

narrative allows us to see that the territory, separated from China by the Tibetans, Uigurs, and Tang-hsiang, had once more passed under Tibetan dependence.

Tibetan
hold upon
Tun-huang.

As long as the Tibetans played the part of a great power in Asia during the eighth and ninth century, dominating vast regions to the east, west, and north beyond Tibet proper, Tun-huang must, owing to its geographical position, have possessed exceptional importance for them. It was in this tract that, then as now, the great high roads passing through the heart of Central Asia from east to west and from north to south crossed each other. By securing their hold on this cross-road of Tun-huang from the south the Tibetans had been able, about A.D. 766, to cut all communications between China and Eastern Turkestan, and finally, in A.D. 790, to overwhelm the Chinese garrisons holding out in the latter.¹² By the middle of the ninth century the expansive strength of Tibet had largely spent itself, and when Eastern Turkestan was abandoned to the rising power of the Uigurs, it was natural for the local rulers of Tun-huang to turn once more to China for support. The decaying power of the Tangs could, however, offer but little effective help beyond diplomatic encouragement such as the inscription of A.D. 851 indicates. Thus Tibetan influence in the Tun-huang region was bound to continue a good deal longer,¹³ and in view of this political connexion, directly attested for two centuries or so, it was easy for me to understand why Tibetan Buddhism was so abundantly represented among the literary remains of the walled-up chapel and to some extent, as we shall see, among its artistic remains as well.

Uigur
manuscripts.

The cessation of Tibetan political and military enterprise north-westward could not have materially affected the links which geographical position and successive periods of common subjection to the Chinese Empire had necessarily created between Tun-huang and the nearest territories of Eastern Turkestan. Buddhism is known to have flourished greatly throughout the powerful kingdom which the Turkish tribe of the Uigurs established after A.D. 860 on both sides of the Eastern T'ien-shan, and which during the tenth century extended south-eastwards, too, into outlying parts of Kan-su.¹⁴ So it could cause no surprise to find evidence of that connexion also in the shape of remains of Uigur manuscripts which cropped up in some of the 'miscellaneous' bundles. Apart from texts written on the reverse of Chinese rolls, they comprised documents on loose leaves and a few texts written in the form of booklets (for specimens see Plates CLXIII-CLXV). Chinese glosses and marginalia found in the latter suggested that these were translations from Chinese Buddhist texts. Such Chinese entries occurred also in the Uigur text of two well-preserved volumes of small quarto size (Plates CLXIII, CLXIV) which were made up of sheets of thin paper folded and stitched after the fashion of Chinese printed books. I shall have occasion further on to comment specially upon the date and probable origin of these texts.¹⁵

Sogdian
texts.

I had noticed from the first that in a number of rolls which I supposed to contain old Turkī texts in the Uigur script the writing, though obviously, too, a derivative of Syriac, was of a different type, distinctly less cursive and of a firmer shape. But it was only after my return to Europe that I realized the true character of the language of these texts. It is Sogdian, the old Irānian tongue of the territories north of the Middle Oxus, the survival of which in early translations of Buddhist literature had first been revealed by Professor F. W. K. Müller's researches on manuscript finds from Turfan. Great as the advance in its study has been since, mainly through the lamented late M. Gauthiot's brilliant labours, the time has not yet arrived for determining the exact chronological

¹² Cf. M. Chavannes' remarks, *Ancient Khotan*, i. p. 534, note 2; p. 535 sq.

¹³ This is very clearly brought out by the reference made in the inscription of A.D. 894 to the influence and dignity enjoyed by a Buddhist monk of Tun-huang at the Tibetan

court. See Chavannes, *Dix inscriptions*, p. 85, with note 4; also above, p. 799.

¹⁴ Cf. Grenard, *Journal Asiat.*, jan.-févr. 1900, pp. 28 sq.

¹⁵ See below, pp. 828 sq., 923.