

to lay in victuals 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 at the ruined site (Fig. 114). This soon showed me that though the walled town may have suffered considerably, as local Mongol tradition asserts, when Chingiz Khan with his Mongols first invaded Kansu from this side about A.D. 1226, yet it continued to be inhabited down to Marco Polo's time and at least partially even later, down to the fifteenth century. This was certainly the case with the agricultural settlement for which it had served as a local centre, and of which we discovered extensive remains in the desert to the east and north-east. But the town itself must have seen its most flourishing times under the Tangut or Hsihsia rule from the beginning of the eleventh century down to the Mongol conquest.

It was from this period, when Tibetan influence seems to have made itself strongly felt from the south, 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 important find of Buddhist texts and paintings. But a systematic search of this and other ruins soon showed that the archaeological riches of the site were by no means exhausted.

By a careful clearing of the debris, which covered the bases of Stupas and the interior of temple cellas, we brought to light abundant remains of Buddhist manuscripts and block