

connecting the antechapels had been cut, evidently at a later date, as shown by the broken wall paintings.

All the walls of these cave-temples are decorated with frescoes, or, to use a more exact term, mural paintings in tempera. The walls of the porches ordinarily show processions of red-robed monks with broad-brimmed black hats, and facing them rows of nuns with elaborate head-dresses made up of flower pendants around a bulb-shaped cap. Exactly the same types had been seen by me at the 'Thousand Buddhas.' The walls of the cellas and antechapels display either processions of large Bodhisattvas, gracefully draped and adorned, or else a variety of panels with a Buddha enthroned among Bodhisattvas on lotus seats; scenes from a Buddhist heaven, with the spirited representation of a 'divine ballet and concert' in the foreground, as seen in so many frescoes of Ch'ien-fo-tung, and others. The photograph in Fig. 215 illustrates both themes of decoration. Even the curious 'wind scene' of the legend already discussed in Chapter LXX. is reproduced on the back wall of two cellas.

The frescoes generally showed great uniformity of style, and were evidently more or less coeval reproductions of the same prototypes. That these were to be looked for among the mural paintings of the 'Thousand Buddhas' appeared to me at the time to be beyond doubt, fresh as my recollection of the latter then was. The technique of the execution seemed generally inferior, and suggested either a somewhat later date or else employment of less skilful hands. In some cases the coarse washes replacing the carefully drawn outlines of the older work suggested extensive use of stencils.

I could not find inscriptional record of the date of construction for any of the shrines of the 'Myriad Buddhas.' But a large number of dated Chinese sgraffiti left behind by pilgrims on the walls of the caves helped to fix the lower date limit. Most of these seemed to belong to the close of the Mongol dynasty's rule, showing dates corresponding to 1331-67 A.D. By their side, but far less numerous, were to be found short sgraffiti in Uigur script, or its later Mongol form, and in Tibetan. There were one