

I rapidly convinced myself that the approach to purely classical design and colouring was closer in these frescoes than in any work of ancient pictorial art I had seen so far, whether north or south of the Kun-lun. Much in the vivacious look of the large, fully opened eyes, in the expression of the small dimpled lips and the slightly aquiline nose, brought back to my mind those beautiful portrait heads of Egyptian Greek girls and youths which I remembered having seen long years before in the Graf collection on panels from Fayûm mummies of the Ptolemaic and Roman periods. Perhaps the faint trace of Semitic influence recognizable in the features presented by one or other of the frescoes helped to suggest this linking. But then, again, there was a note of the quattrocento in the lively directness of gaze and pose, the simple ease of the outlines, conspicuous even in the graceful upward curve of the short fluttering wings. One thing was quite certain at the first glance: work of such excellence could not possibly have originated in the time of Tibetan occupation nor in the period of Chinese rule immediately preceding it. As well might we look for the decorators of Pompeian villas among those who ministered to Theodoric's Goths.

I was still wondering how to account for the distinctly classical style in the representation of these Cherubim and the purport of this apparent loan from early Christian iconography, when the discovery of a 'Khat,' announced by a shout from the men, supplied definite palaeographic evidence for the dating. From the rubble of broken mud-bricks and plaster filling the passage on the south there emerged in succession three large pieces of fine coloured silk, evidently belonging to what had once been a votive flag or streamer, and each bearing a few short lines inscribed in Kharoshthi. These pieces measured about twenty-two inches in length, with a width of six to eight inches. Other fragments of the same excellently woven silk turned up later, but without writing. In all the material showed a ground colour of delicate cream, with numerous narrow stripes in harmonizing tints of buff, brown, and purple.

The Kharoshthi inscriptions on these pieces and on a