

left sterile through want of irrigation, and salty soil with plentiful Kumush or reed beds, until we reached cultivation again at the village of Kara-bash. Its irrigation proved to be supplied not by canals from the Ighiz-yar river but by springs of 'Kara-su' (literally 'black water') in which the water sunk into the gravel beds higher up on the alluvial fan comes to light again.

Soon we struck the high road from Yarkand some three miles before it enters Yangi-hissar, and were met there by an imposing cavalcade. The two dozen odd Hindu money-lenders settled in that flourishing district town had learned of my approach overnight and had ridden out to bid me welcome. Their wish to offer attention to an officer of the 'Sirkar' which protects them in this land of highly profitable exile was quite genuine, and the hospitality offered by old Hira Lal, their Ak-sakal or head-man, acceptable enough after the weary ride in heat and glare. Yet as I looked at the brave show of my *cortège* on prancing ponies I thought of all the mischief resulting from these hardy Shikarpuris being allowed to fasten themselves on Turkestan soil and leech-like to suck by their usury the substance of its cultivators.

White-haired Hira himself was quite an interesting person to talk to. As a path-finder for the whole money-lending fraternity he had come to Yangi-hissar by way of Bokhara as long ago as 1870. Since then he had seen the population of the district and the area of its cultivation fully doubled, mainly a result of the peace and order established by the Chinese after the troubled times of the Muhammadan rebellion. How much Hira himself had benefited by this economic development I could have guessed from the fine house and garden to which he welcomed me in the main Bazar of the lively town, even if I had not heard long before of the Lakhs of rupees he had remitted to his family in distant Sind.

But there was scant time to gather information from this far-travelled and successful representative of the Indian money-lending profession. When, during an hour's halt in Hira Lal's shady garden, I had refreshed myself with a wash and some tea and secured a change of