

inroads both from Turkish tribes in the north and Tibetan races in the south. These vicissitudes must have sadly affected the splendour of the 'Thousand Buddhas' shrines and the numbers of monks and nuns who ministered to their worship. Yet in spite of all changes and devastations Tun-huang had evidently managed to retain its traditions of Buddhist piety even then; for as I examined one grotto after the other I could feel no doubt that it was the sight of these multitudinous shrines, and the first vivid impressions there received of the cult paid to the images, which had made Marco Polo put into his chapter on *Sachiu*, *i.e.* Sha-chou or Tun-huang, a long account of the strange idolatrous customs of its people.

The good folk of Tun-huang have indeed remained to this day attached with particular zeal to such forms of worship as represent Buddhism in the queer medley of Chinese popular religion. My first rapid visit to the 'Thousand Buddhas' had shown me that the cave temples, notwithstanding all apparent decay, were still real cult places 'in being'. This was impressed upon me still more by the great annual religious fair which, just at the time of my return from the exploration of the remains of the ancient *Limes* in the desert by the middle of May, drew the villagers and townspeople of the oasis by the thousands to the site. I therefore recognized that considerations of prudence would make it advisable to limit my archaeological activity at the site, anyhow at first, to the ample opportunities its fully accessible remains offered for the study of Buddhist art, *i.e.* to such work as could not reasonably arouse popular resentment with its eventual risks.

Yet when by May 21, 1907, I regained the sacred site,