

prints both in Tibetan and the as yet undeciphered 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 a variety of scripts, Chinese, Tangut, Uigur or Turkish. Among them I may specially mention a printed bank-note of the Mongol Emperor Kublai, Marco Polo's patron, dating from the year 1260. Finds of fine glazed pottery, ornaments of stone and metal and other antiques, were also abundant on wind-eroded ground.

There was much to support the belief that the final abandonment of Khara-khoto was brought about by difficulties of irrigation. The dry river-bed which passes close to the ruined town lies some seven miles away to the east of the nearest branch still reached by the summer floods. The old canals we traced leading to the abandoned farms eastwards are removed considerably farther. It was impossible definitely to determine whether this failure of irrigation had been brought about by a reduction in the volume of the Etsin-gol's water or been caused by a change in the river course at canal-head with which the settlement had for some reason been unable to cope. Anyhow, there seemed good reason to believe that the water-supply now reaching the delta during a few summer months would no longer suffice to assure adequate irrigation for the once cultivated area. Even at the Mao-mei oasis, over 150 miles farther up the river, and with conditions far more favourable for the maintenance of canals, serious trouble had been experienced for years past in securing an adequate supply of water early enough in the season. Hence, much of the once cultivated area had been abandoned.