

or two lines in Central-Asian Brahmi script, a badly effaced short entry in Arabic writing, and also some characters which I thought might belong to the peculiar script used by the Hsi-hsia in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries.

How long after the painting of the frescoes these mementos of visitors had been left behind, it was impossible to determine. In any case the Chinese sgraffiti proved that the temples must have been much visited by pilgrims about the middle of the fourteenth century, and that their appearance must have been then much the same as now. Destructive invasions had probably affected this out-of-the-way site in the hills far less than the sacred caves near Tun-huang which had served as a model. The caves on the left bank number about ten, disposed in three irregular groups, all at a considerable height above the river. Their frescoes seemed distinctly coarser in design and execution than those on the right bank, and their irregular arrangement may also be taken as an indication of relatively later origin. Yet, here too, dated Chinese sgraffiti showed that the time of construction lay before the fourteenth century A.D.