

we first recovered long detached leaves of paper manuscripts, then whole little packets of folia (Fig. 33). They could at once be recognized by me as written in early Indian Brahmi script, containing Buddhist texts partly in Sanskrit, the classical language of India in which the canonical literature of Northern Buddhism is composed, and partly in a previously unknown language which has proved to have been the indigenous tongue of the Khotan population.

The writing as well as the shape and arrangement of these manuscripts are, of course, derived from India, the original home of Buddhism. But the researches of competent scholars, working partly on materials which had been secured previously from Khotan as the result of local 'treasure-seeking' operations, have proved that old Khotanese language to be Iranian. It appears to have been closely allied with that spoken in the early centuries of our era in ancient Bactria and elsewhere on the Middle Oxus. We know that Buddhist cult and doctrine had penetrated very early through the present Afghanistan into that part of Eastern Iran, and there can be no doubt that Buddhism and the Indian cultural influences associated with it had reached the Tarim basin first, if not solely, through the same region. Buddhist cult and iconography can be shown to have absorbed Iranian elements also on this passage.

Their impact is illustrated in a very striking fashion by a remarkable and fairly well-preserved painted panel (Fig. 32) which came to light as a votive deposit in one of the temple cellas cleared. On one side is seen the figure of a powerful male, wholly Persian in physical appearance and style of dress, yet obviously intended for a Buddhist divinity. The long ruddy face, surrounded by a heavy black beard,