

period of Chinese rule in the Tarim Basin under the T'ang dynasty, *i.e.* the second half of the eighth century A.D. The probability thus presented of sites at opposite edges of the Domoko oasis,—Khadalik, etc., below, and Mazar-toghruk with Kara-yantak above, the present area of irrigation—having been abandoned about the same time is in itself of considerable geographical interest.

But the problem raised as to the cause of this abandonment is thrust more forcibly upon our attention when we remember that the same period must have seen the desertion of the large ruined settlement of Dandan-oilik which I explored in 1900 and which, as recognized by Mr. Huntington, had received its water from the same drainage system. Dandan-oilik is situated fully fifty-six miles farther north in the desert; and if shrinkage of the water-supply needed for irrigation were to be considered as the only possible cause of abandonment of these sites, the chronological coincidence in the case of localities dependent on the same streams and yet so widely separated would be very curious.

That such shrinkage of the available water-supply has taken place in the Tarim Basin during historical times, and that it must be connected with a general desiccation period affecting the whole of Central Asia and probably most regions of the earth, is a conclusion to which we are forced by a mass of evidence steadily accumulating from ancient sites examined in the desert or near the present oases. Nobody has done more than Mr. Huntington to bring out this central fact. Taking the tract which extends along the southern edge of the Taklamakan between Chira and Keriya, it is certain that the water now brought down by its rivers would be quite insufficient to reach the more distant ruined sites, such as Dandan-oilik. Nor would it be adequate to irrigate, besides the actual oases, the whole of the area adjoining them that was once cultivated.

But this fact by no means justifies the assumption that, because desiccation has rendered once cultivated areas incapable of reoccupation after the lapse of centuries, their original abandonment must have been due to the same cause. Where man's struggle with adverse conditions of