

and documents were also unexpectedly ample and varied. The Sanskrit manuscripts excavated at Dandan-Uiliq acquaint us with that class of canonical Buddhist literature which we may assume to have been most cherished in the monastic establishments of ancient Khotan. The series of Chinese documents discovered in ruins of the same site is of particular historical interest. The exact dates recorded in them (781–790 A.D.), in combination with other evidence, clearly indicate the close of the eighth century as the time when the settlement was deserted, while their contents throw curious sidelights on the economical and political conditions of the territory immediately before Chinese suzerain power finally abandoned these regions to Tibetan invasion. Sanskrit manuscripts and records in Chinese mark foreign imports in the culture of Khotan. All the more interest attaches to the numerous documents and fragmentary texts from the same site which show an otherwise unknown language, manifestly non-Sanskritic yet written in Indian Brahmi characters; for it appears very probable that in them we have records of the tongue actually spoken at that period by the indigenous population of Khotan.

We see Sanskrit, Chinese and the same non-Sanskritic language similarly represented among the literary finds from the ruined temple of Endere, in the extreme east of the territory explored. But here in addition there appears Tibetan, as if to remind us of the prominent part which Tibet too has played in the history of Central Asia. A curious Chinese graffito found on the wall of the Endere temple clearly refers to the Tibetans, and gives a date which, since its recent examination by Sinologists, can be safely read as 719 A.D. It is probable that these finds of Tibetan manuscripts are directly connected with that extension of Tibetan power into Eastern Turkestan which the Chinese Annals record for that very period.

But much older and of far greater importance than any of these finds are the hundreds of Kharoshthi documents on wood and leather brought to light from the ruined houses and the rubbish heaps of the ancient settlement discovered beyond the point where