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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed September 29, 1933

"EXSICCATION"

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Meteorologists apply the term "desiccation" to the permanent disappearance of water from an area due to a change of climate and especially to a progressive decrease of rainfall. Large portions of central Asia, Africa and western America have been desiccated since the last glacial period, but there does not appear to have been much progressive desiccation anywhere within historic times.

A newer term in the vocabulary of weather is "exsiccation," which is defined as the driving away of moisture from a region regardless of the supply from the atmosphere. The Meteorological Glossary of the British Meteorological Office says:

"The term implies some change, frequently the result of human agency, which decreases the quantity of moisture available without any appreciable change in the average rainfall. Examples of exsiccation are the washing away of the soil due to the removal of the vegetative cover, with the consequent conversion of a fertile region into a semblance of desert, the advance of sand dunes across cultivated ground, and the draining of swampy ground."

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