

even so, the animals were a most fortunate investment; for they did us the best of service, and we sold them at a profit far away at Turfan, where prices are much higher.

During our stay at Keriya, I learned of another reason for believing that the Keriya River never watered the oasis of Litsa. Except at times of high flood, all the water of the Keriya River is spread out on the oasis and disappears. Below the city, however, numerous springs well out and give rise to a new stream, which meanders northward through the desert for over a hundred and fifty miles. In traveling down the river on the way to Dandan-Uilik, I marveled that so large a stream, flowing perennially through a low, smooth plain, was not utilized for irrigation. When I questioned the shepherds, they merely said that there were no people. At Keriya, two or three well-informed men told me that attempts had been made to use the water, but all had failed. The first year the crops were good, but the second they dwindled greatly, and were not worth raising. The trouble lay in the salinity of the river. Evidently, such a river could never have watered the oasis of Litsa with its large villages of Dandan-Uilik and Rawak.

To-day, the Keriya River ends in the sand halfway from the town of Keriya to the Tarim River. Beyond its present terminus the sand of the Takla-Makan desert prevails, and no caravan except that of a daring explorer like Hedin can possibly traverse the waterless desert. Nevertheless, Littledale was told by a Chinese official that formerly there was a road down the river and across the desert to Kucha; and Stein says that "a remark of Mirza Haidar, the Moghul leader and historian, makes it very probable that the