

characters which the founder of the Hsi-hsia dynasty adopted in 1036 A.D., strongly supports this assumption.

But the small well-sheltered cave had in all probability served for a long time previously as a place of deposit for all kinds of objects sanctified by use but no longer needed in the various shrines. A clear indication of this was supplied by many small and carefully packed bags which I found containing tiny fragments of sacred texts, and ragged remnants of silk paintings. Such insignificant relics would certainly not have been collected and sewn up systematically in the commotion of a sudden emergency. So much was obvious from the first, that the objects deposited in this chapel must very often have been already of considerable antiquity at the time when the deposit was finally walled up. Yet it was to me a very gratifying assurance when in examining portions of our Chinese collection, a year later, Chiang-ssü-yeh found a series of manuscript rolls showing exact dates which seemed to extend as far back as the third century A.D. But even then I realized that it would take protracted scholarly labours in Europe before the date of the earliest pieces could be definitely established.

As I worked my way in great haste through the contents of the 'mixed' bundles,—we never knew how long we might rely on the Tao-shih's indulgence—I felt elated and at the same time oppressed by the constant flow of fresh materials pouring down upon us. Even in the case of art relics and manuscripts which were neither Chinese nor Tibetan, and of which I was able to estimate the full interest, there was no chance of closer examination. All I could do was to make sure of their being put apart 'for further study,' as our polite convention called removal. But what obsessed me most at the time was my total want of Sinologist training. How gladly would I then have exchanged one-half of my Indian knowledge for a tenth of its value in Chinese! Even with Chiang's zealous help I could never be sure of not leaving behind documents and texts of historical or literary interest amidst the smothering mass of Buddhist canonical literature and the like.