

BOGDAN SKŁADANEK

**Settlements in Gharchistān during the
Early Islamic Period
(up to the 11th Century A.D.)**

The present Fīrūz kūh, a mountainous region in Afghanistan which stretches east of Herāt, north of the Harī River and through which the upper reaches of the Murghāb River flow, in the Middle Ages was called by Islamic geographers Gharchistān, Ghardjistān, Gharshistān or Gharishtān. Ghardjistān is a fundamental lection of this geographical name given by Y ā q ū t who, however, maintains that Gharishtān and Ghardjistān, the latter being a local, folk form, are also used. M a q d ī s ī spells it Ghardjistān but gives Ghardj ash-shār as an official name of the region, repeating it probably after I ṣ ṭ a k h r ī who called this province either Ghardj or Ghardj ash-shār. Another version of this name, Gharchistān, used by the anonymous Arab chronicler and author of *The History of Caliphs*, written ca 1017—1018 A.D.¹, is also met with in *Hudūd al-ālam*, a Persian geographical chronicle from the 10th century A.D.

On the basis of Y ā q ū t's opinion, R. N. F r y e, in his article for the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, declares for the form Ghardjistān. In establishing the lection of this name, it seems necessary, however, to take into account primarily all Persian data. In *Hudūd al-ālam*, a voiceless consonant *ch* occurs in this name in the places in which, in Arabic texts, except for *The History of Caliphs*, *dj* or *sh* occur. In Persian words, both *dj* and its voiceless equivalent *ch* are recorded by Arabs by means of a letter *djim*. The form Gharshistān, cited by Y ā q ū t, in which we have probably to do

¹ Y ā q ū t, *Mu'djam al-buldān*, ed. by F. W ü s t e n f e l d, Leipzig 1924, vol. III, p. 785. *Hudūd al-ālam*, ed. by M a n ū c h e h r S a t ū d e, Tehrān 1340, pp. 44, 93, 95, 101. M a q d ī s ī, *Kitāb aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī l-ma'rifa al-aqālīm*, BGA, vol. II, pp. 74, 337. *Hudūd al-ālam*, ed. by V. M i n o r s k y, GMNS XI, London 1937, pp. 105, 327—328. A l - I ṣ ṭ a k h r ī, *Kitāb al-masālik al-mamālik*, BGA, vol. I (cf. index, BGA, vol. IV). A l - I ṣ ṭ a k h r ī's Persian translation ed. by Ī r ā d j A f s h ā r, Tehrān 1340 (cf. index). *Ta'rikh al-khulafā'*, ed. by P. A. G r y a z n e v i c h, Moskva 1967 (facsimile), p. 210b, 1.6.

with an attempt at a phonetic recording of a voiceless consonant, is a indirect proof of the presence of a voiceless consonant in the second syllable.

The Persian language has not a word *ghardj* but it has *gharcha*, which is confirmed by 11th century A.D. literary relic by *Farrukhī*, a Sīstānīan poet who uses this word to determine “an inhabitant of the Gharchistān Region”:

درین دیار بهنگام شار چندین بار پلنگوار نمودند غرچگان عصیان

which means: “In the time of *shār*, the rebellious inhabitants of Gharchistān prowled like tigers”².

According to *Yāqūt*, the territories of Marv ar-Rūd (in Persian, *Marv-i Rōdh*) stretched north of Gharchistān, those of Ghūr were situated to the east and Ghazna Region to the south. In the environs of the city of Afshīn, Gharchistān bordered, in the east, with Guzgānān (in Arabic, *Djuzdjān*)³.

We have not much information on the history of Gharchistān before the Sāmānīds. Before the invasion of Arabs in the 8th century, the region was probably under the rule of the Hephthalite princes. Badhghēs, a province which bordered on Gharchistān in the west, was called by *Yāqūt* “*dār mamlakat al-hayāṭila*”, i.e., “a country of Hephthalites”. For a time, Badhghēs was a center of an anti-Arab movement led by Nēzak Tūrkhūn who was said to be a Hephthalite⁴ and who at first operated in Sīstān and thereafter in Soghd. It was only as a result of an armed expedition led in 107/725 by Asad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Qaṣrī that Arabs succeeded in subduing Gharchistān. The ruler of Gharchistān, bearing the title of “*shār*”, embraced Islam, formally accepted the Caliph’s rule⁵ and, consequently, paid to him, as his sovereign, a tax

² Gharchistān was also a name of a country on the Upper Zaravshan River, cf. *Yāqūt*, *Mu’djam*, vol. III, p. 72. V. Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion* (in Russian), in: *Sobranniye Sochineniya*, vol. I, Moskva 1963, p. 182. *Farrukhī* — according to M. Mo‘īn, *Farhang-e zabān-e fārsī*, vol. II, Tehrān 1343, p. 2339.

³ *Yāqūt*, *Mu’djam*, vol. III, p. 785. Marv-i Rōdh confirmed in *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, ed. by Malek osh-Shoārā Bahār, Tehrān 1314, p. 241.

⁴ *Yāqūt*, *Mu’djam*, vol. I, p. 461; vol. III, p. 785. Maqdīsī, pp. 74, 309. V. M. Masson, V. A. Romodin, *Istoriya Afganistana*, vol. I, Moskva 1965, p. 221. B. Spuler, *Iran in frühislamischer Zeit*, Wiesbaden 1952, p. 30.

⁵ *shār* (and varieties of *shēr*, spelled *shīr*, *shōr*, *shūr*) is a title of a ruler of Gharchistān and Bāmiyān. It is derived from the old-Persian *khshathriya* and hence *shāh* (‘king’) in modern Persian. Cf. J. Marquart, *Ērānšahr nach der Geographie des Ps. Moses Xorenac’i*, Berlin 1901, p. 79. E.I.N. Ed., vol. I, p. 1009 (Bāmiyān). M. Mo‘īn, *Farhang*, vol. II, p. 1996. In a class. lang. *ē* = *ā* before *r*, cf. G. Lazard, *La langue des plus anciens monuments de la prose persane*, Paris 1963, p. 187. According to Ibn Khurrādādhbih (*Kitāb al-masālik wa’l-mamālik*, BGA, vol. VI, p. 39) the ruler of Gh. had a title of *barāz banda*. This is, however, an error resulting from confusing it with a prince of the neighbouring Mānshān, cf. R. N. Frye, *Gharchistān*, loc. cit. *Yāqūt* does not mention the ruler of Gh., cf. his *Tārīkh*, ed. by M. Th. Houtsma, vol. II, Leiden 1883, p. 479.

which, ca 236/850, amounted to 100,000 drahms or, as a payment in kind, 2,000 sheep. For a tax, paid for the entire province, this does not seem to be a particularly heavy burden⁶. In the mid-2nd century H., Khorāsān, Badhghēs and Sīstān were conquered by Ustādhsīs, a leader of an uprising which probably had wide repercussions in Gharchistān.

