

prevailing. As for myself I had to rely almost solely on the assumption that miscellaneous papers showing signs of having been old and badly cared for, long before the final closing of the cave, were most likely to contain materials of historical and antiquarian interest.

It was hence a matter of relief to me when, subsequent to my return to England in 1909, I learned that M. Paul Pelliot, then Professor of Chinese at that great centre of Far Eastern research, the *École Française d'Extrême Orient* at Hanoi, and since appointed to a chair at the Sorbonne, one of the most distinguished Sinologists living, had in the course of the archaeological mission entrusted to his leadership by the Government and several learned bodies of France, visited Tun-huang about a year after my own stay and been able to search thoroughly all the masses of manuscripts I had been obliged to leave behind in Wang's precarious keeping. Aided by his exceptional mastery of Chinese literature and bibliography, especially in its branches related to Buddhism, and by the well-merited respect which his learning gained for him everywhere among the Chinese, M. Pelliot succeeded in rapidly sifting the contents of those hundreds and hundreds of tightly packed bundles. The Tao-shih, who seems to have been much reassured by the discretion maintained about our own little transaction, and by the absence of all awkward consequences, now showed greater indulgence. No doubt duly rewarded, he allowed M. Pelliot to pick out and bring away whatever manuscripts he considered of importance for historical Chinese or philological studies. The preliminary account of his labours shows how abundant has been his harvest, a result of competent gleaning.

So it was a particular satisfaction for me when M. Pelliot, after his own return early in 1910, expressed the wish to examine my collection of Chinese manuscripts from the cave, and eventually to undertake its catalogue. The results of the first rapid scrutiny to which he was good enough to devote a fortnight of unremitting labour, were as gratifying as they well could be. It showed that the total number of Chinese manuscripts amounted to over 9000,