

as briefly suggested in a previous chapter, have since rendered their re-occupation impossible.

Quite apart from the finds which my excavations yielded, there were also other interesting antiquarian observations to be gathered bearing on the general aspects and conditions of life. Thus I traced the remains of ancient orchards and avenues, lines of irrigation channels, debris-covered patches of ground marking the position of humble dwellings, etc., amidst the low dunes. But with such silent witnesses of the past we shall become still better acquainted at the fascinating old site to which the next chapter will take us.

Only one general observation may find room here. Everything at the site pointed to its abandonment having been a gradual one, and in no way connected with any sudden physical catastrophe such as popular legends current about the so-called 'sand-buried cities' of the Taklamakan have induced some European travellers to assume. The Sodom and Gomorrha stories related all over the Tarim basin about 'old towns' suddenly overwhelmed by sand dunes are more ancient than the ruins of Dandan-oilik. Hsüan-tsang had already heard them more or less in the same form in which they are now current. These legends are interesting as folk-lore, but in the face of plain archaeological evidence to the contrary, such as the examination of Dandan-oilik and every other ancient site in this region has supplied, scientific enquiry need have no concern with them.

Detailed surveys, topographical as well as antiquarian, on successive expeditions have convinced me that the lands of Dandan-oilik were irrigated from an extension of the canals which for at least five centuries later brought the water of the streams of Chira, Domoko and Gulakhma to