

alternative seems incredible, especially when the scarcity of water in winter is considered, but it is impossible to speak positively. It is scarcely probable that with the Chira, Genju, and Pisha rivers close at hand, any government would have chosen to build the chief walled town of the district on a little brook, which, under the best of circumstances, could provide barely enough water for drinking purposes. There is no ground for supposing that part of the brook has been diverted, or that it has grown smaller for any reason other than change of climate. If the climate was somewhat moister, and the brook larger, all difficulty disappears.

The hypothesis of climatic change explains another point. If conditions were as they are to-day, it is remarkable that so large a town should have grown up in this remote spot among the mountains. The population from Pisha on the west to Imamla on the east—the district which is naturally tributary to a market town located at Choka—amounts to-day to less than five thousand people. It could not be greatly increased without the adoption of irrigation methods far in advance of any known ever to have been practiced in Central Asia. The present bazaar town of Chaka, northeast of Choka, has a population of about three or four hundred directly around the centre, although as the weekly bazaar was revived only ten years ago, the number may increase somewhat. A town like Choka, with from three to five thousand people, seems disproportionately large as the centre of an outlying district with a population scarcely twice as great. If, however, the climate were more propitious, the possibilities of irrigation would increase; and the pasture zone upon the loess deposits would be increased