

standardised form which corresponded to the Chinese k'ai-shu style. These two types of writing, as well as the semicursive Chinese forms (hing-shu) and the Chinese abridged writing (ts'ao-shu), are found among the documents.

Still in 1916 Laufer wrote (T'oung Pao, vol. XVII p. 4-5), "It is perhaps the most complicated system ever invented by a human mind, — ideographic, like Chinese, the single characters being composed of a bewildering mass of irregular lines, in which no method or principle has as yet been disclosed". — The basis of this writing is without the slightest doubt the ideography of Chinese characters of the chuan ductus. The ideograms are in part phonetic, in part they serve to transcribe Dhāranīs, foreign words, Chinese and Tangut names of families and places, and in part to furnish grammatical particles. In dictionaries they are generally separated after the Fan-tsi 反切 method into two phonetic (Tangut or) Chinese characters. As ideograms are meant for the eye rather than for the ear, it is impossible to determine the phonetic equivalent, except when one knows what dialect of all the multitude of Chinese dialects is expected to be deciphered. The two Chinese ideograms were written, as was the custom, in columns. The sequence of characters was adapted from the sequence in vocabularies (particularly the one compiled in 1190 by the Tangut Ku-lo Mao-ts'ai 骨勒茂才, the Fan-han ho shī chang chung chu 番漢合時掌中珠) that is to say, the characters were read from right to left.

Thanks to this, it has been possible to decipher an increasing number of ideograms, their meaning as well as their phonetics. Finally it has been proved that they belong to the Tibeto-Burmese group of languages. In this group, among the languages still spoken today, that of the Lolo and of the Moso are the most similar. Using the first syllable of the words, Laufer has collected them in a group called "Si-lo-mo". What is common to all of these languages is, for example, the lack of k, p, t as terminal consonants. The Tangut language had, like the Chinese, five different tones: the high even tone, the low even tone, the rising tone, the descending tone, and the sharp tone. The grammatical rules of the language are generally laws of harmony. Thus the adjective (the attribute), is sometimes found after the word to be explained, sometimes before (as in Tibetan). The verb (predicate) is always at the end of the sentence.

THE WRITING AND LANGUAGE OF THE K'I-TAN 契丹 by WILLY BARUCH

Si-hia writing is probably derived from that of the K'i-tan, but although we know considerably today about the language and writing of the Si-hia, we are as yet unable to say anything definite about the system of writing or about the language of the K'i-tan.

The history of this people, who during the XI, XII and XIII centuries played