

Tun-Huang



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著者:Yasushi Inoue

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The novel Tun-huang is a romantic adventure story in the true sense of the word, set in the little-known desert kingdom in China's westernmost frontier. Tun-huang gained fame in the early part of this century when some 20,000 Buddhist scrolls and manuscripts were discovered in the Thousand Buddha Caves there. Around this priceless archaeological and cultural find, and how they came to be hidden there in the first place, the author has woven an intricate and enthralling tale.

The date is 1026. In the remote western frontier of China a fierce battle is raging. The powerful Sung dynasty is struggling to defend its desert outposts against the most energetic of the barbarian tribes, the Hsi-hsia.

Into this war drifts a hapless young scholar, Chao Hsing-te, who lost his chance to sit for the crucial government examination that will determine his career. Totally disillusioned, he wonders off into the Wild West of that era in search of the Hsi-hsia, whose valor and determination he much admires. Mistaken by the Hsi-hsia military for a Chinese mercenary, Hsing-te is enlisted into the army and takes part in several fierce raids in the neighboring regions. During his stay there he learns the Hsi-hsia writing system, which no one knew had existed. And as a result of his love for a young princess

who committed suicide to prove her fidelity, Hsing-te is drawn toward Buddhism and resolves to devote the rest of his life to copying sutras for the repose of her soul.

When the remote frontier outpost where he is living falls and surrenders to the invading Hsi-hsia troops, the hero takes his own sutras and conceals them with countless others in a cave in the hillside. There they remained for nine centuries before they were discovered by an itinerant monk, and consequently by Sir Aurel Stein, Paul Pelliot, and other scholars. Today these scrolls account for the only sources of early Chinese religious and social history.

The author writes with a sound historical background knowledge, combined with a lucidity of expression and a lyrical sensitivity. It comes as no surprise, then, that Tun-huang was awarded the Mainichi Prize in 1960, the year after it was published.

作者介绍:

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