

much more. Nomads might become numerous, and the total population might be several-fold larger. It is probable that such was the case. From Khotan eastward we heard frequent mention of the "Kalmucks" or Mongol nomads of Buddhist faith, who appear to have once lived in considerable numbers along the base of the Kwen Lun mountains. A road almost unused, and running for hundreds of miles along the base of the mountains, is always called the "Kalmuck road," and appears to have been formerly more frequented than now. At present, though every available spring and stream is utilized, the population is extremely scanty. There seems to be a general impression, however, that some hundreds of years ago, in the days of the Mongols, the population was greater, and this means that the water supply was then greater also.

A few miles north of Choka, I discovered the ruins of Karaki, or old Hasha, a close reproduction of those of Choka. They are only a sixth as large, and partake far more of the nature of a fortress than of a town. The natives have no idea as to whether the water supply came from the Karatash River, a hundred and fifty feet below on the east, or from the brook on the west. The latter is said to be dry except during rain. Here, as at Choka, we are confronted by the question whether the water supply came by an impossibly elaborate and completely vanished aqueduct from the red-walled gorge of the river, or by an easy ditch from the dry brook. There is the same scarcity of pottery as at Choka; and the people say that nothing of value has ever been found, though they and their ancestors have dug among the ruins in every direction. The fortress