

are unusually small for Chinese Turkestan. I spent the next five weeks in exploring the lower ends of the Niya, Yartungaz, and Endereh rivers. All three furnished seemingly conclusive evidence of a secular change of climate. The whole country for six or seven hundred miles east of Keriya is so scantily populated that the human factor can in many cases be eliminated, and we are able to form an exact estimate of the influence of purely physical causes on the size and salinity of rivers and on the distribution of life.

From Keriya I sent the camels directly to Niya, while I went with the horses by way of the gold-mining town of Sorgak. The town lies on the enormous fan delta of gravel which the Niya River has deposited where it suddenly emerges from the Kwen Lun mountains and crosses the old fault-line to the relatively level basin floor. Sorgak presents the essential features of a mining town in the southwestern part of the United States. Perhaps it is a trifle more barren and unattractive than the worst of our mining towns, but from a distance it gives the same impression of rawness to the traveler. It lies in a basin-shaped valley a quarter of a mile or more from the edge of the deep gorge of the Niya River, whence water must be brought up on the shoulders of women, or the backs of donkeys. Not a vestige of verdure can be seen, nothing but gravel with dug-outs half buried in it. Here and there a blatantly new shanty with a mud roof and an unseasoned wooden front stands among the older, duskier structures. The population of the region is said to be between three and four hundred families, and the total number of men who work as miners,