

I had been unable to examine closely or to remove during my visit to the Thousand Buddhas. But it certainly looks as if during the centuries before the walling-up of the monastic library the connexion of Tun-huang with the Buddhist communities south of the Taklamakān had been closer than with those in the northern oases from Turfān to Kuchā.

Collection
of Chinese
manuscripts.

The account given above in Chapter XXII will have shown that, notwithstanding my want of Sinologist knowledge, I realized from the first the importance of the masses of Chinese manuscripts which made up the main contents of the great hoard. Evidence secured through Chiang Ssü-yeh's help soon showed me the antiquarian interest of the miscellaneous local records and the often earlier origin of the broken manuscript remains which were to be found particularly in the mixed bundles. The special attention I paid to the acquisition of the latter has since been further justified by the fact that among them the proportion of lay texts with historical or philological value has proved much greater than among the compact bundles containing for the most part well-preserved rolls of Buddhist canonical literature. The number of individual rolls in the 270 odd regular bundles which I secured in the end in addition to previous 'selections' proved so great that, when at last in July, 1908, there was leisure to set Chiang Ssü-yeh to work at them, the weeks available before my final departure from Khotan sufficed only for a first rapid listing of less than a third of them. Even thus the rough inventory proved useful by showing that among the manuscripts then unrolled there were to be found dated colophons reaching back to the fifth century A.D. if not earlier.

Chinese
manuscripts
examined by
Prof. Pelliot.

After the collection had been safely brought to the British Museum, nothing could be done for the examination of the Chinese manuscripts from Ch'ien-fo-tung filling twenty-four cases until in the early summer of 1910 Professor Pelliot to my great satisfaction came to London and devoted several weeks of unremitting labour to a rapid examination of those manuscripts. His exceptional qualifications as a Sinologist, and the unique experience gained through his preceding labours at the great *cache* itself, enabled him to arrive soon at a safe estimate of the general character and value of our materials in spite of their great mass. At my request Professor Pelliot was kind enough to sum up the main result of his observations in a brief but very instructive memorandum (reproduced below), and at the same time to express his readiness to undertake under certain conditions the preparation of a systematic inventory of our Chinese manuscripts from Tun-huang. I felt most grateful for this arrangement, which promised within a reasonable time to render this important part of our collection fully accessible to research through the work of the scholar best qualified for the task. The proposal soon received also the sanction of the India Office and the British Museum Trustees, into whose possession all Chinese manuscripts brought back from my expedition were ultimately to pass.

Arrange-
ments for
cataloguing
Chinese
MSS.

In the autumn of 1910 a first instalment of manuscripts was duly transmitted to Professor Pelliot at Paris for the purpose of being catalogued. But, owing to personal circumstances and the pressure of other scientific tasks, their inventory had not been completed by the summer of 1914, when the outbreak of the war called Professor Pelliot to military duty in the French Army. As on account of other obligations he was unable to resume these labours, the preparation of a detailed catalogue was undertaken by Dr. L. Giles at the British Museum.^{17a} Meanwhile this portion of the collection having attracted due attention in Japan, several very competent scholars, such as Professor Kano and Mr. Taki in 1912-13 and Mr. Yabuki in 1916, had devoted

and Meillet's just-quoted paper makes it impossible for me to determine which of them came from Ch'ien-fo-tung and which from Duldul-ākhur and other Kuchā sites.

[^{17a} At the time of going to press over 2,000 separate manuscripts have already been catalogued.]