

plied in the schematic fashion dear to Buddhist piety, bore the unmistakable impress of Indian models transmitted through Central-Asian Buddhism. Hieratic tradition had preserved for these Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and saintly attendants the type of face, pose and drapery originally developed by Graeco-Buddhist art, whatever modifications Chinese taste had introduced in technique of treatment and colouring.

In spite of this strong conservative tendency there were different phases of development to be distinguished among these wall paintings. There were plentiful archaeological indications to suggest that those in most of the larger shrines belonged to the times of the T'ang dynasty, from the seventh to the tenth century, when the sacred site, like the Tun-huang oasis itself, had enjoyed prolonged spells of prosperity. Since a fine stone inscription of T'ang times which M. Chavannes had published before from an *estampage* mentions the first consecration of the site in A.D. 366, remains of shrines even earlier than the T'ang might also be looked for. The search for such would not have been possible for me without Sinologue training and expert knowledge of Chinese secular art. On the other hand, it was easy to recognize fresco work later in style but still skilful and vigorous on the walls of antechapels and passages. These were necessarily much exposed to decay and damage, and restorations such as later inscriptions mention under the Mongol dynasty had here manifestly been frequent.

During the centuries that followed the downfall of the T'ang dynasty until the establishment of paramount Mongol power, these marches of China proper, then no longer within the 'Great Wall', had been exposed to barbarian