

separated in distances could adequately be accounted for by progressive desiccation alone.

These surveys gave me plentiful opportunities for instructive observations on the physical changes which had come over this desert area around Khadalik, once evidently occupied by numerous villages. Again and again I noted how the patches of open ground, probably marking the positions where the dwellings of small agricultural settlements had clustered, were being broken up and scooped out by the erosive force of wind and driven sand. Small terraces of fairly hard loess soil, rising to heights of six to thirteen feet above the eroded depressions close by, served as 'witnesses' indicating approximately the ancient level of the ground. Thin layers of pottery fragments and similar hard *débris* on their surface helped to explain why these terraces had withstood the unceasing attack of wind erosion. How the latter was proceeding could be clearly seen from the sides of the terraces, which everywhere showed the effects of under-cutting as plainly as the bank of a river towards which the current sets. What remains of modest dwellings could still be traced here, consisted usually of low rush walls or fences, which by their very weakness offered less scope to the grinding force of driven sand, and on the contrary were apt to catch and retain it as a cover.

The closely packed sand-cones, encircling such open areas and rising to fifteen feet or more above the original ground level, illustrated in their structure the same phenomenon. Tangled masses of tamarisk scrub, usually dead at the foot but still flourishing on the top, invariably covered these small hillocks. There could be no doubt that the latter owed their origin to the tamarisk bushes, which had first overrun the fields when cultivation ceased, and had then served to catch and collect the drift sand passing over the ground. It was this initial stage of the process which I had seen exhibited by the low tamarisk thickets spread over the abandoned fields of Ponak and 'Old Domoko.' The struggle for light and air, which the tamarisk bushes once rooted on level ground had to carry on against the sand steadily accumulating around them, forced their