

unpromising aspects, I had gathered a rich harvest. The manuscript remains carried away nearly sufficed to fill a good-sized mule-trunk, and probably exceeded three or four times all the finds in Brahmi script of my former journey.

Before leaving the Domoko tract I decided to search a spot south of the oasis where, according to an old villager's statement reported by Mullah Khwaja, 'old papers' had been found some forty years before by men engaged in searching for saltpetre to supply Yakub Beg's powder factories. They were said to have been thrown away again on the spot as useless rubbish. It seemed a true 'treasure-seeking' business to follow so vague a clue, especially as Mullah Khwaja knew nothing of ruins there. But the march to the alleged site proved of interest.

It gave me the desired opportunity of visiting the main oasis of Domoko, and also of clearing up the peculiar irrigation conditions to which its latest colony, Malak-alagan, owed its rise. When in 1901 I first touched the northern edge of this tract, I was struck by the shifting which its irrigated area had undergone within living memory. From the site of 'Old Domoko' in the zone of desert vegetation immediately to the north-west of Malak-alagan, where I then came across abandoned fields and dwellings, the area of cultivation had, according to the villagers' uniform statements, been transferred to its present position, eight miles farther south, near the Khotan-Keriya high road, only some sixty years before. The gradually increasing difficulty of conducting the irrigation water sufficiently far was indicated to me as the cause of the shift. This had undoubtedly served to bring the cultivated area nearer to the springs in which the water of the mountain streams about Nura and Tört-Imam comes to light again at the foot of the great glacis of Piedmont gravel southwards, and upon which the oasis entirely depends for irrigation before the summer floods.

It was thus natural to connect the shift with that general desiccation or gradual drying up of the climate which, as is becoming clear to competent observers, has affected the physical conditions of Central Asia so extensively during the historical period. The merit of having first systematic-