

certain silk tissue known as *Yasdi* which merchants carry into many quarters to dispose of." Fifty years later Odorico found Yezd to be "the third best city which the Emperor of the Persians possesses in his whole realm." According to Curzon, the town contained at the beginning of the eighteenth century 100,000 inhabitants, in the years 1860-1870 only 40,000, and in the year 1890 about 70,000 or 80,000. During more than 600 years no progressive diminution can be detected, but certainly periods of prosperity and decline. If the driftsand constantly encroaches on the country in the same way as in the interior of Eastern Turkestan in former times, the town must equally constantly contract and at last disappear altogether. Whether this is the fate which awaits Yezd can only appear in a distant future.

If, then, a system of dunes moves forward in a definite direction, it can only be under the influence of the prevailing wind. If it is stationary, this is the resultant effect of winds from several different quarters. In steppe districts lying near an area of blown sand small sandy ridges may often be seen heaped up to leeward of all the shrubs. Even the smallest obstacle is sufficient to give origin to a rudimentary dune. In such a steppe an unbroken law is observed in the arrangement of the sand; all the small ridges are parallel to one another.

But how remarkable and unexpected is it that the same law obtains, one may say, in the whole of Asia! Naturally there are exceptions depending on local wind conditions. In the innermost parts of Asia winds are seldom experienced. But when we find the Takla-makan, the greatest sandy desert of the world, west-south-west of the Lop-nor depression, where we know that the prevailing wind is east-north-east, and when we find immense accumulations of sand south of the Hamun-i-Seistan depression, where an exceedingly strong north-north-west wind is prevalent, we can take it for granted that in other tracts the position of sandy desert reveals the existence of prevailing winds which may be only just directly perceptible or not at all, but of which the character may be inferred from the position of the sand.