

added over eighty packets of Tibetan rolls and convolutes, as well as eleven huge Tibetan Pōthīs, about 2 feet 5 inches long and 8 inches wide, with a height of nearly 1½ feet, which appeared to be in fair order and to contain uniformly written portions of the Kanjur.

Almost all the bundles were sewn up tightly in coarse canvas covers, as seen in the case of the specimens which *Desert Cathay*, ii. Fig. 194, reproduces unopened. Whether these covers are old or were added after the discovery of the chapel I have not been able definitely to ascertain. Wang Tao-shih asserted the former. The ends of the covers were generally left open. Thus, as Wang handed out bundle after bundle through the chapel door, I was with Chiang's help just able to look hastily whether, embedded between the usual Chinese rolls, there were to be found any Pōthī leaves or other non-Chinese texts, folded-up small pictures, or other relics of obvious interest. Such we endeavoured to pick out as well as time would permit, and put them aside rapidly. But there was no time then even to glance at individual rolls and to see by unfolding them whether their reverses bore anywhere Indian or Central-Asian scripts or what else might be hidden within.

In view of the Tao-shih's visibly growing reluctance, it did not appear safe at this stage to attempt any proper search which would necessarily have delayed the clearing. But perfunctory as the operation had to be, its timely completion brought a gratifying reward in the discovery at the very bottom of a number of large 'mixed' bundles (Ch. xlvi-lvii). They had been put by Wang Tao-shih to what he thought appropriate use in turning the floor at the foot of the north wall and on either side of the clay-built platform into a foundation level with the latter on which to build up his wall of manuscript bundles. They proved to contain a considerable number of exquisite silk paintings, several of exceptionally large size, and some beautiful textile pieces. Apart from the very instructive patchwork hangings (Ch. lv. 0028, Plates CVII, CVIII), it must suffice here to mention the magnificent embroidery picture, Plate CIV,<sup>3</sup> showing a Buddha between Bodhisattvas in life size. Owing to the heavy crushing which these bundles had been exposed to through their position low down on the ground, the recovery of the silk paintings contained in them required special care, and kept me busy during the greater part of the following day.

At the same time lengthy negotiations ensued with the Tao-shih. Whether it was from the fear of increased risks of exposure or merely because he regretted having put, as it seemed, within our reach those precious Chinese Sūtra texts to which alone he seemed to attach particular value, he thought fit to press at this stage for an early end of our proceedings. While asking for a substantial subscription to his temple, he yet protested that any cession of sacred texts or 'Chings'—and among these he classed all Chinese manuscript rolls, whatever their contents might be—was impossible. Though this attitude was far from encouraging, I was glad that the Tao-shih came to business, as it were; for the preceding work had fully convinced me that it was my duty towards research to try my utmost to rescue the whole of this precious collection from the risk of slow dispersion and loss with which it was threatened in such keeping. But I also realized fully the serious difficulties and objections with which this course was beset. I was not qualified to form any definite estimate of the philological value of those masses of Chinese Buddhist texts which made up the bulk of the hidden library. Their contents were, no doubt, to be found in the complete editions of the Chinese *Tripitaka*, printed in Korea and Japan. Still less could I profitably attempt to select those texts which were likely to possess antiquarian or literary interest. The removal of whole cart-loads of manuscripts would inevitably lead to the whole transaction becoming public, and this was likely to compromise my chances of further work elsewhere. As regards Tun-huang itself, there was a special reason to avoid anything that might arouse religious resentment with its possibly serious consequences; for I knew through my Mandarin friends of the popular unrest, caused

<sup>3</sup> Cf. regarding this embroidery picture, below, pp. 895 sq.

Bundles  
sewn up in  
canvas  
wrappers.

Art relics in  
'mixed'  
bundles on  
floor.

Negotia-  
tions with  
Wang Tao-  
shih.

Impossi-  
bility of  
complete  
removal.