

first centuries of our era and that they were preserved for us, as it were in transit, along the very route which had served as the main channel for this trade since its first opening in the second century B.C.

Among them designs are frequent which clearly foreshadow features characteristic of the decorative style prevailing in Īrān and the adjoining regions during the Sassanian period. Their comparison creates a strong presumption that we touch here a source from which Persian art, and not merely that of the weaver, must have drawn much fresh inspiration since the first century B.C. That Chinese art in successive later periods has asserted a very powerful influence on Persian painting and ceramics is a fact well established by recent research and furnishing an exact parallel. It is impossible for me to follow up further the traces of the early 'artistic penetration' from the Far East to the West here assumed; that those ancient Chinese silks, so portable and so lasting, are likely to have provided the best transmitting agency for it is clear. But enough has been indicated already to justify the impression I received at the very time when they first came to light from that desolate Lou-lan site, that by their discovery 'there had opened up a new and fascinating chapter in the history of textile art'.

Influence of early Chinese textiles on Persian art.

#### SECTION IV.—MANUSCRIPTS FROM THE HIDDEN LIBRARY, IN BRĀHMĪ AND CHINESE

In Chapter XXII an account has already been given of the conditions in which I found the manuscript remains stored away in the walled-up chapel, and of the operations by which a considerable portion of this big deposit was secured for my collection. It will take many years before all these abundant new materials can be examined in detail and made fully accessible for philological and other researches. Even if their preliminary analysis and study, for which I had endeavoured from the very time of my return to England to secure the help of the most qualified experts, had already been completed, a systematic exposition of the results would fall beyond the scope of this publication as well as the limits of my competence. It appears, however, desirable for more than one reason to record here briefly the arrangements made for the first examination and cataloguing of the texts and documents in the different scripts and languages, and to pass in rapid review any indications that the preliminary labours already accomplished may furnish as to the sources from which the old monastic library had drawn its contents. cursory and wholly inadequate as such a synopsis must be, it may claim some historical interest; for it will help to illustrate further that interchange of influences from varied regions, races, and creeds of which Tun-huang, owing to its geographical position, became pre-eminently the scene from Han times downwards.

Preliminary examination of MSS.

We may appropriately commence our survey with the manuscript remains in different forms of Brāhmī writing; for apart from special philological interest they possess the advantage of having been completely catalogued by Dr. Hoernle with the same painstaking care which has benefited so many manuscript finds in Brāhmī since the Central-Asian field was first opened to Indologist researches. As a reference to his classified list in Appendix F will show, these Brāhmī manuscripts comprise texts in three languages, Sanskrit, Khotanese, and Kuchean, while as regards their outer form they divide themselves into rolls and Pōthīs. The contents in all three languages are exclusively Buddhistic.

Manuscripts in Brāhmī script.

Taking the Sanskrit texts first, it may be noted that those in Pōthī form, nine altogether, have almost all been published or identified in the succession of articles which Professor de la Vallée Poussin was kind enough to devote to the Sanskrit portion of the collection.<sup>1</sup> Apart from frag-

Sanskrit texts in Pōthī form.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. L. de la Vallée Poussin, *Documents sanscrits de la seconde collection M. A. Stein, J.R.A.S.*, 1911, pp. 759 sqq.,

1063 sqq.; 1912, pp. 355 sqq.; *Nouveaux fragments de la collection Stein*, 1913, pp. 843 sqq.