishakabad, which should not be confused with Ishakabad, is famous for its fertility. Some 11 miles after starting, we crossed the same salt river which we had already struck further up, near Sasanian Nishapur ; and, beyond it, stretched a barren salt plain to Salari, where the water was brackish.



The following day we marched south-south-east to Targhi, situated on another salt stream. From this salt district we moved south-west to Katkan, an important village of 400 houses, situated on the skirt of the range at an elevation of 6200 feet. It is said that, for the last two years the cold has ruined the fruit crops. The inhabitants are Karai, and the village forms part of the Turbat district.

My object in visiting Katkan, apart from the fact that the district was a blank on the map, was to examine a shrine, in which it was alleged that the famous *Nizam-ul-Mulk*, the Vizier of Malik Shah, was buried. Upon entering the village, where we, as being possibly the first Europeans seen by its inhabitants, not unnaturally excited considerable curiosity, we were taken to a partially ruined brick building, consisting of a central arch with two *gushvar* or side chapels, and were informed that the *Nizam-ul-Mulk* was buried in the eastern chapel. The dome of this building showed traces of rich mosaics with florid designs in white, dark blue, and light blue, which unmistakably belonged to the Sefavi period. The interior, too, with remains of tiles, rich stencil and the Yasin chapter of the Koran, moulded in plaster letters, closely resembled the decoration of the shrine of Khoja Rabi near Meshed. In the centre was the tombstone, a monolith of black stone some 5 feet in height, with the inscription perfectly legible. It recorded the name of *Shaykh* Muiz-u-Din, *Nizam-ul-Mulk*, son of *Shaykh* Shahab-u-Din; and the date was A.H. 938 (1532). This proved that the shrine was not, as reputed, the resting-place of the great vizier; and also that it was a monument of the Sefavi period.

From Katkan, we marched north-west for two stages, as there is no pass across the Kuh-i-Surkh range; and the second day we camped opposite the Dahána-i-Sahn, which is on the direct Nishapur-Turshiz route. A long march took us across this unexplored range, and we camped at Ráush (more correctly Ribush), the capital of the district of Kuh-i-Surkh. This upland valley—the elevation of Ráush is 5300 feet—is well watered, and a stream runs down to the plain of Turshiz. An ancient dam is said to be in existence a few miles below, which only requires a small expenditure to double the water-supply.

A particularly trying march across yet another range brought us to Turshiz (3400 feet), where we halted for a day: and I now propose to give a short sketch of the very interesting district which I had entered and which I examined in some detail. The earliest mention of Turshiz is in connection with the legend, to which some historical value may be assigned, that it was the scene of the activities of Zoroaster; this will be dealt with later on.

In mediæval times, Turshiz was known as Pusht, or Busht-al-Arab, and formed the north-west district of the province of Kuhistan, of which the two chief towns were Turshiz (now Firuzabad) and Kunder, which is still an important centre. In the sixth (twelfth) century, the district was seized by the Ismailis, better known to us as the Assassins; but, a century later,

Hulagu Khan destroyed their power. Yet another century passed when Tamerlane appeared and sacked the ancient capital which has, since that date, lain desolate.

The present town was founded by Abdul Ali Khan, governor of Herat under Nadir Shah and completed by his son Mustafa Kuli Khan, a contemporary and rival of Ishak Khan of Turbat. It is walled and contains a population of 7000 to 8000 inhabitants; but suffered considerably during the earthquake of 1903, which fortunately affected only a small area. The town is now known as Turshiz. Adjoining it, is a village now termed Sultania with gardens and a ruined shrine to *Sayyid* Hamza Riza, brother of the *Imam* Riza, which can boast of some fine firs and cypresses. In the latest map, Turshiz does not appear as the name of a town; but this is no longer correct; and Sultanabad, which is shown, is now termed Sultania.

Upon resuming the tour, we rode west across a level and fertile plain to Sar-i-Hauzak. There we quitted the main track and turned north some 4 miles to the foot of the black inhospitable-looking range, up which runs a steep ravine. This was closed by two walls of uncoursed stones, terminating in towers. Shortly above this defence, the valley bifurcates and the track winds up the western side, which, some distance up, was also built across by a similar wall. After a steep climb, passing the mouth of what was said to be a subterranean tunnel running to Nishapur, the main fort erected on two terraces of artificially levelled ground between the two valleys, was reached. The ground was held up by walls of uncoursed stones; and there were thousands of broken bricks and fragments of blue and yellow pottery lying about. The bricks of a reddish colour were 10 by 10 by 3 inches, which is unusually large. A track led down to the spring at the top of the eastern valley; on the way we saw a long narrow groove cut in the rock. There were numerous other towers on the hills and, generally speaking, the position was most carefully fortified. This ancient site is known as Kala Atish Gah, or "Firetemple Fort;" and legend assigns it to the Zoroastrians, whose connection with Turshiz is very intimate as, after the conquest of Persia by the Arabs, the faithful remnant lived in Kuhistan, and it was from this province that the ancestors of the Parsis of India emigrated to Surat, *viâ* Hormuz.