In the time of the Sāmānīds, Gharchistān, like neighbouring Sīstān, Bust, Ghazna, Khuttal, Guzgānān, Khvārizm, as well as inaccessible eastern territories of the present Tadzhikistan were subordinated to the local ruler who sent to Bukharā only gifts and not tributes or taxes. After the fall of the Sāmānīds, the sovereignty over Gharchistān, this time an actual one, was won by the Ghaznavīds. It was only for some time under Mas'ūd that some parts of Gharchistān were occupied by the *darmishpat*, a ruler of an adjoining province Ghūr, who conquered one of the Gharchistān fortresses. Unfortunately, Bayhaqī who describes these events, does not mention the name of this fortress. On Ghazna's explicit demand *darmishpat* withdrew to Ghūr⁷.

Under the rule of the Ghaznavīds, Gharchistān was a rather restless region in which revolts repeatedly broke out. Like in all eastern confines of the Caliphate, its population was receptive to heretical influence. In the early-9th century A.D., insurgents from a Khāridjīd sect called *hamziyya* operated in Badhghēs and Sīstān.

The conditions in this region were undoubtedly affected by political and religious systems, predominating in neighbouring provinces. A sect called *qadariyya* was then active in Kundur and another, *djahmiyya* — in Tirmidh. In the 9th century, a considerable popularity was won by Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Karām al-Sagazī al-Nīshāpūrī (died in 255/869) a founder of the then fairly strong sect *karāmiyya* who preached his ideas mostly to common people in Ghūr, Gharchistān and some parts of Khorāsān. It was as early as during the lifetime of the leader of this sect that Nīshāpūr was the center of this movement. Karām came to this city from Gharchistān accompanied by a group of his followers, members of the lowest social classes⁸.

The inhabitants of Gharchistān were Iranians who spoke one of the Persian dialects. According to Maqdisī, it was similar to those spoken in the neighbouring provinces of Herāt and Marv. For this reason, the relations between the inhabitants of Gharchistān and Ghūr could not be very close. It is true that both these countries had a similar configuration and, according to Mustafī, identical climate, but

⁶ Ibn Khurradādhbih, p. 36. Sums paid by other regions cf. B. Spuler, *Iran*, pp. 467—476, in which the tax paid by Gh. was not differentiated as a separate item.

⁷ Abū'l-Fazl Baihaqī, ed. by Ghani, Fayyāz, Tehrān 1945, p. 119 (russian trans. *Istoriya Mas'uda*, by A. K. Arends, Tashkent 1966, p. 631, n. 264). Yā'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, vol. II, p. 457. C. E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavīds*, Edinburgh 1963, index. V. M. Masson, *Istoriya Afganistana*, pp. 227, 242. B. Spuler, *Iran*, p. 51. V. Barthold, *Turkestan*, p. 292. *Istoriya uzbekskoy SSR*, vol. I, kn. 1, Tashkent 1955, p. 193, 223.

⁸ C. E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavīds*, pp. 166, 185—186.

Ghūr was inhabited by Indian tribes. V. Barthold expresses the opinion that the boundary between the Indian and Iranian territories ran along the valley of the Kābul River. Bāmiyān, situated north-west of this valley, belongs to the Iranian zone. However, as results from recent studies, the Indian zone should be shifted further to the west and Ghūr should be included in it. The Iranian character of Bāmiyān seems to be unquestionable, the more so as this fact is confirmed by a recently found 11th century A.D. document, but it seems to form an Iranian enclave deeply wedged in the Indian environment. In the 2nd century H., a river flowing between Makrān and Kirmān constituted a boundary of the Indian territory. In the 10th century A.D., Indian tribes lived in Sīstān and Kirmān. According to General P. Sykes, the inhabitants of Kirmān are as dark-skinned as those of Penjab⁹.

The inhabitants of Gharchistān were peaceful people, although, as results from the history of the conquests of this province by the Caliphate, the Sāmānids and Ghaznavids, not submissive by any means. The author of the *Hudūd al-ʿalam* favorably evaluates their customs speaking about them as peaceful. Likewise, positive opinions are expressed in this chronicle concerning the skill of Gharchistān farmers and shepherds¹⁰. This area was suitable for animal husbandry and for agricultural purposes. Farming was mostly concentrated in the river basin of the Murghāb flowing in the borderland between Guzgānān and Gharchistān, over a short stretch through Ghūr and, further, through Gurchistān, to the Marv Oasis where its waters were lost, distributed by an irrigation system. According to the Persian chronicle *Djahān-nāme*, the Hirmand, a Sīstān river, flowed from the mountains of Ghūr and Gharchistān, but to consider this information as a true one the boundaries of Ghurchistān should be shifted much to the south¹¹. Due to periodical, extensive floods of this river, not very many settlements were located on the Murghāb¹².

