

Ch'ien-fo-tung so closely in all essential points of architectural disposition and artistic decoration that a summary description will suffice. The principal caves are found on the right bank, ranged in two stories as seen in Fig. 214, one on a terrace about twenty feet above the river bed, the other between fifty and sixty feet higher. The five main caves below are rendered very dark by the verandahs built in front of them, and comprise, besides the colossal seated Buddha already referred to, an image of Buddha recumbent in Nirvana, fully thirty feet long.

Owing to abundant restoration, all stucco images in these caves bear a modern appearance, while the large fresco panels in some of them show a style suggesting that Tibetan influence had asserted itself upon the traditional local art. These caves, and some five or six smaller grottoes in the same lower story, seem to receive most attention from the priests in residence and to attract most gifts from pious visitors. The former all claimed to have resided here for over thirty years, and one of them, a white-haired old man, who had installed himself in the picturesque little grotto on the extreme left of Fig. 214, was approached with special reverence by our people from An-hsi and Ch'iao-tzŭ. Even Chiang, usually so sceptical in regard to saintly claims, was inclined to let him pass for a 'sage.'

The upper row of caves is approached near this holy man's grotto by a rough staircase cut from the rock. Then, crossing a deep fissure of the rock wall by a rickety bridge, and passing by a cave of which the front part had fallen in, we arrived at the northernmost of a flight of thirteen cave-temples, communicating with each other. All of them consist of a cella square or nearly so, varying from twenty to thirty-eight feet on each side; of a high porch or passage, sometimes twenty or thirty feet deep, admitting light and air; of an antechapel in front of the latter, as broad as the cella, but narrow and opening towards the cliff face by a big outer porch as seen in the photograph. Communication between the shrines was originally effected by narrow passages leading from one outer porch to the other through the facing part of the rock wall. But in places this had crumbled away or become unsafe, and a rough tunnel