

## SECTION V.—MANUSCRIPTS IN TIBETAN, SOGDIAN, TURKISH

It seems appropriate to proceed next to the manuscripts in Tibetan, the mass of which is second only to that of the Chinese. As originally secured from the cave, they filled over thirty compact bundles, besides many packets of Pōthīs found in miscellaneous bundles and generally mixed up in utter confusion.<sup>1</sup> The total number of individual Pōthīs, rolls, and other manuscripts may be estimated at about 800.<sup>1a</sup> My ignorance of Tibetan would not have allowed any systematic selection, even if the conditions of acquisition had been different from what they were. But for the reasons previously explained I endeavoured in the first place to secure whatever Pōthīs and other materials in Tibetan turned up in 'miscellaneous' bundles. The very appearance of the writing suggested that the vast majority of the Pōthīs, rolls, etc., were likely to contain portions of the Tibetan Buddhist Canon or other religious texts. This assumption was fully confirmed by the first examination which Dr. F. W. Thomas and, under his guidance, Miss Ridding were kind enough to make of the manuscripts. It also showed that the suspicion roused in me by the look of certain big convolutes of large sheets,<sup>2</sup> which had to be taken *en bloc* with other closely tied-up bundles, was only too well justified. Their contents, made up mainly of endless *Prajñā-pāramitā* copies and the like, help merely to illustrate the fatal attraction which the frequent repetition of certain particularly cherished texts or prayers, as a quasi-mechanical method for accumulating spiritual merit, seems to have had evidently since early times for Tibetan piety.

Tibetan manuscripts.

Since under a decision arrived at in 1910 the whole of the Tibetan manuscripts from Ch'ien-fo-tung were handed over to the India Office Library for final deposit, Dr. Thomas as its Librarian charged himself with the arrangements for having them systematically catalogued. These labours, commenced by Miss Ridding but mainly effected since 1914 through Professor de la Vallée Poussin's efforts, have now, I understand, been carried to completion. In the Introduction to his catalogue, the publication of which may be hoped for in due course, M. de la Vallée Poussin has furnished a valuable synopsis of the chief results arrived at. Meanwhile I feel grateful for the notes Dr. Thomas has been kind enough to furnish on the manuscript specimens reproduced in Plates CLXXIII, CLXXIV.<sup>3</sup>

Cataloguing of Tibetan manuscripts.

It appears reasonable to assume that a great portion, if not the bulk, of the Tibetan manuscripts found at Ch'ien-fo-tung belongs to the period when the region of Tun-huang was under Tibetan domination, from the middle of the eighth to the middle of the ninth century A.D. This relatively early date justifies the hope that, well-known as most of the texts may be from their being included in the Tibetan Canon, the manuscripts will yet furnish materials repaying close study when the time comes for textual criticism of the vast Buddhist literature of Tibet. As soon as the mass of these manuscripts is duly arranged, comparison with them of the fragments of Tibetan Buddhist texts found at such approximately datable sites as Khādalik, Endere, and the fort of Mirān ought to prove interesting in more than one respect.

Approximate period of Tibetan manuscripts.

Another direction, too, may be suggested for research likely to yield useful results. While the Tibetan manuscripts in roll form are generally written on paper similar to that of inferior make which is used in the Chinese texts and documents of the ninth-tenth century, the material in many of the Pōthīs seemed to me of a different and distinctly better make, recalling paper made from the fibres of a *Daphne* plant, such as the modern paper still manufactured in Nepāl, and first found in a manuscript excavated by me at Endere.<sup>4</sup> If microscopical analysis of such paper specimens and

Paper used in Tibetan manuscripts.

<sup>1</sup> For a specimen of such a mixed packet of Pōthī leaves, see Ch. 03, Pl. CLXXIV.

<sup>1a</sup> Excluding very numerous duplicates of certain texts.

<sup>2</sup> For a specimen, see Ch. 05, Pl. CLXXIII.

<sup>3</sup> See below, Appendix I.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Ancient Khotan*, i. p. 426.