

it seemed clear that the water of the Charchan Darya could still be brought here without difficulty. But far-advanced deflation has left on these southern Tatis only a soil of fine gravel without the fertile loess layer which once covered it, and with many thousands of acres of fertile ground available along the river lower down, renewed cultivation is not likely to take this direction.

None of these 'Tatis' which my guide distinguished by quaint fancy designations offered scope for systematic archaeological labour. Nor did I succeed in discovering among their small débris anything affording a definite clue as to their age. So great appears to be here the force of wind erosion that intact Chinese copper coins, so common at most of such sites, are said never to be found now. Only tiny fragments retaining the characteristic rim attest their former existence. Some gauge, however, as to the different age of the débris areas is afforded by the fact that, while to the south the ground once cultivated has been denuded right down to the underlying Piedmont gravel, the 'Kone-shahr' Tati adjoining the present oasis which may represent the site of mediaeval Charchan shows its remains resting on loess soil, the process of erosion being still in progress. As an indication of the eroding force at work I may mention that a huge solitary 'witness' of loess in the middle of the Tati adjoining the Ayak-tar bed rises to a height of twenty-three feet and is covered with very hard potsherds of ancient look on its slopes.

All day a strong wind was blowing from the north-east, and its icy blast made me glad in the evening for the shelter of my room in Tursun Bai's house. By dint of great efforts the freshly hired camels and the supplies we needed for the journey to Charklik had been secured in good time along with the men's winter equipment. There were no antiquarian tasks to retain me, and thus I could keep to my programme and set the caravan on the move again by the morning of November 23rd. For Ram Singh, who was still away triangulating the range to the south, I left instructions to rejoin me at Charklik and carry his surveys eastwards as far as possible by the foot of the mountains.