

left side of the leaf, as in most of the ancient manuscripts recovered from Eastern Turkestan. Dr. Hoernle's examination (see list) shows that the leaf, numbered 8, contains a text written in the non-Sanskritic (Proto-Tibetan?) language, which he was the first to recognize in other fragmentary manuscripts previously obtained from Eastern Turkestan, in part at least from Khotan, and that the manuscript to which it belonged was probably that of a Buddhist canonical text. The writing is attributed by Dr. Hoernle, on palaeographical grounds, to the seventh or eighth century¹.

The find just described was made at a depth of about 5 feet from the surface and close to the rough wooden post fixed in the floor as seen in Fig. 33. It was quickly followed by a series of other manuscript finds, all consisting of fragments, but varying in extent from relatively large portions of single leaves to batches of numerous minute pieces. Among these fragments (numbered D. III. 2-11) the large majority could at the time be easily recognized, by their conformity in paper, size, and handwriting as having originally formed part of a Sanskrit manuscript treating of Buddhist canonical matter. Dr. Hoernle's careful analysis proves that these fragments belong to the eighteenth and nineteenth chapters of a Mahāyāna text, apparently some kind of *Prajñā Pāramitā*, written in Gupta characters of the seventh or eighth century on leaves of very large size, about 18 by 7 inches². A leaf of this work, as restored from two pieces (D. III. 7, 8) is reproduced in Plate CVII. The obverse contains the conclusion of the eighteenth chapter (*Bhūmiparivarta*), marked also by a diagram of homocentric rings, and bears on its left hand margin the pagination number 132. Dr. Hoernle's notes show that remnants of two other Buddhist Sanskrit texts, one of them apparently containing the story of the Yakṣa chief Mañibhadra (see Plate CIX), are represented among these fragments³.

The position in which all these manuscript pieces were found, embedded in loose sand at levels varying from 4 to 3 feet above the original flooring, proved beyond all doubt that they could have got there only by accident. Their distribution in varying depths and places makes it probable that they had fallen in from an upper story, while the basement was gradually filling up with drift-sand. This assumption was borne out by small pieces of animal bones, felt, leather, and oilcakes (*kunjara*), which turned up in the same layers. The earlier any manuscript remains had reached the safe resting-place offered by the sand-covered basement, the more extensive they might reasonably be expected to be. So I watched with growing eagerness the progress made by my men on December 23 in clearing the sand nearer down to the original floor. The first find, made a little to the east of the post already mentioned and about 1½ feet above the floor, was the portion of a document (D. III. 12) written on a sheet of coarse thin paper, about 10 by 8 inches, in cursive Brāhmī characters of the eighth century (see Plate CX). In the text Dr. Hoernle has recognized the same Eastern Iranian language in which a number of other documents from Dandān-Uiliq are recorded. As in the majority of these, the writing is confined to one side of the sheet only, since the thin unsized paper, like the modern Khotan paper, would readily absorb the ink and let it pass through.

As the work proceeded towards the centre of the room, a massive beam of poplar wood ('Terek', *Populus alba*), 11 inches thick and in almost perfect preservation, was laid bare. Its length, close on 19 feet, and its position showed that it had once stretched right across the room, undoubtedly supporting its ceiling. Two well-carved octagonal posts, each 4 feet 5 inches high and exactly alike, had turned up before (see Figs. 32, 33). Their bell-shaped capitals, 4 inches high, were surmounted by single circular bands accurately reproducing the Amalaka ornament of

MS. of
Prajñā
Pāramitā.

Position
of MS.
remains.

Carved
posts.

¹ Comp. Hoernle, *Report on C.-A. ant.*, ii. pp. 12 sq., 18 sqq.

² See Dr. Hoernle's Note i. in list of finds.

³ See Notes ii. and iii. in list below.