After examining this ancient site we returned to the main track, passing on our way some nomad tents inhabited by Tahiri Arabs. These men are the descendants of the Tahiri dynasty which ruled Khorásán in the third (ninth) century, and, as mentioned with reference to Nishapur, made that city the capital of Khorásán. I have been informed on good authority that old *Kanat* pipes are frequently found stamped with their name.

Khalilábád, 12 miles from Turshiz, is a small but very prosperous town. Beyond it lay numerous villages, and the river which flows down from Kuh-i-Surkh was crossed at Sartaráz or, "The top of the division," where the water is divided into six channels.

The western portion of Turshiz which we now entered, is termed Páin

Viláyat or Netherland ; and the first village of Kishmar, at 26 miles, is built round what is termed the Minar-i-Kishmar. This striking edifice resembles the Kashana at Bostám, the Gunbad-i-Kábus and the Mil-i-Radkán. Built on uncoursed stone foundations, some feet above the ground are 12 brick panels, each 12 feet square, the building being a duodecagon outside. Above are salient angles, and half columns of brick. The building is surrounded by a conical top. Blue tiles are let in at intervals on the outside wall, which is covered with patterns.

The interior is octagonal, with a diameter of 22 feet, the thickness of the walls being 12 feet. The niches are decorated with rich plaster work in two stories. The total height may be 100 feet. The building has a staircase, and it probably served as a tomb ; but of this there are no remains. Fragments of tiles were procured which date from about the thirteenth century, and as we know from an inscription that the Gunbad-i-Kábus was built in A.D. 997, it is reasonable to assign the Kishmar edifice to about the same period.

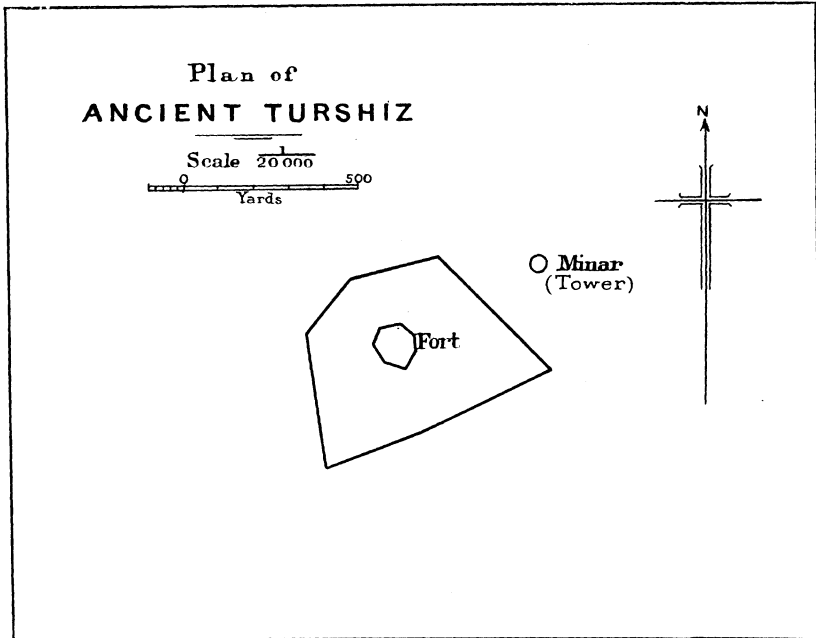
But the historical interest of Kishmar is far more ancient, as it was, according to the unanimous opinion of ancient Persia, the spot where Zoroaster, to commemorate the conversion of King Vishtaspa (the Gushtasp of the *Shah Nama*) to the Magian faith, planted a cypress tree. The story runs that this tree, which grew to a supernatural size, remained for century after century as a witness to Zoroaster ; but in A.H. 247 (861), the Caliph Mutawakkil had it felled and transported across Persia to the Tigris to be used in the construction of his palace at Samarra. Large sums of money were offered in vain by the heart-broken Zoroastrians to the Tahiri governors. However, they had their revenge, as the historians mention that, when the logs reached their destination, Mutawakkil was dead, murdered by his son.

A short march to the south-west lay the ruins of the ancient city of Turshiz, which do not appear to have been examined by any previous traveller. As mentioned above, it was the capital of the district and suffered from the onslaught of Hulagu Khan in the seventh (thirteenth) century. It had, however, recovered and, owing to its deep ditch and high walls was believed to be impregnable when besieged by Tamerlane. That great master of war, however, tapped the water in the ditch by using a body of *Kanat* diggers ; and he then drove a mine under the walls which fell down. The garrison surrounded, was spared and re-enlisted in the Tartar army, to serve in Turkestan.