⁹ V. Barthold, rev. of: A. Godard, Y. Godard, J. Hackin, *Les antiquités bouddhiques de Bāmiyān*, Paris 1928, in: *Sobranniye Sochineniya*, vol. IV, Moskva 1966, p. 302. Maqdisī, p. 335. Mustawfī, *The Geographical Part of the Nuzhat al-Qulūb*, ed. and trans. by G. Le Strange, GMS XXIII, 2, London 1919, p. 152. *Chach-nāme*, in: *The History of India*, ed. by H. M. Elliot, vol. I, London 1867, p. 153. C. E. Bosworth, *The Early Islamic History of Ghūr*, "Central Asiatic Journal", vol. VI, nr. 2, 1961, pp. 123—125. G. Scarcia, *A Preliminary Report on a Persian Legal Document of 470—1078 found at Bāmiyān*, "East and West", N. Series, vol. 14, nr. 1—2, 1963, pp. 73—85. G. Scarcia, *An Edition of the Persian Legal Document from Bāmiyān*, "East and West", N. Series, vol. 16, nr. 3—4, 1966, pp. 290—295. P. S. Petrov, *K voprosu o proiskhozhdenii naseleniya Gura X v.*, "Toponimika Vostoka", Moskva 1962, p. 76. Ištakhri, Persian text, pp. 219—220. Balādhūri, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, ed. by J. M. de Goeje, Leiden 1966, pp. 375—376. *Hudūd al-ʿālam*, ed. by V. Minor sky, p. 373. P. M. Sykes, *Ten Thousand Miles in Persia or Eight Years in Iran*, London 1902, p. 43.

¹⁰ *Hudūd al-ʿalam*, Pers. ed., p. 93.

¹¹ Muḥammad ibn Nadjīb Bakrān, *Djahān-nāme*, ed. by Y. Y. Borshchevskiy, Moskva 1960, p. 12a, l. 17.

¹² *Dāʿira al-maʿrif*, vol. III, Kābul 1328, p. 273.

It was not in the form of tributes, taxes or feudal gifts, that gold, wool, leather products and high quality carpets were exported from Gharchistān, which was also famed for its mules and a good breed of horses. Extensive cultivated fields and orchards testified to a fairly high standard of agriculture. Rice was grown in the environs of the city of Afshīn and exported to neighbouring markets, for instance, to Balkh. Vineyards were met with near Shūrmin, in the interior of Gharchistān¹³.

V. Minor sky and R.N. Frye assume that during the early-Islamic period, there were only two cities in Gharchistān, i.e., Afshīn and Shūrmin. Before them, G. Le Strange maintained that there were also three other settlements: Bālīkan or Balkiyan, Baivār and Sindja¹⁴.

Islamic geographers' opinions diverged as to the number of settlements in Gharchistān. Iṣṭākhrī mentions only two cities: Afshīn and Shūrmin to which a mountain settlement (*qariya*) of Balkiyan is added by Ibn Hauqal. Maqdisī speaks about many Gharchistān settlements, mentioning As...ūn, Afshīn, Shūrmin, Balkiyan, etc. In addition, he locates a few settlements along the Herāt — Shūrmin — Afshīn — Marv-i Rōdh road.

Part of this information was repeated, unfortunately uncritically, by Yāqūt in an entry on Gharchistān he included in his *Mu'djam al-buldān*. At the beginning of this entry Yāqūt mentions Afshīn as a main city in Gharchistān, adding that this is a seat of the local ruler called *ash-shār* but a few lines below he maintains that the city (*madīna*) of Bālīkan is a capital of Gharchistān. In the entry, entitled *Baivār*, he speaks that this settlement was an administrative center of the region (*qaṣaba*). Except for a general statement that there are many settlements, Yāqūt does not give any accurate number of such settlements in Gharchistān. A hundred years after Yāqūt, Mustaufī estimates the number of settlements in Ghardja (Gharchistān — B.S.) at about 50¹⁵.

Afshīn (Apshīn, Abshīn, Bashīn, Bashīr, Bzhīn, Anshīn and Nashīn) was the most important city in Gharchistān. The alternation of *f/p/b* is encountered in Persian. In old manuscripts, *p* and *b* were fairly frequently recorded identically, with the omission, in the case of *p*, of two diacritical points. This is the reason why sometimes we do not know whether in a given case we have to do with differences in spelling or alternation of consonants as in, for instance, *Safzavār* = *Sabzavār* (a city in northern Iran), *zafān* = *zabān* ('tongue'), *sapīd* = *safīd* ('white') and *pīl* = *fīl* ('elephant'). On the other hand, from the standpoint of Persian phonology, the alternation of *f/p/b*, *n* is ill-founded. The occurrence of a form *af/ab/ap/an* is a result of an erro-

¹³ Iṣṭākhrī, Persian text, p. 214. Yāqūt, *Mu'djam*, vol. III, p. 785. Ibn Hauqal, *Kitāb al-masālik wa'l-mamālik*, BGA, vol. II, p. 323.

¹⁴ *Hudūd al-ʿālam*, ed. by V. Minor sky, pp. 327—328. R. N. Frye, *Ghardjistān*, loc. cit. G. Le Strange, *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate*, Cambridge 1930, p. 416.

¹⁵ Iṣṭākhrī, Persian text, p. 214. Ibn Hauqal, p. 323. Maqdisī, pp. 50, 309, Yāqūt, *Mu'djam*, vol. III, p. 785. Mustaufī, p. 152.

neous reading of *af-* ʾf as *an-* ʾn. *Bashīr*, encountered only in *Y ā q ū t*'s vocabulary, was formed by assuming ʾn for ʾf which may easily happen when a manuscript is read. It may also indicate that *shīr* and not *-shīn* is the second component of this name, hence, as a result of an incorrect distribution of diacritical points, *-zhīn* and, consequently, *Bzhīn* were formed. Similar changes are observed in the name of a Sīstān fortress: *Kūhtēz*, *Kūhtīz*, *Kūhezh*, *Kūhshēr*, *Kūhezhak*, *Kūhak*, *Kuhak*, the appropriate name being *Kūhshēr* (Royal Mountain).

In the case of the names of cities in Gharchistān, the occurrence of a variant *an* may be adopted as a proof for the fact that *af/ap* was a fundamental form, whereas *ab* was a result of the lack of precision in the Arabic and Persian spelling. Of both, equally probable varieties, i.e., *af/ap* we may choose *af* as an appropriate one. In Samarqand, the spelling *Afshīna(t)* was used which is an indirect proof that the city in Gharchistān was called *Afshīn*¹⁶.

According to *Ma q d i s ī* and *Hudūd al-ʿālam*, *Afshīn* was an administrative center of the region. *I ṣ ṭ a k h r ī* maintains that *Afshīn* differed in size from *Shūrmīn*, the other important city in Gharchistān but he does not indicate which of them was larger. On the basis of certain circumstances we may conclude, however, that *Afshīn* was a larger city. Of all Gharchistān settlements, *Afshīn* had the tallest minaret and was, at least for a certain time, a capital of the country. The situation of *Afshīn* in relation to an economically active region between *Marv-i Shāhigān* and *Marv-i Rōdh*, more advantageous as compared with that of *Shūrmīn*, seems to be also an important circumstance.

