

pious worshipper. On the larger and better preserved of these panels, which measures 18 by 4 inches, there appears seated between two attendants a half-length human figure with the head of a rat, and wearing a diadem. It was only long afterwards, when the little painting had been cleaned of its adhering layer of sand in the British Museum, and examined by the trained eye of my friend, Mr. F. H. Andrews, that I realised the peculiar shape of the figure and its true significance. It is manifestly meant to represent the king of those holy rats which, according to the local legend related by Hiuen Tsiang and already referred to, in connection with the Kaptar-Mazar (p. 195), were worshipped at the western border of the Khotan oasis for having saved the kingdom from a barbarian invasion. The sacred character of the rat-headed figure is sufficiently marked by the semi-elliptical vesica or halo which encloses it, and by the worshipping attitude of the attendant figure on the left, which carries in one hand a long-stemmed, leaf-shaped fan or punkah.

In a corner of the temple-cella, close to the floor, there turned up two scraps of thin water-lined paper, showing writing on one side only, and that in characters which I could at once recognise as belonging to that peculiar cursive form of Brahmi already known to us from certain ancient documents in a non-Sanskritic language that had reached Dr. Hoernle's collection through purchase from Khotan. On clearing the largest of the rooms in the ruined dwelling-house adjoining the shrine, I found several small sheets of the same coarse paper and with similar writing, either crumpled up or folded into narrow rolls, just like the Chinese documents I subsequently unearthed at this site. It was no easy task to open out these flimsy papers with fingers half-benumbed with cold, and the more delicate part of such work was accomplished only in the British Museum. But the cursory examination that was possible on the spot showed that these more or less fragmentary sheets could not have belonged to manuscript books or 'Pothis,' but evidently contained detached records of some kind.

The impression I had gained from the outward appearance of