

explain to my readers the significance of the mass of antiquarian materials brought to light by my excavations—whether in the form of objects of ancient art and industry; or in those hundreds of old manuscripts and documents which the desert sand has preserved in such surprising freshness; or finally in the many curious observations I was able to make on the spot about the conditions of every-day life, etc., once prevailing in those sand-buried settlements. But of the great historical questions which all these finds help to illuminate, it was impossible to show more than the bare outlines, and those only in glimpses. This cannot be the place for their systematic discussion. But I may at least indicate here the main directions in which those discoveries are likely to open new vistas into obscure periods of Central-Asian civilisation.

The early spread of Buddhist teaching and worship from India into Central Asia, China and the Far East is probably the most remarkable contribution made by India to the general development of mankind. Chinese records had told us that Buddhism reached the "Middle Kingdom" not directly from the land of its birth, but through Central-Asian territories lying northward. We also knew from the accounts left by the devoted Chinese pilgrims who, from the fourth century A.D. onwards, had made their way to the sacred Buddhist sites in India, that Sakyamuni's creed still counted numerous followers in many of the barbarian "Western Kingdoms" they passed through. But these Chinese travellers, best represented by the saintly "Master of the Law," Hiuen-Tsiang, our Indian Pausanias, had their eyes fixed on subjects of spiritual interest, on holy places and wonder-working shrines, on points of doctrine and monastic observance. Of the many things of this world about which their observations would have been of far greater interest for the historical student, they have rarely chosen to inform us even within the sacred bounds of India. Hence their brief notices of Central-Asian countries, visited merely en route, fail to supply definite indications of the extent to which Indian culture, language and art had spread with Buddhist propaganda across the Himalaya and the Hindukush.