The opinions concerning the function of *Afshīn* as a capital of the country are rather diverging. Sometimes, *Y ā q ū t* locates the seat of the ruler in *Afshīn*, but sometimes he contradicts this statement and maintains that this seat is in *Bālīkan* (= *Balkīyān*) or *Baivār* and calls this city a *qaṣaba*. This geographer's mention of *Afshīn* being a capital comes from earlier sources than the information locating the seat of the ruler in *Bālīkan* or *Baivār*. It might well be that the capital was transferred by the ruler to the interior of the country or that he had two capitals to which his seat was moved alternately in summer and winter. The main city of a province need not necessarily be and, in fact, sometimes was not a seat of the administration. In the *Guzgānān* province, the *ʿamīl* of a very ancient city of *Pāryāb* (in Arabic, *Fāryāb*) had his seat in *Yahūdān*¹⁷.

B a i h a q ī's mention of the capital (*qaṣaba*) of Gharchistān is not very helpful. Describing the Ghaznavīds' defeat in the battle of *Dandānaqān*, which triggered the *Saldjūqs*' invasion, he speaks that the Gaznavīd emir *Mas'ūd* with his train escaped

¹⁶ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 207 n. 4, 6. G. L e S t r a n g e, *The lands*, p. 464. *I ṣ ṭ a k h r ī*, Persian text, *Afshīna*, index, G. L a z a r d, *Grammaire du persan contemporain*, Paris 1957, p. 140—142. Cf. my review of *A r e n d*'s translation of *Tārīkh-i Baihaqī*, in: *RO*, vol. XXIX, Z. 1, 1965, p. 123. *D j ū z d j ā n ī*, *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*, ed. by Major Raverty, Calcutta 1873—1881, p. 19, n. 2.

¹⁷ *A l - Y a ʿ q ū b ī*, *Kitāb al-buldān*, BGA, vol. VIII, p. 287.

from the battlefield to the *qaṣaba* of Gharchistān which he reached on the eighth day of a speedy ride. In another part of his chronicle, B a i h a q ī mentions the Gharchistān *qaṣaba* in connection with a raid of the *darmishpat* from the neighbouring Ghūr. Unfortunately, he never mentions the name of this *qaṣaba* or its locality. If the escapees traveled at a rate used in a normal journey, we could be able to establish the locality of their destination on the basis of the number of the days they devoted for travel and bivouacs. Since, however, this was a forced march, the daily stages might be two or even three times as long as those of a normal journey. In each stage this makes up a difference of about 70 km. In a normal march, army units covered about 30 km. daily, whereas the same time was quite enough for a courier to cover nearly 100 km. As we know, the flight of the emir lasted eight days. We cannot assume that the highest speed was maintained all along. It was bound to drop as a result of the fatigue of the animals and not so much of men.

According to A.C. Y a t e, who in 1885 visited these parts as a member of the Afghan Boundary Commission, in the mountain territories of Afghanistan, a horse may cover a distance of even 70 miles (about 112 km.) in a single day, but it cannot endure such an effort repeated on a few successive days¹⁸. The stages of M a s ' ū d' s flight were bound to be either alternately longer and shorter or to vary in length between 30 and 100 km. On the basis of the number of stages we cannot, therefore, determine the entire distance covered by the emir's party and, consequently, the situation of the fortress which was their destination with an accuracy smaller than 500 km.

Afshīn was a center of raising rice in Gharchistān and from this center it was exported to neighbouring provinces. The city itself was situated on the eastern bank of the Murghāb River. The data on the locality of this city are, however, rather general and not very accurate. I ṣ ṭ a k h r ī and, after him, Y ā q ū t maintain that the journey from Afshīn through Diza, which was situated halfway, to Marv-i Rōdh took two days. M a q d i s ī also mentions that the distance from Afshīn to Marv-i Rōdh amounts to ten farsangs and divides it into four *marḥalas*, that is, daily stages. A distance of ten farsangs was usually covered in 1.5—2 days and, therefore, dividing it into as many as four stages is rather surprising. It seems that M a q d i s ī mentioned four places of rest and not the destinations after each day of travel¹⁹.

¹⁸ *Tārīkh-i Baihaqī*, ed. Ghanī, Fayyāz, pp. 119, 626, 663. In my opinion, a daily stage of a forced march amounted to about 100 km and that of a normal march to 30 km., cf. RO, vol. XXIX, Z. 1, p. 121. The Afghan Boundary Commission in which A. C. Y a t e participated, covered (on horseback or on mules) about 15 miles (= 24 km.) a day. I.e. 78 miles (125 km.) in 5 days, 102 miles (163 km.) in 7 days, 46 miles (74 km.) in 4 days; cf. A. C. Y a t e, *Travels with the Afghan Boundary Commission*, Edinburgh 1887, pp. 177, 189, 271, 275.

¹⁹ Y ā q ū t, *Mu'djam*, vol. I, p. 803; vol. III, p. 785. I b n Ḥ a u q a l, p. 323. I ṣ ṭ a k h r ī, Persian text, p. 214. M a q d i s ī, pp. 50, 309, 348. *Hudūd al-'ālam*, Persian ed., p. 93.

The settlement Diza, also called Dizaq-i Marv-i Rōdh, was located on both banks of the Murghāb four farsangs upstream of Marv-i Rōdh. Both parts of this settlement were connected with each other by a bridge spanning the river above a gorge through which the Murghāb flowed near the settlement. Nowadays, a settlement called Darband-i Kilrikhta is situated in this place. A distance from Bālā-Murghāb (former Marv-i Rōdh) to Darband-i Kilrikhta (former Diza) amounts to about 30 km. The northern inlet of the gorge is located about 10 km. (ab. 6 miles) upstream of Bālā-Murghāb. Through this gorge, the Murghāb forces went its way through the Tirband-i Turkestān range. Below this range, after flowing from the gorge, the river does not encounter any elevations and flows in a wide, shallow channel. As mentioned in the *Hūdūd al-‘ālam*, Afshīn and Diza were separated from each other by a mountain chain, that is, both settlements were situated above the gorge, in the interior of Gharchistān. This information is confirmed by a list of the following settlements situated on the Murghāb from its upper to lower reaches: Shūrmīn, Afshīn, Diza, Marv-i Rōdh, Diz-i Aḥnaf, Lōgar, Barakdiz, Girang and Marv²⁰.

