

is no longer in use, we are tempted to assume that increasing desiccation makes a journey along this road no longer possible. But here, too, other factors come in. In the westernmost part of the Kevir a road was mentioned between Kashan and Semnan, which was used in the time of Shah Abbas, but is now abandoned. Likewise a direct desert road was spoken of between Jandak and Semnan, which was given up some tens of years ago. So also has the old road between Nakshir and Jandak been abandoned. But why? By reason of increasing droughts? No, it is because of dampness that the Kevir is feared. The road is deserted because a temporary winter lake has been formed on its course and in a part which was dry before. If the climate of the Desht-i-Lut had been moister a thousand years ago than it is now, it is improbable that the western parts of this depression, which consist for the most part of kevir ground, could have been crossed. As a curiosity Makdisi's statement, as related by Tomaschek, may be repeated, that it never rained within the walls of Khabis. In our days, a thousand years later, it is said of this district that it seldom rains there.

What is true of the great Kevir is also true of the smaller depressions in Eastern Persia. The kevir deserts, which lie near the large one, for instance, the Kevir-i-Bajistan, and those lying south of the Khorasan road, may be considered annexes of the larger, though their level is not always the same. The great Kevir has a maximum length of 300 miles and a maximum breadth of 150. The area in round figures is 21,000 square miles, or about that of Lake Michigan.

We found that the basin was surrounded by bare, rather low hills, with the solid rock rising out of its own ruins. Here there is nothing to prevent rapid weathering. The differences of temperature between winter and summer and between day and night are very great, and a protective growth is absent. Rain and snow fall in winter, and frosts break up the surface of the hills ever more and more. The products of weathering form the fans of pebbles and blocks at the foot of the hills; they are very flat, and their material becomes finer and finer as the distance increases down to