

seventh and eighth centuries with their beautifully smooth and tough paper. M. Pelliot rightly emphasizes the fact, illustrated also by the later dated paintings in my collection, that this steady decay must have been well advanced before the Hsi-hsia, or Tangut, conquest. The entire absence of any Hsi-hsia writing among the contents of the walled-up chamber was noted by us both. But it is a discovery made by Professor Pelliot elsewhere on the site which gives to this negative evidence its distinct chronological weight, and to which special attention must be called here.

Manuscripts and prints of 13th-14th cent. found in other grottoes.

Colophon assumed to date from A. D. 1350.

Probable provenance of Uigur booklets.

Uigur books added from later finds elsewhere.

On clearing two late grottoes belonging to the northernmost detached group and decorated in pure Tibetan style, he found there some torn manuscript and printed remains of the thirteenth and fourteenth century in Chinese, Mongolian, and Tibetan, and, besides a little of Brāhmī, also some fragments of Hsi-hsia prints.<sup>7</sup> This discovery makes the total absence of the Hsi-hsia script among those thousands of texts and documents in Wang's *cache* all the more significant. But even more important is the help it offers for clearing up what otherwise might appear a serious antiquarian puzzle. Among the materials that I secured from that deposit there are, as mentioned above, a small number of Uigur texts in the form of books, stitched and folded after the Western fashion, and all remarkably well preserved (for specimens see Plates CLXIII-CLXV).<sup>7a</sup> Two of them are written on one side of sheets of thin paper, of a kind not otherwise met with among the contents of the deposit, but recalling that found in Chinese prints of later times. In one of the manuscript booklets, Ch. xix. 003 (Plate CLXV), containing like the rest a Buddhist text translated from Chinese into Uigur Turkish, Dr. (now Sir) E. Denison Ross, who had undertaken a detailed examination of all our Uigur texts, discovered a colophon in which he recognized, as he believed, a date corresponding with A. D. 1350. In the course of the discussion which followed a paper on 'Western Manichaeism and the Turfan Discoveries', read by Mr. Legge in 1912 at the Royal Asiatic Society, Dr. Ross mentioned this dated colophon, and expressed the conclusion that it proved the Ch'ien-fo-tung hoard to have been walled up at least three hundred years later than M. Pelliot and I had assumed.

Not having received previous information of Dr. Ross's interesting discovery, and being away in India at the time, I had not been able to inquire more closely into the chronological problem thus raised before Dr. Ross, after further consideration, saw reason to modify his conclusion.<sup>8</sup> From information communicated to him by Professor Pelliot it appeared that the grottoes of the northernmost group belonging to the Mongol period had been searched by Wang Tao-shih subsequent to his great discovery of 1900, and that he had found in them a few manuscripts. Two of these small caves of later date remained untouched by Wang's 'treasure-seeking' operations, and on clearing these M. Pelliot only came upon remains of manuscripts and prints dating from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, as previously mentioned, some of which were Uigur. Thus the explanation naturally offers itself that the Uigur booklet containing the colophon supposed to be of A. D. 1350 and probably also the other Uigur texts in book form are likely to represent specimens of Wang's later finds there which the priest, owing to their particularly good preservation, thought fit to add to the great book store of his original *trouvaille*.

From this explanation, which is supported by Professor Pelliot's close knowledge of the local conditions, I see no reason to dissent. It satisfactorily accounts for the presence in the repository of all those undoubtedly old remains of a few books which are manifestly later in origin. That the priest had actually used the small chamber as a place of deposit in the way assumed is proved with certainty in the case of the small Taoist treatise printed under the Emperor Kuang Hsü (A. D. 1875-1908) which M. Pelliot mentions having found there.<sup>9</sup> With the explanation just given the con-

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Pelliot, *B.É.F.E.O.*, viii. p. 529, postscript in footnote.

<sup>7a</sup> See above, p. 818; also below, p. 923.

<sup>8</sup> See Ross, *The Caves of the Thousand Buddhas*, *J.R.A.S.*, 1913, pp. 434 sqq.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *B.É.F.E.O.*, 1908, p. 506.