

close to the main temple, and gathered from them a plentiful harvest of manuscript remains and inscribed tablets. The walls had almost completely disappeared, but the plastered floor and the manuscript deposits above it sufficed to show the position of these smaller structures. There were exciting finds, too, here, such as that of some twenty fragmentary leaves of a Pothi in Sanskrit, nearly two feet long, written in fine bold Brahmi characters like the hymn-book for some abbot or canon. The discovery of Tibetan records on wood supplied clear proof that the presence of the Tibetan invaders, attested by the Chinese Annals for different periods of the eighth century A.D., was not confined in Khotan territory to mere inroads, as might otherwise have been supposed. One of the rooms adjoining the main shrine northward seemed to have been used as a sort of workshop by those who had quarried the deserted shrines for timber, and among the chippings and other materials left behind as useless I was glad to unearth richly moulded balustrades, columns, finials, and other pieces of fine architectural wood carving (Fig. 79).

The careful search of all ground which had escaped erosion, and thus could be supposed to retain débris of buildings, was a big task. It took the unremitting labour of ten days to accomplish it, though we worked with a large number of diggers and in spite of heat and smothering dust practically without interruption from daybreak until nightfall. For many years past I had not felt so thoroughly tired evening after evening. But success kept my spirits refreshed, and my eagerness to move on eastwards to sites farther away in the desert and hence likely to have been abandoned far earlier urged me to additional exertions. In the end I felt doubly glad that I had spared at the outset the time and labour for Khadalik; for, when nearly eighteen months later I returned to this tract, I found that the area containing the ruins had, after long centuries, again been brought under irrigation from the stream, the vicinity of which had been such a boon to us all during those long hot days of hard labour—and their destruction completed.