

road lines crossing this area, particularly in its eastern portion where a main street leading up from the east gate to a ruined temple raised high on a clay mound could be followed with ease also on the ground. But even along this it was easier to make sure of flanking refuse heaps than of the position of buildings which had crumbled away almost completely. Most of the structures within the walls, and probably all private dwellings, had been built of stamped clay and timber walls of no great thickness, and these walls were bound to decay rapidly once occupation had ceased. Wilful destruction and long-continued burrowing for 'treasure' at a site so easily accessible from ground still inhabited have probably accelerated the process, and at certain points traces of fire were unmistakable. This levelling of the interior had doubtless already proceeded far by the time that the accumulation of drift-sand outside overtopped the walls. Hence the protection which dunes might have afforded to ruined structures had here been of no avail.

Limitation
of search.

It was easy to realize from the first that a complete clearing of the interior could not be attempted with the small band of inefficient Mongol diggers. It would have implied a disproportionate sacrifice of time on our part, even if it had been possible to persevere with it in spite of the difficulties due to refractory workers, the heat, the dust-storms, and the scarcity of water. So I decided to confine our search to those few among the temple ruins recognizable in the western portion of the town where layers of debris still remained likely to hide objects of interest, and to the extensive refuse heaps elsewhere which held out some promise of fragments of writing, &c., capable of affording chronological evidence. In this hope I was not disappointed, and as the finds of written records in these places, together with the coins picked up within the walls and immediately outside them, removed from the start all doubt as to the period down to which occupation must have extended, we may review them at once.

Written
remains
amidst
refuse.

Among the deposits of rubbish, composed mainly of stable refuse, chippings of wood, broken pottery, &c., those found along the sides of what appeared to have been the chief thoroughfares were the largest. They lay mostly in places where no remains of substantial structures adjoined, and the conclusion seems justified that they had chiefly accumulated close to modest habitations which may have served as booths, inns and the like, and which, in consequence of their poor construction, have suffered complete effacement. Apart from a few fragments of wooden objects bearing stray Chinese characters, all the inscribed remains are of paper, and their general condition leaves no doubt that they had found their way into the rubbish-heaps as 'waste papers'. The great majority of the documents are torn pieces, many of quite small size, while others, though apparently complete, were found twisted into rolls or otherwise crumpled up. In some cases a number of strips bearing Chinese characters had been tied together in knots. Among the records thus recovered, those in Chinese were by far the most numerous, and so far as appeared from a hasty examination at the time, all, with the exception of some printed pieces, were hand-written. A rough inventory prepared before the submission of the Khara-khoto materials to different collaborators shows a total of some 230 Chinese documents and fragments from this source, as against 57 pieces in the Hsi-hsia or Tangut script, close on half of these being printed. Of fragments showing Tibetan writing only three were found, in addition to a Chinese document with a Tibetan endorsement and two pieces containing writing both in Hsi-hsia and Tibetan. Finally the yield of the refuse heaps includes 9 pieces inscribed in Uighur script and Turkish language [see Prof. von Lecoq's App. K].

Chrono-
logical
bearing of
documents.

As no data have yet reached me from the two scholars who have kindly undertaken the examination of the Chinese and the Hsi-hsia and Tibetan remains respectively, I am unable to surmise what indications of definite chronological bearing, if any, these 'waste papers' from the rubbish-heaps of Khara-khoto may furnish. The presence of Hsi-hsia pieces, both written and printed, suffices, however, to prove that the town must have been inhabited during the period of the Hsi-hsia dynasty