

middle of the large cella, some forty-six feet square, there rose on a horseshoe-shaped dais, ancient but replastered, a collection of brand-new clay images of colossal size, more hideous, I thought, than any I had seen in these caves. The seated Buddha in the centre, and the disciples, saints, and Guardians of the Regions symmetrically grouped on his sides, showed only too plainly how low sculptural art had sunk in Tun-huang. But neither for this nor for the painful contrast these statues presented to the tasteful and remarkably well preserved fresco decoration on the walls and ceiling of the cella could the worthy Tao-shih reasonably be held responsible. His devotion to this shrine and to the task of religious merit which he had set himself in restoring it, was unmistakably genuine. As a poor, shiftless mendicant he had come from his native province of Shan-hsi some eight years before my visit, settled down at the ruined temple caves, and then set about restoring this one to what he conceived to have been its original glory.

The mouth of the passage was then blocked by drift sand from the silt deposits of the stream, and the original antechapel had completely decayed. When I thought of all the efforts, the perseverance, and the enthusiasm it must have cost this humble priest from afar to beg the money needed for the clearing out of the sand and the substantial reconstructions,—besides the antechapel there were several stories of temple halls built above in solid hard brick and timber, right to the top of the cliff,—I could not help feeling something akin to respect for the queer little figure by my side. It was clear from the way in which he lived with his two humble acolytes, and from all that Chiang had heard about him at Tun-huang, that he spent next to nothing on his person or private interests. Yet his list of charitable subscriptions and his accounts, proudly produced later on to Chiang-ssü-yeh, showed quite a respectable total, laboriously collected in the course of these years and spent upon these labours of piety.

It had not taken Chiang long to fathom Wang Tao-shih's profound ignorance of all that constitutes Chinese