

from classical models. Even the wavy edges of the festoon-like plaits hanging from the arms were reproduced with exactness. It was impossible to doubt that the construction of this ruined temple dated back to a period long anterior to the Tibetan occupation.

But that even its abandonment must have taken place centuries earlier became highly probable when I discovered in front of and close to the base of one statue a fragment about six inches long of a palm-leaf manuscript written in Sanskrit with Brahmi characters of an early Gupta type. The material showed that the Pothi-shaped manuscript, containing apparently a Buddhist metaphysical text, had been written in India; and, judging from the palaeographical features of certain characters, it was safe to conclude that it could not have been written later than the fourth century of our era, and possibly somewhat earlier.

The position in which the detached leaf was found made it almost certain that it had been deposited as a votive offering on the neighbouring image base after the fashion first seen by me in the ruined shrine of Endere. On several grounds it appeared very unlikely that the manuscript could have been of great age at the time, or that a leaf of such brittle substance could have lain thus exposed for a prolonged period before the débris of the crumbling shrine came down to cover and protect it. As another curious instance of the shelter from the pressure of heavy débris, which the proximity of the massive image bases could afford, we discovered the colossal head, which once had belonged to the third statue from the north corner, firmly wedged between its own base and that of its right-hand neighbour, still upright and with its front quite uninjured (Fig. 141).

It seemed a puzzle why the shrine should have retained these remains of its sculptural decoration just on its north-east side, the one most exposed to the destructive power of the winds; but it was soon solved when our continued excavation showed that the outer passage wall was adjoined here at a few feet's distance by the massive enclosing wall of another and larger building. While helping to ward off