If Marv-i Rōdh was situated 10 farsangs from Afshīn and 4 farsangs from Diza, the remaining section of this road, that is, the Afshīn — Diza section was 6 farsangs long. It has been calculated by W. H i n z that in the Middle Ages one farsang equalled exactly 5.985 km.²¹ Such an accuracy applied to the medieval measures of distance seems, however, to be rather unfounded since, in addition to W. H i n z' s theoretical calculations the fact should be taken into account that Islamic geographers quoted approximate distances, expressed in full farsangs only.

A settlement called Qaṣr-i Aḥnaf (Diz-i Aḥnaf, Kushk-i Aḥnaf or Diz-i Hīnf) which means "Aḥnaf's Castle" was situated on the Murghāb at a distance of a day's journey below Marv-i Rōdh. Its present name is Karavulkhāna or, according to V. B a r t h o l d, Karaulkhāna. The distance from this place to Marv-i Rōdh amounted to about 17 km. (according to A. C. Y a t e, 10.75 miles) and downstream, to Maruchak (former, Marv-i Kuchak) — to about 20 km. (12.5 mi.). The entire way

²⁰ *Hūdūd al-‘ālam*, Persian ed., pp. 44, 30; item by V. M i n o r s k y, p. 64. *Dā'ira al-ma'rif*, vol. III, pp. 270, 273, 336. V. B a r t h o l d, *Merverrūd, Sobranniye Sochineniya*, vol. III, p. 254. A. C. Y a t e, *Travels*, pp. 187—189. Dizaq-i Marv al-Rōdh (= Marv-i Rōdh) = Dizaq al-‘uliyā, cf. Y ā q ū t, *Mu'djam*, vol. II, p. 572. V. M i n o r s k y (*Hūdūd al-‘ālam*, p. 73) میان درّه بیرذ reads: *miyān-i darra biburadh* and translates: "(it) cuts through the middle of the valley" providing the translation with a question mark. This lection was adopted, after M i n o r s k y, by the Persian publisher of this chronicle (p. 44). This paragraph is indeed rather vague. Should not we read *diza* instead of *darra*, that is, adopt a diacritical mark for a point and not tashdid? Adopting this lection, we obtain *miyān-i diza biburadh* ('flows through Diza') which is perfectly comprehensible since Diza was situated on both banks of the Murghāb River.

²¹ W. H i n z, *Farsakh*, E.I.N. Ed., vol. II, pp. 812—813. W. H i n z, *Islamische Masse und Gewichte, Handbuch der Orientalistik, Ergänzungsband 1, H. 1*, Leiden 1955, p. 62.

Maruchak — Marv-i Rōdh (Bālā Murghāb) is, according to A.C. Yate, 23.3 *mi.* (about 37 km.) long. A two day's journey was necessary to cover this distance²². According to Qudama and Ibn Khurrādādhbih, the distance of 5 farsangs from "Aḥnaf's Castle" to Marv-i Rōdh was covered in one day²³.

Between Marv-i Rōdh and Marv-i Shāhigān, at a distance of a four days' journey from the latter, a settlement called Qarīnain was situated on the Murghāb. According to the medieval sources, this distance amounted to 25 farsangs. The ancient Qarīnain was located by V. Zhukovski near the present railroad station of Imam Baba 121 verst (about 129 km.) from Marv²⁴, that is, about 110 km. from the ancient Marv. In this case, a daily stage of the journey amounted to nearly 5 farsangs and, therefore, one farsang equalled 4.5 km.

The distance from Qarīnain to Marv-i Rōdh was 22 farsangs and, therefore, a total length of the way from Marv-i Shāhigān to Marv-i Rōdh amounted to 47 farsangs. According to Ya'qūbī, a journey between these two cities took five days, but, according to Ibn Khurrādādhbih and Qudama it was divided into eight stages. The same number of stages results from the information given by Maqdisī who describes, with a division into particular stages, a road from Marv to Yahūdān which branched away from the Marv — Marv-i Rōdh route as far as at Diz-i Aḥnaf, that is at a distance of a day's ride before Marv-i Rōdh. According to Maqdisī, "Aḥnaf's Castle" could be reached after covering seven stages.

An average length of a stage along the route from Marv to Hauzān amounted to slightly more than 6 but not more than 7 farsangs. From the lengths of the last two parts of the route it is clear that the length of a *marḥala* (stage) was less than 9 farsangs. The last but one part of the route is much shorter than the remaining ones. However, riding directly from Hauzān to Marv-i Rōdh, one would have to cover 9 farsangs a day which, as is clear from the division of this part of the road, was too long a distance for a single stage.

The length of a stage depended on the terrain conditions. In less rough and relatively flatter areas than those in Gharchistān, a distance of 7 farsangs was covered on a normal daily march. A normal daily stage along the route from Hamadhān to Ray amounted to 7 farsangs, whereas on a way from Nishāpūr to Marv through Sarakhs to 5—6 farsangs only. Between Marv-i Rōdh and Tāliqān stages amounted to 5, 7, 6 and 6 farsangs, that is, on the average, to 6 farsangs. On the way from Herāt to Marv-i Rōdh, a stage was 5 farsangs long except for the sections Marghzār-Darra — Bāghchī Shūr which amounted to 8 farsangs and Ushrūd (called, according to Mustaufī, Lūd-rūd) — Marv-i Rōdh which was 4 farsangs long. In a rough, mountain terrain,

²² A. C. Yate, *Travels*, p. 189. V. Barthold, *Merverrūd*, p. 253. *Hudūd al-'ālam*, Persian text, p. 93. Iṣṭakhrī, Persian text, p. 213.

²³ Ibn Khurrādādhbih, p. 32. Qudama b. Dja'far, *Kitāb al-kharādj*, BGA, vol. VI, p. 209.

