

of paper manufacture in Central Asia, will be found reproduced in the same Appendix. It proves that the paper of the Judaeo-Persian document could not be distinguished in make from the paper of other ancient documents (Chinese, Brāhmī) excavated by me at Dandān-Uiliq, while on the other hand it was found to differ entirely in substance and structure from the modern Khotan paper which has exclusively served as material for the forged MSS. and 'block prints' from Islām Ākhūn's factory.

Thus there remains only the question as to whether the document was picked up in the alleged place and manner, or obtained in the course of my excavations at some other ruin of the site. Personally I am strongly inclined to credit the men's story; for the strict supervision exercised over the labourers would have rendered the abstraction of objects, especially such a relatively bulky one as the Chinese stucco inscription, distinctly difficult. But this question fortunately does not affect in any way the conclusion to be drawn as to the age of the document, or the historical and philological interest of its contents.

Historical
allusion in
Judæo-Persian
letter.

From Prof. Margoliouth's translation and notes, reproduced in Appendix C, it will be seen that the document represents the much-mutilated fragment of a letter written by a Persian-speaking Jew, and mainly relating to certain business affairs. Owing to the extent of the lost portions, not a single line being complete, it has been impossible for Prof. Margoliouth to attempt to make out a continuous sense; but more important from an antiquarian standpoint than the general contents is the reference made in line 23 to the 'Ispahbud'. As pointed out by Prof. Margoliouth, only one of the successive rulers of Tabaristān can be meant here, whose distinctive title *Ispahbud* is well known from Muhammadan historians. As a reference to Tabaristān is thus quite certain, Prof. Margoliouth proposes to identify the *Yazīd* named in the same passage with the Muhammadan general of that name, son of Al-Muhallab, who is known from Muhammadan chronicles to have conquered parts of Tabaristān in 717 A. D. On the ground of other historical and philological observations, Prof. Margoliouth concludes that, if this identification is correct, the letter containing this reference to the relations between the Ispahbud and Yazīd is likely to have been written about 718 A. D.

Date of
document.

The dating thus proposed can well be reconciled with the available archaeological evidence. The fact of the Dandān-Uiliq site having been abandoned at the close of the eighth century furnishes a definite chronological *terminus ad quem* for the Judæo-Persian document; in the other direction no fixed chronological limit can be deduced from the antiquarian observations and finds I made. Considering the remarkable dryness of the atmosphere in the Khotan region, there is nothing to preclude the possibility of a paper document, complete or fragmentary, remaining in fair preservation for a considerable number of years, even when not protected by the sand nor specially cared for. Hence the interval of fifty years which separates the date of our earliest Chinese document, 768 A. D., from Prof. Margoliouth's conjectural dating of the Judæo-Persian document can in no way be considered a valid argument against the latter.

Relations
between
Tabaristān
and China.

More difficult it may seem at the first glance to explain how a document written by a Persian-speaking Jew of distant Tabaristān should have found its way into an outlying settlement of Khotan. Yet Chinese historical records furnish evidence to meet any doubts that might arise on this score. M. Chavannes' extracts from the T'ang Annals give us interesting glimpses of the diplomatic relations which the rulers of Tabaristān maintained with China during the eighth century⁴. Pressed hard by Muhammadan conquest, they naturally turned for help to the great though distant power which asserted its hold over Sogdiana and even

⁴ See *Turcs occid.*, pp. 173 sq.; *Notes additionnelles . . .* (*T'oung pao*, 1904, pp. 70 and note, 76, 77 and note).