

(Fig. 192, 2), some fifteen feet long, showing a remarkably well written text in the peculiar form of Syriac script which recent discoveries at the ruined sites of Turfan have revealed as usually employed for Manichaean writings. What had this neat, almost calligraphic, manuscript to do in the Buddhist chapel, if it really contained some text of Mani's church which for centuries was a formidable rival to Buddhist and Christian propaganda alike throughout Central Asia?

Less attractive at first sight, but in reality of special value, were the miscellaneous records in Chinese, such as letters, monastic certificates, and accounts, which filled those bundles of apparent 'waste paper.' Guided by the peculiar form of paper and writing, I soon learned to pick them out from among the masses of religious texts. They were likely to throw instructive light not only on details of monastic organization prevailing here during the centuries which preceded the walling up of the cave, but also on many aspects of political condition and private life. More important still was the chronological assurance I could derive from them at the time.

The Chinese, as people of culture and business habits, have always recognized the need of exact dates. So I soon was able to gather a considerable mass of dated documents, many quasi-official, from which to draw a definite conclusion as to the time when this great deposit of manuscripts and sacred relics was finally closed and forgotten. The great majority belonged to the ninth and tenth centuries of our era, and as those from the middle of the tenth century were frequent while only a few approached its end and none extended beyond the reign of the Emperor Chên Tsung (998-1022 A.D.), I was able to determine that the walling-up of the chamber must have taken place early in the eleventh century. There can be little doubt that the fear of some destructive invasion had prompted the act, and in view of the above chronological indication a connection naturally suggests itself with the conquest of Tun-huang by the rising power of the Hsi-hsia which took place between 1034 and 1037 A.D. The total absence of any manuscripts written in the special