

which followed, and which is illustrated by the tortuous line of route, fully bore out my misgivings. Yet there was interesting experience to compensate for the trouble and fatigue.

The first couple of miles in a north-westerly direction had brought us to the limit of the newly irrigated land, when to my surprise I came upon unmistakable marks of earlier cultivation beyond. Old fields overgrown with tamarisk and thorny scrub could be clearly distinguished by the little embankments dividing them, as well as by the lines of dry 'Ariks' that once carried water to them. My guides explained that these were the fields of 'old Ponak' village, which had been abandoned "in their grandfathers' time," *i.e.*, forty or fifty years ago. Passing along a road still frequented by the people visiting the cemeteries of the deserted villages, I arrived some three miles further north-west at the southern end of the area known as 'old Domoko.' Here the ruins of mud-built dwellings, constructed exactly like the modern villages of this tract, seemed to extend, together with the interspersed orchards and cemeteries, for fully three miles from east to west. The mud walls, strengthened by the insertion of vertical bundles of Kumush, still often rose 4 to 5 feet above the ground, and the massive fireplaces were intact even to a greater height. The deserted homesteads had been stripped of all materials that could be of use, such as beams, wooden doorposts, &c.; and as scarcely any sand had accumulated about the crumbling ruins, their complete disappearance was only a question of time.

The villagers accompanying me, as well as the people I subsequently examined on my return to the oasis, all agreed in asserting that the gradually increasing difficulty of conducting the irrigation water sufficiently far had caused the cultivated area of these and some other villages of the Begships of Domoko and Gulakhma to be shifted as much as six to eight miles further south within the memory of living men. Local tradition, in fact, maintained that such shifts of the cultivated land, backwards and forwards, had occurred repeatedly in the case of these small oases along the road from Keriya to Chira. Evidence that cannot be detailed here