

them. The first of the edicts, bearing an exact date corresponding to June 23, A.D. 851, records the grant of honorific ecclesiastical titles to Hung-jên, described as 'exercising the functions of chief of the Buddhist religion at Sha-chou', and to Wu-chan, another Buddhist Śramaṇa of Sha-chou, in recognition of the services they had rendered by bringing about the return of their territory to the imperial allegiance. The second edict, addressed to Hung-jên himself, conveys the emperor's eulogies for the loyal sentiments expressed through his envoy Wu-chan, encourages them to continue their efforts for the throne and the doctrine, and enumerates the various dignities and presents with which the emperor has honoured them both. The reference made to an edict addressed to Chang I-ch'ao,⁹ as M. Chavannes has duly pointed out, is a clear indication that the mission organized by the two ecclesiastics was directly connected with the submission of that local ruler.

M. Chavannes has not failed to draw special attention to the interesting sidelights thrown by the inscription on the important position which the Buddhist monks of Chinese origin settled in Tun-huang then held, and also on the extent of the influence which they evidently exercised among the Tibetans. The exceptional distinctions bestowed by the emperor upon the monastic head and the monk who had acted as his emissary to the court of China amply demonstrate the value which was attached to their diplomatic activity and to the links which they maintained between the Empire and the Chinese population of its long-lost outpost on the western marches. But it is still more interesting for us here to note the particular stress with which the imperial edict eulogizes the beneficent action exercised by the monks through their Buddhist doctrine upon the spirit of the Tibetan population. Their lot from birth having fallen among the barbarians, 'they have made their sentiments pass to Buddhism and have been able, through the sovereign doctrine . . . , to change the hearts of these men of strange race; their irascible and violent spirit has been entirely suppressed; loyal feelings and uprightness have been raised'. In the edict addressed to Hung-jên the monks are expressly enjoined to persevere in their civilizing exertions. The political objects aimed at by the imperial government stand out clearly enough. But equally clear it is that what prompted both its praise and appeal was a knowledge of the close relations established in this region between the Chinese monastic communities and their Tibetan confrères.

Influence of Chinese monks of Tun-huang among Tibetans.

Chang I-ch'ao's submission to the emperor allowed the Chinese to re-establish a sort of suzerainty over the local ruling family on these westernmost marches.¹⁰ The Ch'ien-fo-tung inscription of A.D. 894 shows that this still continued at that time. But during the troubled period which followed the downfall of the T'ang dynasty in the first years of the tenth century the Chinese again lost their hold upon Tun-huang and the territories adjoining it on the east. M. Chavannes has aptly called attention to the interesting evidence recorded for this by Kao Chü-hui, a member of the Chinese mission which in the years 938-42 proceeded from the imperial court to Khotan and returned.¹¹ Near Liang-chou he found established the Tang-hsiang 党项, a tribe which a century later was destined to raise the important kingdom of the Hsi-hsia 西夏, or Tanguts. Following the great route further west along the foot of the Nan-shan he came upon a chiefship of the Uigurs at Kan-chou. Then beyond Su-chou he passed through what was then the position of the 'Jade Gate barrier' and skirted Tibetan territory. On reaching Kua-chou 瓜州, the present An-hsi district, and Sha-chou, or Tun-huang, he found there an essentially Chinese population and the administration in the hands of a chief belonging to the local family of the Ts'ao. But his

Tun-huang once more separated from Empire.

⁹ One is tempted to hazard the conjecture that the edict which is engraved first on the stēlē may be meant here. But M. Chavannes' description of the allusion as obscure enjoins caution.

¹⁰ Cf. Chavannes, *Dix inscriptions*, p. 12.

¹¹ For extracts from Kao Chü-hui's important report, cf. Rémusat, *Ville de Khotan*, pp. 75 sqq.; also *Ancient Khotan*, i. p. 178, and above, p. 320.