

the excavated area, the banks worked immediately below the houses of Khalche, where the proceeds in antiques, such as terra-cotta figurines, seals, &c., are richest, show a "culture-stratum" 13 to 14 feet thick. It is evident that this varying depth is due to the different length of the periods during which particular localities were occupied, and to the different character of the uses to which they had been put. The frequency of pottery fragments and of bones also varies at different points.

But in one respect all portions of the "culture-strata" exposed show a regrettable uniformity: nowhere did I come upon traces of remains of buildings, nor could I hear of such having been found during previous excavations. This is easily accounted for by the fact that, owing to the total absence of suitable stone, sun-dried bricks and clay supplemented by timber must have been in old days, just as now, the only obtainable materials for the construction of houses in the Khotan region. Whatever of the mud walls of buildings had not crumbled into dust, was bound to decay completely in the course of the centuries during which the site was taken up for cultivation and the soil kept constantly moist by the percolation of irrigation water. The same fate overtook whatever of the wood once contained in the buildings had not been extracted and utilised by successive occupiers of the soil. It might have been different if the old town had been overwhelmed by some sudden catastrophe and its site left deserted. Then we should expect to find under the ruins the original materials preserved in a recognisable form. But there is nothing to support the assumption of such a catastrophe.

The strata containing the old remains are everywhere covered by a considerable layer of alluvium from 9 to 20 feet thick at various points. This layer, which by its light colour is easily distinguished from the "culture-strata" below and is absolutely free from remains indicating subsequent occupation of the site, interested me greatly. Some of the earlier European visitors to Yotkan have hazarded the assumption that the thick cover of earth under which the relics of the old town are hidden was due to a great flood, and they accordingly attributed its destruction to