²⁴ Maqdisī, p. 348. Qudama, p. 209. Ibn Khurrādādhbih, p. 32. Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 291. V. Barthold, *Merverrūd*, p. 253.

a distance of 50 *verst* (about 52 km.) between Tōn and Barskhān was divided into three daily stages, which, according to V. Barthold, is, however, too high a rate of travel. Assuming that Gardēzī, in whose work this information was found by Barthold, was not mistaken, a daily stage on this route was about 17 km. long. In Sīstān, one farsang equalled four miles (ab. 6.5 km.)²⁵.

Table 1

Routes	Distances, according to	
	Maqdisī (in <i>marḥalas</i> or stages)	Ibn Kurradādhbih, Qudama, Mustaufī (in farsangs)
Marv-i Shāhigān — Fāz	1	7
Fāz — Mahdiābādh	1	6
Mahdiābādh — Yahyā-ābādh (Maqdisī — Badjirābādh)	1	7
Yahyā-ābādh — Qarīnain	1	5
Qarīnain — Asadābādh (Must. — Astarābādh)	1	7
Asadābādh — Hāuzān (Must. — Khaurāt, Khaurzān, Khūrāb)	1	6
Hāuzān — Qaşr-i Aḥnaf	1	4
Qaşr-i Aḥnaf — Marv-i Rōdh*	—	5

* Qudama, *ibid.* Ibn Khurradādhbih, *ibid.* Maqdisī, pp. 347—348. Mustaufī, p. 172.

The lengths of daily stages were, therefore, variable and depended on local terrain conditions. In addition, divergences were caused by the fact that various geographers differed in their division of the routes into stages. According to Maqdisī, Qudama, Ibn Khurradādhbih and Mustaufī, the route from Marv to Ṭāliqān, about 72 km. long, was divided into four stages, whereas Le Strange maintains that it required only three days. Dividing this distance into four and three equal sections, the stages would be 18 and 24 km. long respectively²⁶.

²⁵ Qudama, pp. 161, 201, 202. Ibn Khurradādhbih, *ibid.* Mustaufī, pp. 171, 172. Gardēzī, *Zain al-akhbār*, ed. by V. Barthold, in: *Otchet o poyezdke v Srednuyu Azyu*, “Zapiski Imperatorskoy Akademii Nauk”, ser. VIII, vol. I, nr. 4, 1897, p. 90 (text); p. 114, n. 4 (commentaries). J. Marquart, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte von Eran*, “Philologus”, Supplementband X, H. 1, p. 21. G. P. Tate, *Seistan. A memoir on the history, topography, ruins and peoples of the country*, Part I—III. Calcutta 1910, p. 198.

²⁶ Maqdisī, p. 348. Qudama, p. 161. Ibn Khurradādhbih, *ibid.* Mustaufī, p. 172. G. Le Strange, *The Lands*, p. 424 n. 1.

The city of Dandānaqān is situated 33 km. south-west of the present Marv, that is about 65 km. from the ancient Marv. According to *Iṣṭākhrī*, these 65 km. were covered in a day, whereas *Maqdisī* and *Baihaqī* mention two days²⁷.

In the light of the consideration of the travel routes described in the present paper, the lengths of a daily stage (*marḥala*, *manzil*) were as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Route	Number of			Length in km.		Length of a stage in farsangs
	stages	km.	far-sangs	a stage	a far-sang	
Dandānaqān — Marv	2	65	10	32	6.5	5
Marv — Qarīnain	4	110	25	27	4.5	6
Qaṣr-i Aḥnaf — Marv-i Rōdh	1	16	5	16	3	5
Marv-i Rōdh — northern opening of the gorge	9	10	1	—	10	—
Marv-i Rōdh — Diza	1	32	4	32	4	8
Marv-i Shāhigān — Marv-i Rōdh	8	—	46	—	—	6
Marv-i Shāhigān — Tāliqān	4	72	—	18	—	—
Ray — Nīshāpūr	20	—	139	—	—	7
Herāt — Marv-i Rōdh	7	—	37	—	—	5.5
Nīshāpūr — Marv-i Shāhigān*	14	—	70	9	—	5

* The length of the shortest stage, i.e., Sarakhs — Qarīnain amounted to 3 farsangs only. If we disregard this exceptionally short stage, the mean length of a stage increases to 5.5 farsangs.

If we discount extreme magnitudes (3 and 8 farsangs per one stage), it turns out that a *marḥala* displays a higher degree of stability than a farsang and that the length of a *marḥala* fluctuates within limits of 27—32 km. in an easy and about 18 km. in a very rough terrain. A journey along the river banks could not be very difficult and hence 30—32 km. may be assumed as a length of a stage. According to the number of *marḥalas*, Afshīn should be located 30—32 km. upstream of the present Darband-i Kilrikhta. This is about 18—20 km. upstream of Dahan-i Kusnak²⁸ or Darbāb-i Zamān, a locality situated in the place where the Murghāb turns at an almost right angle westward²⁹.

²⁷ *Tārīkh-i Baihaqī*, ed. G h a n ī, Fayyāz, p. 621. *Maqdisī*, *ibid.* gives the Dandānaqān — Djarūdjar — Marv route, one *marḥala* between each of these settlements. Acc. to *Qudama* between Dandānaqān — Marv is 10 farsangs (p. 155).

²⁸ *World Aeronautical Chart*, nr. 430 and maps in the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia", vol. 28, p. 568; vol. 26 after p. 418.

²⁹ These are poorly described areas, cf. J. H u m l u m, *La géographie de l'Afghanistan*, Copenhagen 1959, map p. 147.

Shūrmīn or Sūrmīn, or Surmīn (Sormīn?), another Gharchistān city, was located upstream of Afshīn. It seems that Shūrmīn ('saline'), derived from *shūr* ('salt', 'saline') is an appropriate lection of this name. An etymology of this word derived from *shūr*, *shār*, *shōr* ('ruler', 'king') is less reliable.

As mentioned before, Shūrmīn was smaller than Afshīn. Vine was grown in its environs and the entire region was famed for its raisins.

