

with Chinese and Tibetan texts, a great heap of oblong paper leaves in the variety of Indian script known as Central-Asian Brahmi (Fig. 192).

They proved on arrangement to belong to half-a-dozen different manuscripts of the Pothi shape, some in Sanskrit, some in one or other of the 'unknown' languages used by Turkestan Buddhism. Several of these manuscripts were of large size, with leaves up to twenty-one inches in length, and some have since on arrangement proved to be complete. None of my previous finds in Brahmi script equalled them in this respect or in excellence of preservation. So that first day Chiang and myself worked on without a break until quite late, picking out sometimes stray leaves in Indian script even from regular bundles of Chinese or Tibetan rolls, or else Chinese rolls bearing on the reverse texts in a cursive form of Central-Asian Brahmi.

Flushed as I was with delight at these un hoped-for discoveries, I could not lose sight of the chief practical task, all-important for the time being. It was to keep our priest in a pliable mood, and to prevent his mind being overcome by the trepidations with which the chance of any intrusion and of consequent hostile rumours among his patrons would fill him. With the help of Chiang-ssü-yeh's genial persuasion, and what reassuring display I could make of my devotion to Buddhist lore in general and the memory of my patron saint in particular, we succeeded better than I had ventured to hope. I could see our honest Tao-shih's timorous look changing gradually to one of contentment at our appreciation of all this, to him valueless, lore. Though he visibly grew tired climbing over manuscript heaps and dragging out heavy bundles, it seemed as if he were becoming resigned to his fate, at least for a time.

When the growing darkness in the cave compelled us to stop further efforts for the day, a big bundle of properly packed manuscripts and painted fabrics lay on one side of our 'reading room' awaiting removal for what our diplomatic convention styled 'closer examination.' The great question was whether Wang Tao-shih would be willing to brave the risks of this removal, and subsequently to fall in with the true interpretation of our proceeding. It would