To-day the small village of Firuzábád (3000 feet) has sprung up to the west of the ruins, and between it and the walled area is the *minar* or column, which is round, with a circumference of 70 feet. The height is, perhaps, about the same. There is a herring-bone pattern worked in the bricks and a belt of Kufic inscription about 20 feet above the ground. This tower, which could be ascended, was, like others of its class, probably constructed to serve as a watch tower.

The fort rises some 30 to 40 feet above the level plain, and the city evidently spread far and wide outside the walls, in which connection there is a legend to the effect that a flock of sheep could be driven over roofs the whole way to Kishmar.

A good deal of pottery was brought for sale, which shows how very little shapes have changed in Persia; but of greater interest was a perfect specimen of what is, I believe, old Persian glass: a Chinese snuff-bottle was also brought for sale. The district had recently suffered from a raid of Fars nomads, said to be Kashgai, who had carried off 2000 camels and other property. It is more than a generation since such raids have



been pushed farther north than the Tabas district; and it is wonderful what enormous distances these light horsemen traverse, as the Kashgai country is beyond Shiraz!

At Firuzábád, we were in the western edge of the district of Turshiz. I was, however, informed that there were important ruins in the district of Doruna to the west, which are termed *Shahr-i-Sufid*, or "White City;" but I was unable to extend my tour so far west. In this connection, it is to be recollected that there was the famous "White Forest" of Kuhistan.

From these very interesting relics of a historical part, we travelled east to Kundur, with its ruined fort of *Bárkala*, which, at one period, was the rival of Turshiz city, and which is still an important centre, lying in a very rich district. Indeed, I was much struck by the fertility of Turshiz,

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which produces a great variety of crops, and where they say that a plough only lies idle for forty days. This is, in part, due to its mean elevation, barely exceeding 3000 feet, and its proximity to the still lower levels of the Lut. At Meshed, for instance, figs and pomegranates do not grow, whereas in this district, they are especially fine.

From Kunder, we passed to the south of the modern capital, and hearing of extensive ruins on the edge of the low-lying district of Mahavalát, we crossed a low range and camped at Himatabad, where some of the famous small, dark green melons with pink inside, were brought for sale; and I must own that their flavour disappointed me. East of Himatabád were ruins also known as Shahr-i-Sufid; and among the low hills are traces of Kala Shir, said to be a corruption of Kala Hajir, or "the fort of Hajir," who was a noted *pahlawan* or champion in the days of Rustam. He was in charge of the Diz-i-Sufid or "White Fort;" and fought with Sohrab, but was vanquished and captured by that heroic youth. All these ruins are said to date back to the Zoroastrian period.

We now swung north to Azghand, an important village with some very fine cypress trees. It was the private property of Ishák Khan Karai, who nearly a century ago, was besieged in it for a whole year by Hassan Vali *Mirza*, son of Fath Ali Shah. As both sides became tired of the siege, peace was made, and Ishak Khan gave his daughter to the prince, from whom my host at Turshiz is descended and Asghand still remains in his family. A long stage brought us to Turbat-i-Heideri, and so back to Meshed, after successfully accomplishing the objects I had in view.

The PRESIDENT (after the paper): The extremely interesting lecture we have just listened to proves how much there is yet to be learnt with regard to the geography, both ancient and modern, of Persia, especially perhaps of the ancient geography, which must be based on archæological researches. I am quite sure that Major Sykes will continue his valuable researches, and that we may look forward to other lectures from him, dealing with other interesting parts of Persia. Major Sykes has had great obstacles to surmount, for it is always extremely difficult in a distant land for a foreigner to learn about the habits and customs of the people; in fact, it sometimes has occurred to me that we do not sufficiently study the accounts given by foreigners of their own countries. In all seriousness, this is a branch of study which geographers might with advantage look to more carefully than they have in the past. In connection with this, I perhaps may remark that Major Sykes, together with an Indian colleague, has just published a most interesting book called 'The Glory of the Shia World.' On the title-page it is described as the translation of a Persian manuscript; it appears, in fact, to be the account, in autobiographical form, of the life of one Nurulla Khan, obviously a man of some standing, for we hear that he is the grandson of a person described in a note as the original of Haji Baba. Now, I confess I do not quite know the full meaning of that note, and I will also confess that in reading this work some suspicions crossed my mind which I could not possibly allude to in the presence of Major Sykes. If any of those here present had had an ancestor who had dined in the presence of Defoe, would they have expected him to have asked him whether Robinson