

out some characters resembling cursive Hebrew. It was not until this tightly-compressed piece of ancient waste-paper had undergone careful treatment at the expert hands of Mr. Hunt, of the MS. Department of the British Museum, that it resolved itself into the relatively large but unfortunately much-mutilated fragment of a Judaeo-Persian document, seen in Plate CXIX. The extant portion of the document, with its closely-written thirty-seven lines, covers one side of a piece of paper nearly 16 inches in height and apparently preserving its original dimensions in that direction. The original width of the paper cannot be ascertained, as the fragment is badly torn on either side and presents ragged edges; the actual width varies from 4 to 8 inches.

In view of the forgeries practised by Islām Ākhūn, of which I had acquired convincing evidence before leaving Khotan, and the story of which I was subsequently able to expose², I had exercised the closest watch while the excavations were proceeding in order to be able by personal observation to authenticate any antiquarian finds. The want of equally precise testimony was hence keenly felt by me in the case of the two curious finds now brought to me after my departure. I cross-examined the several men who alleged that they had been present at the discovery, and found their separate statements to agree well. A post-factum inspection of the find-place held out little hope of additional assurance, since I knew that the loose sand and débris from which the small objects had avowedly been scraped out could not possibly retain any distinct trace of their position. A return to Dandān-Uiliq would have meant a delay of at least one or two days, and this I was obliged to avoid out of consideration for the practical difficulties likely to arise if the heavily-laden camels, which had already subsisted for five days on the scantiest of rations and practically without water, were to be kept in this condition beyond the carefully calculated programme.

Question of origin of finds.

In the introductory note prefixed to Professor Margoliouth's paper, where the Judaeo-Persian document was published for the first time³, I have already explained the above circumstances as well as the possibilities which *a priori* presented themselves as to the real origin of these finds. I have shown there that, unless these objects were of modern origin and had been purposely taken along from Tawakkēl or Khotan to Dandān-Uiliq on the chance of an opportunity offering to sell them to me as antiques, they could only have either been found under the conditions alleged by the men, or else abstracted in the course of my excavations at some other structure and secreted for a time with a view to subsequently securing some special reward. Fortunately the first-named supposition, rendered improbable at the outset by several weighty considerations, need not be examined any further, since the expert analysis of the document itself, as recorded in detail in the above publication, has furnished conclusive proof of its antiquity in respect of both script and paper.

Proofs of antiquity of objects.

For the palaeographic evidence as regards the Hebrew writing of the document, it will suffice to refer to Mr. Cowley's remarks embodied in Prof. Margoliouth's paper which is reproduced in Appendix C. These show clearly that 'the writing is throughout more archaic than that of the Persian deed of 1021', the oldest Judaeo-Persian document previously known, and stands midway between that deed and the remains of the third and fourth centuries. The result of the microscopical examination which Prof. J. Wiesner has been kind enough to effect of a specimen taken from the margin of the document, is equally decisive. The opinion of this distinguished expert, whose detailed researches into the material of the paper MSS. and documents contained in Dr. Hoernle's and my own collections, have for the first time elucidated the early history

Microscopical analysis of paper.

² See below, chap. xv. sec. i.

³ See *An early Judaeo-Persian Document from Khotan, in the Stein Collection, with other early Persian Documents.*

By D. S. Margoliouth; with an Introductory Note by M. A. Stein and communications from W. Bacher, A. E. Cowley, and J. Wiesner, in *J. R. A. S.*, 1903, pp. 735 sqq.