

while another inscription of local provenance, Ast. 09 (Pl. LXXV), brought to me by villagers of Astāna, shows the date of A. D. 571.¹ These epigraphic records, combined with the dates which, as shown above, are found among the documents recovered from the tombs, establish it beyond doubt that the period to which the tombs of the Astāna cemeteries in the main belong extends from the latter half of the sixth century to the first half of the eighth.

Chinese
influence at
Turfān.

This conclusion is fully supported by the data derived from Chinese sepulchral inscriptions and documents collected by M. Tachibana from tombs of Astāna and the previously mentioned cemetery to the north of Idikut-shahri; these data have been rendered accessible by M. Maspero's review of the Japanese publication in which they appeared.² M. Maspero in his lucid analysis has justly laid stress on the fact that these records conclusively prove the predominant influence that Chinese civilization must have exercised at Turfān during the period above indicated. This influence was well established long before the territory was reduced to a district of the Chinese Empire and was necessarily much strengthened during the time of effective Chinese administration down to the close of the eighth century.

Chinese
burial
customs
observed.

The inscriptions make it certain that the bodies in the tombs examined were those of persons either Chinese by origin or else of natives of Kao-ch'ang who, whatever their descent, were entirely under the sway of Chinese civilization. It is sufficient to point to the Chinese names of the dead, the Chinese official titles borne by them, and the very language and contents of the funerary records. This conclusion is completely borne out by what our examination of the tombs has revealed as to the manner of their burial. It does not fall within either my task or my competence to attempt to prove in detail that all the points observed in connexion with these burials at Astāna conform to Chinese rules and usages regarding the disposal of the dead, as Chinese literature shows them to have been at the period in question. It must suffice to state that most of the essential facts summarized below from our preceding description of the tombs and bodies examined can be accounted for even by those who are not Sinologists from the abundant materials that the late Professor J. J. M. De Groot has rendered available in the first two volumes of his great publication dealing with the 'Disposal of the Dead'.³

Variations
in burial
customs.

But this exhaustive disquisition on what has always been a most important part of Chinese religious and customary lore also shows that, notwithstanding the persistence of the fundamental ideas underlying, the burial practices have been subject to considerable variations at different times and in different localities. Hence there is reason to hope that, apart from the interest attaching to particular finds, the observations made in the tombs of Astāna will prove useful to research as illustrating changes of custom of which adequate knowledge cannot be obtained merely from literary records or from modern practice.

Arrange-
ment of
tombs.

In the introductory remarks of this chapter I have already indicated the essential features uniformly noted in the arrangement of all the tombs in the cemeteries of Astāna. I mean the approach trench, the tomb chamber carved in the clay of the 'Sai', the low pyramidal mound raised above the tomb chamber, and the grouping of the tombs in rectangular graveyards marked by low embankments of gravel. The uniformity observed in these structural features goes some way to prove that the burials in different portions of the great cemetery area probably took place during approximately the same period as that indicated by the range of dates recorded in inscriptions and documents. In a number of tombs the regular plan of tomb chamber and approach trench divided by a narrow walled-up entrance was enlarged by the addition of one or two anterooms;

¹ See below, M. Maspero's Appendix A.

² Cf. M. Maspero's paper in *B.E.F.E.O.* xv. pp. 57 sqq., on *Seiki kōko zusu*, Tōkyō, 1915 (2 vols. of plates); for the

cemetery NE. of Idikut-shahri, cf. above, p. 642.

³ See De Groot, *The Religious System of China*, Book I, pp. 1-473, 659-806.