Shūrmīn was situated on the Murghāb at a distance of a day's journey upstream of Afshīn. Maqdisī divides the distance between these cities into four sections, each of them corresponding to one *marḥala*³⁰, that is, altogether about 120 km. which seems to be an exaggerated estimate. If we accepted this distance then it would be impossible to locate Shūrmīn on the Murghāb but still within the borders of Gharchistān and, at the same time, about 150 km. east of Herāt.

A road from Shūrmīn to Herāt led through Karūkh, the latter two places being at a distance of one stage, that is, about 35 km. from each other. It is clear from the length of the Herāt — Karūkh *marḥala* that, in this case, a distance covered during a single day and not particular stops should be understood as stages (*marḥalas*). Between Herāt and Shūrmīn, the road was divided into five stages and, therefore, the Shūrmīn — Karūkh route consisted of four stages. Shūrmīn should be located on the Murghāb, approximately 150 km. from Herāt or about 115 km. from Karūkh. Such a point might be situated at a distance of 30 km. from Afshīn (one stage), but no place on this river situated 90—120 km. (3—4 stages) from Afshīn, could be at the same time located at a distance of 150 km. from Herāt.

The conditions of Shūrmīn's situation in relation to Herāt and Afshīn, referred to above, correspond to the nearest surroundings of Qal'a Nīyāz khān, a present settlement of fortress type. According to the World Aeronautical Chart, an anonymous fort is situated 5—6 km. downstream of the last-named locality and a settlement called Shakh-i Mashhad³¹ is marked on one of the maps of the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia* in the environs of this anonymous fort and Qal'a Nīyāz khān.

The ancient road from Shūrmīn to Herāt coincides with the present track from Qal'a Nīyāz khān, which runs through Khair khāna, Langar, now a ruined fort called Qadis and, near Laman, joins the road from Qal'a Nao to Karūkh and Herāt. In its initial part, the road from Qal'a Nīyāz khān might run more to the south than the track referred to above and, crossing the mountains, might pass a few kilometers north of the present settlement Seyāh khāna, subsequently join this track at a distance of 5—6 km. before Langar and run along its route.

Over this road Maqdisī enumerates the following places which are destination points of particular stages: Shūrmīn, qariya al-Madjūs, Khārih, ribāṭ-i Miyāna, Karūkh and Herāt³².

³⁰ Maqdisī, p. 348.

³¹ Recorded only on the map of the Murghāb River, in the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia*, vol. 28, p. 568.

³² Maqdisī, *ibid.*

The village of Madjūs, a settlement which was the nearest Shūrmīn, was situated about 30 km. from the last-named locality. In view of the lack of unequivocal information on this village, its localization in the territory of Gharchistān is uncertain but, on account of a small distance from Shūrmīn, we may assume that it was a Gharchistān settlement. The character of this locality also testifies to this hypothesis. Judging by its name, it was inhabited by Zoroastrians. Guebres lived in Qarīnain north of Marv-i Rōdh. In the 10th century, Gharchistān was not yet completely Islamized. According to *I ṣ ṭ a k h r ī*, most inhabitants of this province were Moslems and, therefore, it is clear that some of them did not confess Islam. A complete conversion to Islam took place in this region during a later period³³.

It seems that the Khārih and Miyāna situated along the Herāt-Shūrmīn road, should not be assigned to Gharchistān localities.

According to *M a q d i s ī*, the following three settlements, listed from the north to the south, were situated between Afshīn and Shūrmīn: ribāṭ-i Shūr, ribāṭ-i Shār, qariya al Qāzī³⁴. The localization of two forts (inns) Shār and Shūr near each other indicates an error of a geographer who, hearing two forms of the word *shār* ('king'), accepted them as the names of two, different forts. Taking this correction into account, we have only two names left, that is, the fort Shār (or Shūr) and the village Qāzī. Both were situated on the river or near it and close to the road leading to the interior of Gharchistān. Since the valley of this mountain river is, in this place, narrow, the village of Qāzī could not be large. As to the settlement or fort Shār/Shūr, it might be a military signal post or, also on account of its situation in the narrow valley, a small village.

Both settlements were situated near an about 30 km. long road (which corresponds to one marḥala). There are no more detailed data on the distances between them. It would be erroneous to assume that along the Afshīn-Shūrmīn road the distances in kilometers between particular settlements were identical.

The road from Afshīn to Marv-i Rōdh led through ribāṭ-i Kurzuvān, Marzak (?) and ribāṭ-i Rōdh. The next place was Marv-i Rōdh from where Ṭāliqān could be reached in two days through Djisr Harr ('Stone Bridge?'). Ribāṭ-i Rōdh or "River-side Fortress", situated at a distance of one stage from Marv-i Rōdh, may be probably identified with Dizaq-i Marv-i Rōdh (Upper Diza), that is, the present Darband-i Kilrikhta. A. C. Y a t e who has visited these places more than 80 years ago, observed traces of an ancient fortress. This stronghold was not probably contemporary to *M a q d i s ī*'s epoch but such a place, advantageous from the defensive point of view, was probably fortified in all epochs. The fort closed a narrow defile through a gorge which stretches north of the mountains and leads to a flat, fertile area. Since rocky slopes of the hill on top of which it was built steeply descend towards the river, this fort was unaccessible and could be easily defended. Ribāṭ-i Rōdh is included in the Marv-i Rōdh District.

³³ *M a q d i s ī*, *ibid.* *I ṣ ṭ a k h r ī*, Persian text, p. 214. *Q u d a m a*, p. 253.

³⁴ *M a q d i s ī*, *ibid.*

A distance from ribāṭ-i Rōdh (Diza) to Shūrmīn amounted to 6 farsangs. Three settlements were situated along this stretch of land. Over such a short route, the differences in distances were probably very small and adopting 2 farsangs as an average we cannot commit any major error. The nearest settlement was, therefore, situated about 12 km. from Shūrmīn. It was a fortress or a fort called Kurzuvān. As to the more distant Marzak, the present state of knowledge of this country does not allow us to determine its assignment to Gharchistān. Kurzuvān might be either a military post or a fortified village which, on account of its inconvenient situation in the valley of the Murghāb³⁵, was probably a rather small settlement.

