

the gaunt, splintered trunks of poplars and various fruit trees, which could still be seen, half-buried in the sand, near most of the buildings. On some patches of the original ground left uncovered between the moving dunes the traces of old irrigation channels, running between small banks of earth, and evidently constructed after the fashion that still prevails in the country, were easily recognisable. But owing to the dunes or else to the effects of erosion it was impossible to follow them for any distance.

In many places between the scattered ruins, the ground was thickly strewn with fragments of coarse pottery, small corroded pieces of metal, and similar *débris*. These remains, found in places where at present no traces of old structures survive, probably mark the positions occupied by less pretentious dwellings which, like the houses of common Khotan cultivators of the present day, were built wholly of sun-dried bricks or stamped clay. These were likely to crumble away far more quickly than buildings with a timber frame-work covered by hard plaster. The latter mode of construction also is still used in the towns and villages of Khotan, but being far more expensive, owing to the distance from which wood has to be brought, it is restricted to the houses of the well-to-do and to Mosques, Sarais, and similar buildings. This observation helps to explain, at least partly, why, at sites like Dandan-Uiliq which must for various reasons be supposed to have been occupied by comparatively large settlements, the extant structural remains are limited in number and so widely scattered.

But the striking preponderance of religious buildings among the Dandan-Uiliq remains also suggests the possibility that these local shrines and their small monastic establishments continued to be kept up and visited, perhaps as pilgrimage places, for some time after the rest of the settlement had been abandoned. The conditions in which Muhammadan Ziarats are now often found beyond the present cultivated area of oases, would furnish an exact parallel. In this case the complete decay of the deserted village structures was likely to have been accelerated by the demands that