

examination of these dates and that of the materials gathered by Professor Pelliot, it results that the walling up of the great deposit must have taken place about the beginning of the eleventh century, probably at the time when the conquest of this border region by the Tanguts caused danger to the religious establishments of the site.

This great store of Chinese literary remains will yet claim painstaking researches for many years to come. I can refer here only to one or two of the interesting discoveries already made by European and Japanese scholars. In the large block-printed roll dated A.D. 868 is found the oldest specimen of a printed book so far known. The perfect technique displayed by the text and the frontispiece indicates a long preceding development of the printer's craft.

Even more important from another point of view is the discovery of Manichæan texts in Chinese garb. Their study has furnished the safest basis so far available for the study of that strange syncretistic religion of Mani which embodies so many Christian elements. It was hitherto known almost solely from the writings of its Christian adversaries and from text fragments discovered at Turfan. Firmly established first in the Persian Empire of the Sasanides, Manichæism had for centuries been widely spread throughout Central Asia. Westwards it penetrated even into Mediterranean countries, and in certain heretical sects of Eastern Europe its influence survived to the late Middle Ages.

The Tibetan manuscript rolls and documents (Fig. 92) approach the Chinese materials nearest in character and extent. They also, for the most part, contain Buddhist canonical texts. But the learned labours of Professor F. W. Thomas, of Oxford, have shown that among these Tibetan remains, too,