

that it was identical with Marco Polo's 'City of Etzina.' Of this we are told in the great Venetian traveller's narrative that it lay a twelve days' ride from the city of Kan-chou, 'towards the north on the verge of the desert; it belongs to the Province of Tangut.' All travellers bound for Kara-koram, the old capital of the Mongols, had here to lay in victuals for forty days in order to cross the great 'desert which extends forty days' journey to the north, and on which you meet with no habitation nor baiting place.'

"The position thus indicated was found to correspond exactly to that of Khara-khoto, and the identification was completely borne out by the antiquarian evidence brought to light. It soon showed me that though the town may have suffered considerably, as local tradition asserts, when Chingiz Khan with his Mongol army first invaded and conquered Kansu from this side about 1226 A.D., yet it continued to be inhabited down to Marco Polo's time, and partially at least for more than a century later. This was probably the case even longer with the agricultural settlement for which it had served as a local centre, and of which we traced extensive remains in the desert to the east and north-east. But the town itself must have seen its most flourishing times under Tangut or Hsi-hsia rule from the beginning of the eleventh century down to the Mongol conquest.

"It was from this period, when Tibetan influence from the south seems to have made itself strongly felt throughout Kansu, that most of the Buddhist shrines and memorial Stupas dated, which filled a great portion of the ruined town and were conspicuous also outside it. In one of the latter Colonel Kozloff had made his notable find of Buddhist texts and paintings. But a systematic search of this and other ruins soon showed that the archæological riches of the site were by no means exhausted. By a careful clearing of the débris which covered the bases of Stupas and the interior of temple cellas we brought to light abundant remains of Buddhist manuscripts and block prints, both in Tibetan and the as yet very imperfectly known old Tangut language, as well as plenty of interesting relievos in stucco or terra-cotta and frescoes. The very extensive refuse heaps of the town yielded up a large number of miscellaneous records on paper in the Chinese, Tangut, and Uigur scripts, together with many remains of fine glazed pottery, and of household utensils. Finds of Hsi-hsia coins, ornaments in stone and metal, etc., were also abundant, particularly on wind-eroded ground.