

varied regions, races and creeds of which Tun-huang was the scene from Han times onwards. Needless to say that most of the information this rapid synopsis can present is derived from the painstaking researches which a number of distinguished Orientalist collaborators have carried on for years.

The great mass of Chinese manuscripts (Fig. 91) proves that religious life at the Thousand Buddhas and also in the Tun-huang oasis, of which it has always been the most sacred site, was maintained mainly by Chinese Buddhists. The Chinese materials brought away by me in 1907 comprise about 3000 more or less complete rolls, many of great extent, and besides close on 6000 documents and detached text-pieces. No wonder that their cataloguing, started about 1914 by Dr. L. Giles of the British Museum, after Professor Pelliot had been obliged to abandon this task, has only now been completed for the press. The great majority of the rolls contain texts of the Buddhist canon as constituted in China. The devoted labours of a Japanese scholar, Rev. K. Yabuki, have shown that there are among them works previously unknown or lost.

But in addition there are to be found many fragments of secular texts, otherwise unknown, bearing on history, geography and other branches of Chinese scholarship. There have been found hundreds of documents throwing light on local conditions of life, monastic administration and the like, all representing a category of records of which practically nothing has otherwise come down to us from that early period. The exact dates noted in the colophons of rolls and in the documents extend from the very beginning of the fifth down to the close of the tenth century A.D. From the