

clearly marked sections, as convenience of reading required in the case of a writing running in horizontal lines, not in vertical columns like Chinese. I could not doubt that they contained portions of the great canonical collections now known as the Tanjur and Kanjur. In the first rapid examination Chiang failed to discover colophons giving exact dates of the writing in any of the Chinese rolls, and owing to their length a complete unfolding would have required much time. So I had reason to feel doubly elated when, on the reverse of a Chinese roll, I first lighted upon a text written in that cursive form of Indian Brahmi script with which the finds of ancient Buddhist texts at sites of the Khotan region had rendered me familiar. Here was indisputable proof that the bulk of the manuscripts deposited went back to the time when Indian writing and some knowledge of Sanskrit still prevailed in Central-Asian Buddhism. With such evidence clearly showing the connection which once existed between these religious establishments and Buddhist learning as transplanted to the Tarim Basin, my hopes rose greatly for finds of direct importance to Indian and western research.

All the manuscripts seemed to be preserved exactly in the same condition they were in when deposited. Some of the bundles were carelessly fastened with only rough cords and without an outer cloth wrapper; but even this had failed to injure the paper. Nowhere could I trace the slightest effect of moisture. And, in fact, what better place for preserving such relics could be imagined than a chamber carved in the live rock of these terribly barren hills, and hermetically shut off from what moisture, if any, the atmosphere of this desert valley ever contained? Not in the driest soil could relics of a ruined site have so completely escaped injury as they had here in a carefully selected rock chamber where, hidden behind a brick wall and protected by accumulated drift sand, these masses of manuscripts had lain undisturbed for centuries.

How grateful I felt for the special protection thus afforded when, on opening a large packet wrapped in a sheet of stout coloured canvas, I found it full of paintings on fine gauze-like silk and on linen, ex-votos in all kinds