

The evidence afforded by the MĪrān documents as to the character and extent of the Tibetan occupation is of special value for us, because that epoch in the history of Eastern Turkeṣtān is one about which our information is exceptionally scanty. This obscurity is a direct result of the total severance of political relations with the Chinese empire which was brought about by the Tibetan conquest of the Tārīm Basin and the regions adjoining it on the east. This wedge-like intrusion of the Tibetan power caused Central-Asian affairs to disappear from the records of the Chinese Annalists for more than a century. The thoroughness and far-reaching effects of this great political change are proved by the significant fact that among all the abundance of written pieces which had found a safe refuge in the refuse-heaps of the MĪrān fort, I failed to bring to light a single scrap of Chinese writing.

Absence of  
Chinese  
records at  
MĪrān.

#### SECTION VI.—A RECORD IN RUNIC TURKISH SCRIPT

The thorough change resulting from the Tibetan conquest must invest with additional interest the discovery of the only non-Tibetan record which my excavations in the ruined fort yielded. It was made in the small apartment M. I. xxxii, which, owing to the effects of wind-erosion, had retained its thin brick walls and the refuse accumulated between them only to a height of about two feet. There, close to the floor and in immediate proximity to a dozen or so of scattered Tibetan records on paper and wood, was found a crumpled-up packet of coarse brownish paper which, when opened out, proved to be a large and fairly well preserved sheet, about one foot square, and two torn pieces of smaller size and inferior condition, M. I. xxxii. 006. a-c (Plate CLIX). In the large quasi-lapidary writing which covered the obverse, and in piece *b* also the reverse, I recognized at once the Turkish 'Runic' script, which first became known to scholars in those oldest monuments of the Turkish language, the bilingual inscriptions of the early eighth century A.D., discovered on the Orkhon and Yenissei Rivers. It is a source of special gratification to me that Professor Vilhelm Thomsen, the first decipherer of those famous inscriptions from Mongolia and Siberia, was kind enough to undertake the publication and interpretation of the MĪrān documents as well as of my subsequent finds in Turkish 'Runic' script. It is wholly on the paper in which Professor V. Thomsen has discussed these finds<sup>1</sup> that the following observations concerning their contents and import are based.

Discovery of  
Runic  
Turkish  
document.

Professor Thomsen believes that 'we here have the fragments of a register or lists of persons who may be presumed to have been either in the act of leaving the fort after having stayed there, or of having only passed by it in the one or the other direction, and to whom a kind of passport had been granted or assistance given for their further journey'. His translation shows that the numerous names mentioned are all Turkish, and apparently most of them belong to military persons. It is in more than one way interesting to note that 'several of them are known from elsewhere, especially from Mongolia and Siberia; but in addition to this, many new contributions are added to our knowledge of the Old-Turkish manner of naming'. If we turn, in Professor Thomsen's translation, to the statements recorded about the three dozen or so of persons individually named, we see that they concern mainly either the issue to them of a *yarlig* or the provision of a *yarig*.

Persons  
named in  
passports.

In the case of the former term we are on safe ground, since the Turkish *yarlig* is otherwise known as a close equivalent of the Persian *farmān*, in the sense of 'an open letter which serves as a passport or introduction to other authorities'. The custom of issuing such warrants (known in

Meaning of  
*yarlig*.

<sup>1</sup> See V. Thomsen, *Dr. M. A. Stein's manuscripts in Turkish 'Runic' script from Miran and Tun-huang*, J.R.A.S., 1912, pp. 181 sqq.