

them so very brittle that their successful separation could only be accomplished in London through the expert help of the Manuscript Department of the British Museum. The ends of the leaves had been bent over near the usual string-hole already referred to, and had often got detached through this folding of centuries; but they could be fitted again without difficulty to their proper places.

The leaves in their complete state measure 14 inches in length and show on each side six lines of bold Brahmi writing of the so-called Gupta type. The text, which is Sanskrit, deals with some subject of Buddhist 'Dharma,' or canonical law. In view of the extent of the well-preserved portions it will in all probability permit of an exact identification by Dr. A. F. Rudolf Hoernle, the distinguished Indologist, who has undertaken the decipherment and publication of all manuscript materials in Brahmi characters discovered by me. [While these pages are passing through the press, Dr. Hoernle informs me that he has recognised in this manuscript almost the whole of the Vajracchedika, a famous Sutra text of the Mahayana School of Buddhism.] Certain palæographic features of the writing, which need not be set forth here in detail, make it difficult to assign to this and the other Sanskrit manuscripts recovered from this ruin a date later than the seventh century A.D. But as far as other observed criteria go, some of them might well have been written a century or two earlier.

The religious character of their contents makes it appear highly probable that these manuscripts formed part of the library of a Buddhist monastic establishment, or 'Vihara,' that had once occupied the structure and no doubt supplied the attendant priests for the adjoining small temples. That the basement room I was actually excavating had offered only accidental shelter to these fragmentary relics of Buddhist literature, and had originally served the more prosaic purposes of a cook-room for the little monastery, became abundantly clear as the work of clearing proceeded towards the east wall. Built against the latter we found a big fireplace, constructed of hard plaster with an elaborately moulded chimney that reached to a height of over 6 feet from the floor.