

they could readily be distinguished from the uniform packets containing rolls of Buddhist texts in Chinese or Tibetan. Fortunately their very irregularity had caused the Tao-shih to put them on the top when he built up the wall-like array of what I may call 'library bundles'; and the consequent ease with which they could be reached induced him now to bring them out in steady succession.

It was from those 'mixed' bundles chiefly that manuscripts and detached leaves in Indian script and of the traditional Pothi shape continued to emerge. By far the most important among such finds was a remarkably well preserved Sanskrit manuscript on palm leaves, some seventy in number, and no less than twenty inches long (Fig. 192, 1). The small but beautifully clear writing closely covering these leaves showed palaeographical features which seemed to leave little doubt as to the manuscript going back to the third or fourth century A.D. at the latest. This high age, not surpassed by any Sanskrit manuscript then known, made the text important, even though it has proved to be that of a work well known in the Northern Buddhist Canon. That the manuscript had been written in India itself was quite certain from its material. But who was the pilgrim who had brought it to the very confines of China?

Like the manuscripts written in Indian script after the fashion of Pothis, so too the rolls with Indian Brahmi writing soon furnished a fine show-piece. It was a gigantic roll of paper, over seventy feet long, and about one foot wide, entirely covered on its inner side with Brahmi writing in a fair upright hand of what scholars know as the Gupta type (Fig. 193). A painting on the top of the outer side showed two cleverly drawn geese standing on lotuses and facing each other. When hastily examining it in part, I could find only invocation prayers in corrupt Sanskrit of a kind familiar to Northern Buddhism, along with name lists of Buddhas, etc. But the preliminary examination made by my learned collaborator Dr. Hoernle has since shown that, interspersed with these prayers, there are hundreds of lines with texts in that 'unknown' language which finds from sites about Khotan had first revealed to us, but without a key to its interpretation.