

Sasanian period ending in the seventh century A.D. This close contact in time with the remains of the Dandan-oilik shrines adds to the interest which the introduction of the deified Iranian hero into the local Pantheon of Khotan affords as an illustration of the accretions undergone by Buddhist cult on its passage into Central Asia.

The time when the site of Dandan-oilik was abandoned to the desert can fortunately be determined by converging chronological evidence from manuscript remains of a secular character. There were found in some ruined dwelling-places, probably monastic, small sheets of thin paper with Brahmi script (Fig. 33). On subsequent examination these have proved to be documents drawn up in Khotanese language and relating to petty local transactions, such as deeds of loan, requisition orders, etc. The palaeographic character of these writings as well as of the canonical Buddhist manuscripts pointed to the eighth century as their probable date. The correctness of this approximate dating, due mainly to the scholarship of the late Dr. Hoernle, one of my oldest and most helpful collaborators, has been established by a series of Chinese documents (Fig. 34) brought to light from more than one of the ruined monastic quarters.

When examined by the late Professor Chavannes, the lamented great Sinologue of Paris and my unfailing guide in all that related to Chinese records, they proved to contain petitions for the recovery of debts, bonds for small loans, reports from a small local officer and the like. As was to be expected in documents drafted by people so strongly imbued with chronological sense as the Chinese are, these finds supply us with exact dates ranging from A.D. 781 to 790. They have given us also the Chinese name, *Li-sieh*, of