

an elaborate stitched pattern and an embroidered design of palmate leaves. Finally, passing reference may be made to some painted fragments, M. I. xix. 005, of uncertain use. Their material, birch bark, is of interest, as it manifestly points to Indian origin.

SECTION V.—TIBETAN DOCUMENTS FROM THE MĪRĀN FORT

The abundance of the Tibetan written records recovered from the refuse-heaps of the Mīrān fort seemed at the time an encouraging recompense for the trying physical conditions under which their clearing was effected. But even while first handling the dirt-encrusted documents, or trying to clean them with half-benumbed fingers at night in my little tent, I could not fail to foresee to some extent the difficulties which there would be in interpreting them later on. Quite apart from the fragmentary state of the great majority of the wooden slips and papers, and the effaced surface and cursive script in many of them, these difficulties were bound to be serious. Wholly unversed as I am in matters Tibetan, I knew that Tibetan literature, while abounding in Buddhist texts and other works of a devotional character, possesses but very few specimens of early secular writing. Yet from the first it was obvious that the great mass of the Tibetan records from Mīrān would prove to consist of miscellaneous 'office papers', more often than not of a petty kind, reports, applications, indents, and the like, all probably couched in the language of everyday life.

Character of
Tibetan
records.

It was clear that for the full elucidation of documents of this kind philological acumen would be needed, combined with intimate knowledge of the living language and the ways of Tibet. I had therefore reason to feel specially gratified when, in 1910, the Rev. Dr. A. H. Francke, late of the Moravian Mission, Leh, the recognized authority on the antiquities and the living language of Western Tibet, kindly agreed to undertake the examination of the Tibetan manuscript materials in my collection, as far as they comprise the finds made at Mīrān and the approximately contemporary site of Mazār-tāgh. But obligations arising from recent archaeological tours of his own, and practical considerations connected with the great number of the documents, made it necessary for Dr. Francke to limit his collaboration, as far as the present publication is concerned, to the preparation of a complete inventory of the above materials.¹ To this important contribution Dr. Francke was at my request kind enough to add, in 1913, very valuable notes of a general kind, dealing succinctly with the main results of his preliminary scrutiny of the documents in their various aspects, philological and antiquarian, and to publish them for preliminary information in the *Journal* of the Royal Asiatic Society.^{1a}

Dr. Francke
examines
documents.

A reference to the Mīrān portion of Dr. Francke's inventory will show on how many points of direct archaeological and historical interest fresh light may yet be expected from a detailed analysis of these documents, and especially of the better-preserved ones among them. It had been my hope to secure from this most competent scholar translations or at least fuller extracts of those particular records and letters which, judging from the entries in the inventory, hold out promise of information likely to be of use for elucidating local antiquarian questions, or else capable of being itself illuminated by actual archaeological observations and finds. But this hope has been necessarily frustrated by conditions arising from the war.

Dr.
Francke's
inventory
and notes.

It is due to the same cause that I am not even able at present to gain access to the summary notes which Dr. Francke and another learned collaborator, Dr. F. W. Thomas, Librarian of the

¹ [It had been originally intended to reproduce this inventory in Appendix G of the present work. But a variety of considerations has rendered this course impracticable. It was decided instead to deposit the original catalogue slips of this inventory, as well as a set of type-written copies, in the

India Office Library, where they will be conveniently accessible for reference and further research.]

^{1a} See *Notes on Sir Aurel Stein's collection of Tibetan documents from Chinese Turkestan*, J.R.A.S., 1914, pp. 37-59; also below, Appendix G.