The mountain settlement (*qariya*) Balkīyān is mentioned by Ibn Hauqal, Maqdisī and Yāqūt as a capital of Gharchistān. Yāqūt spells its name Bālīkan and the remaining two authors — Balkīyān. We do not know if Balkīyān has anything in common with *belk* or, in the Ṭabaristān dialect, *balk* ('fire'), but, on account of a pagan character of the adjoining Kāfiristān which was converted to Islam as late as in the late-19th century, certain influences exerted by "pagan" traditions on the speech of the inhabitants of these territories are very likely³⁶. No detailed data on the situation of this settlement are available.

Another seat of the *shār*, mentioned by Yāqūt who determines it as a *qaṣaba*³⁷, is Baivār. We do not know anything more about this place.

Singa (in Arabic, *Sindja*) is assigned by G. Le Strange to Gharchistān settlements. Information on this settlement is not, however, sufficiently unequivocal to localize it quite unhesitatingly. Yāqūt maintains that "balad Sindja" was situated on the territory of Gharchistān but further he explains that as Gharchistān she means Ghūr (hiya al-Ghūr). However, neither Sindja nor any other place with a similar name is mentioned in the entry *al-Ghūr*. On the other hand, three different settlements: *s.n.dj* are mentioned in Yāqūt's work *Mu'djam*. Two of them were situated in Marv District and one in Bāmiyān Province, east of Ghūr. Let us quote Yāqūt's own words on the last-named settlement: "Sundja... as it was told by al-'Umrānī, is a village (*qariya*) in Bāmiyān. Another man, who comes from Ghūr, told me that this village is called Sundja, in Persian, *Sunka* [strictly speaking, *Sunga*

³⁵ Maqdisī, *ibid.* A. C. Yate (*Travels*, p. 233) cites the following legend on these ruins: "The lovely daughter of the chief of some neighbouring tribe promised her hand in marriage to that one of her wooers who could dam the Murghab. One of them, Mohammad Hanifa, more determined or madly in love than the rest, essayed and succeeded. The fickle fair one, incited by an aversion for matrimony, not usual with beautiful women, having fulfilled her promise so far as to go through with the marriage ceremony, straightway sought the shelter, not of her husband's, but her father's house. The unfortunate husband in despair drowned his sorrows — not in drink — but in the waters of the Murghab".

³⁶ Ibn Hauqal, p. 323. Yāqūt, *Mu'djam*, vol. III, p. 785. Maqdisī, *ibid.* M. Gul'djanov, *Zavoyevaniye Kafiristana i rasprostraneniye v nem islama*, "Blizhniy i Sredniy Vostok", Moskva 1967, pp. 22—29.

³⁷ Yāqūt, *Mu'djam*, vol. I, p. 803.

as indicated by the spelling alternation of *k/g/dj* — B.S.] and that it is one of the most famous cities [sic — B.S.] in Ghūr”.

The entry *al-Ghūr* contains a mention of one city only, i.e., Fīrūz kūh which was founded as late as the 12th century and, therefore, it did not yet exist in the epoch we are interested in. According to Y ā q ū t, Fīrūz kūh was a fortress (*qalʿa*) in Gharchistān, a province which — to cite his words — is situated between Herāt and Ghazna. He also determines the situation of Gharchistān Province maintaining that this is a region stretching between Herāt, Ghazna, Marv-i Rōdh and Ghūr.

The indications of this type localizing a region are fairly frequently encountered in various sources. Sometimes, they are discrepant or, to say the least, very inaccurate. In *Hūdūd al-ʿālam*, Shūrmīn is called a city in the Herāt District, but M a q d i s ī assigns it to the Ghazna Region. I ṣ ṭ a k h r ī considers Ghardj (= Gharch) and Ghūr to be univocal names. M u s t a u f ī includes Ghūr province in Khorāsān. Under such circumstances, the assignment of Singa to Gharchistān cities is permissible, although rather uncertain³⁸.

M a q d i s ī also mentions a mysterious locality whose name, obliterated in his manuscript, unfortunately remains unknown. On the basis of a few indistinct letters we may only conjecture that it was A...ūn or As...ūn. If the name Afshīn was never before used by M a q d i s ī we might guess that this is precisely the name in question. Since, however, he does mention Afshīn we have to reject such a hypothesis as a too far-fetched correction of the text. Despite this mention, the existence of such a settlement seems to be uncertain because of an unusual laconism of the source. Except for these four indistinct and uncertain letters, no reference to this locality may be found in this geographer's manuscript³⁹.

Of all localities (cities, fortresses, forts, fortified villages and military posts), some were certainly situated within Gharchistān's borders. As to the remaining ones, their situation may be only conjectural.

Afshīn, Baivār, Balkiyyān, ribāṭ-i Kurzuvān, qariya Qāzī, ribāṭ-i Shār/Shūr and Shūrmīn may be assigned to the former and As...ūn (A...ūn), Madjūs, Marzak and Singa to the latter category.

The presence of other settlements, anonymous at the present state of knowledge, cannot be precluded.

³⁸ Y ā q ū t, *Muʿdjam*, vol. III, pp. 161, 163. I ṣ ṭ a k h r ī, Persian text, p. 214. M a q d i s ī, p. 26. According to Y ā q ū t's: Fīrūz kūh — a strong, inaccessible fortress in the mountains of Ghūrshistān (vol. III, p. 930); Bīrūz kūh — a name of one of the two inaccessible fortresses. One of them is situated in the al-Ghūr mountains between Herāt and Ghazna (vol. I, p. 786); Fairūz kūh — the fortress in this provinces is called Fairūz kūh (vol. III, p. 823). Cf. also *Hūdūd al-ʿālam*, Persian ed., p. 93. P. I. P e t r o v, *K voprosu*, p. 76. The boundaries of other provinces were also unsettled, for instance, Dāvar was assigned by some to Sīstān, whereas some others considered it to be an independent country. M a q d i s ī, p. 305. I ṣ ṭ a k h r ī, Persian text, p. 196). Djiruft, the largest city of Kirmān, is included by Ī b n F a - q ī h to Sīstān (cf. his *Kitāb al-buldān*, BGA, vol. V, p. 206). The western boundary of Kirmān was also uncertain, cf. Ī b n H a u q a l, p. 219.

³⁹ M a q d i s ī, p. 50.