THE AUTHOR: Yasushi Inoue was born in 1907 in Hokkaido, the son of an army medical officer. He graduated from Kyoto University in 1936, and joined the staff of Mainichi Newspapers as a reporter. In 1948 he published his first stories, *The Hunting Gun* and *The Bullfight*, which won him the Akutagawa Prize, a much coveted literary award. He is the author of numerous works of historical fiction, the best known being *Wind and Waves*, *The Emperor Go-Shirakawa*, *A Strange Tale of Russia*, and *Tun-huang*. Among his works that have been translated into English are *Journey through Samarkand*, *Tun-huang*, and a book of short stories entitled *Lou-lan*. In 1976 Inoue was decorated with the Cultural Award, the highest honor bestowed by the Japanese government.

THE TRANSLATOR: Jean Oda Moy was born in Washington State and spent her early years in Seattle, moving to Japan shortly before the outbreak of World War II. She has combined her studies in Japanese with a career as a psychiatric social worker, and has a practice in California. She travels to Japan frequently on teaching and lecturing trips and is the translator of Inoue's *Chronicle of My Mother*, published in 1982.

Tun-huang

敦煌

A Novel

YASUSHI INOUE

translated by JEAN ODA MOY

KODANSHA INTERNATIONAL LTD.,
Tokyo, New York and San Francisco

Distributed in the United States by Kodansha International/USA Ltd. through Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 10 East 53rd Street, New York, New York 10022. Published by Kodansha International Ltd., 12-21, Otowa 2-chome, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 112 and Kodansha International/USA Ltd., 10 East 53rd Street, New York, New York 10022 and 44 Montgomery Street, San Francisco, California 94104. *Copyright © 1978 by Kodansha International Ltd. All rights reserved.* *Printed in Japan.*

LCC 77-75969

First edition, 1978 — *ISBN 0-87011-576-6*

First paperback edition, 1983 — *ISBN 4-7700-1086-9 (in Japan)*

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

The novel *Tun-huang* was originally published in 1959 as a five-part serial in the literary magazine *Gunzo*. Although nearly twenty years have passed since then, I still have not set foot in Kansu Province, China, the setting of the novel. Moreover, not a single contemporary Japanese scholar has ever been to Tun-huang, although in Japan scholarly interest in that city has been so great since the Meiji era (1868-1912) that the term "Tun-huang studies" has come into common use in academic circles.

Last year, in 1977, I journeyed very near: I had the opportunity to visit Sinkiang (called Hsi-yü in ancient times), the Uighur autonomous region bordering Kansu Province. I

could not travel to Tun-huang then, but I may soon have that chance through the generosity of officials of the People's Republic of China.

Be that as it may, the novel was written without my ever having been to Tun-huang or the Thousand Buddha Caves. It is possible, indeed, that it was written precisely because I had not been there. Logically, this might seem a paradox. It would seem one ought to see the place about which one writes a novel, but inspirationally, it is in fact a different matter.

From the time I was a student I have enjoyed reading works on Central Asia, and over the years I have developed compelling mental pictures of each of the several walled cities west of the Yellow River that collectively served as the gateway to that vast desertland. Even today, those mental pictures created entirely out of what I read—images of the walled cities and the desert which I kept so long in my mind's eye—have a strangely solid reality for me. I suppose the only way I could finally separate fantasy from reality would be to travel to that area. Yet if ever I go there, I anticipate no need for major revisions of my conceptions: my long-held vision of the Takla Makan Desert needed little revision after my trip to Sinkiang last year.

That vision rose out of lines in ancient chronicles such as these:

> "Not a single bird in the sky
> Nor a beast roaming the land"
>
> (Fa-hsien, dates unknown)

and these:

> "Bones of men and beasts
> Merely serve as guideposts on our journey"
>
> (Fa-hsien)

and from lines in *Hsüan-tsang Tripitaka* (602–64) that evoke images of ruins half-buried in sand:

> "The walled city stands stolidly,
> No trace of smoke from homes remains."

I have long known from my student readings of the enormous quantity of priceless documents relevant to world cultural history discovered by Sir Aurel Stein, Paul Pelliot, and the Japanese expedition led by Kozui Otani in one of the Thousand Buddha Caves at Tun-huang. The questions I pondered in those days were: When were the documents hidden in the cave, and why so many? What forces impelled their concealment? There was no historical account to answer these questions, and no historian came forth with an opinion.

Some time after I became a writer, the questions I had contemplated as a student and set aside somewhere in my mind returned to me clearly and without conscious effort as likely material for a novel. I started preparing for this novel in 1953, and for the next five years I searched through history books and other works of literature. As I look back now, that was a very satisfying time for me.

When were the ancient documents hidden in the cave? I learned that the most recent of them was dated Jen Tsung (1023–63) of the Sung dynasty. Judging from that, I could only assume that some sort of political and social upheaval occurred at about that time. (I was not alone in this assumption; it was shared by certain historians.) But then, what sort of upheaval? And why did it take place? The only reasonable answer was an invasion from outside. And speaking of invasion, what figures occupied center stage in that area at that time? The Hsi-hsia. It seemed logical, then, that the concealment was related to the Hsi-hsia conquest of Sha-chou and Kua-chou and the overthrow of Ts'ao, the

powerful administrator of the western frontier territories. Finally, the content of the documents strongly suggested that the person who hid them was either a member of a religious order or a government official.

I experienced extreme difficulty not only in ascertaining the personality of the politically powerful viceroy of Kua-chou, but in the general task of reconstructing the history of the region. Of necessity I turned to the *Sung History* (T'o-t'o, et al., 1313–55) for many relevant facts. But for the crucial ten years following 1026, I drew a complete historical blank. In the end, I resolved to fill the gap left by the historians with a novel. *Tun-huang* fits exactly into the space provided by their silence. However, the theme in the novel of the hero failing in his examination and his subsequent impressment into service for the Hsi-hsia is no mere plot device. Actual records exist which chronicle the fact that the Hsi-hsia kept a sharp eye out for bright young men who failed the civil service examination and enlisted them as government advisers.

It was in San Francisco in 1964 that I first met Jean Moy, translator of *Tun-huang*. I was then in the United States at the invitation of the State Department to do research for my novel *The Ocean* (*Wadatsumi*), and she had already started on the translation of *Tun-huang*. Fourteen years have gone by since then, and I am very pleased that *Tun-huang* is now to be published in English by Kodansha International, Ltd.

I would like to end this note with an expression of gratitude to Jean Moy for her many years of hard work.

YASUSHI INOUE

INTRODUCTION

The walled city of Tun-huang (Sha-chou) was an outpost on the northwestern frontier, whose importance was due primarily to its location for it was a military base on the Silk Road connecting China with Central Asia and the Western world. More recently it has attracted attention because of its proximity to the Thousand Buddha Caves. The recorded history of Tun-huang dates back to the Han dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D. 220), when a governor was dispatched to this frontier post by the Chinese emperor. Thereafter, owing to the vacillating fortunes of a succession of Chinese rulers, the incompetence of the Chinese court, and the insurgence of various local tribes, the city changed hands many times.

The novel *Tun-huang* is set in the eleventh century, just before the city was wrested from Chinese hands by the Tangut tribe known as the Hsi-hsia. Although the Hsi-hsia officially declared vassalage to Sung China, its leaders frequently took advantage of China's political and military impotence to wage local wars of conquest. By the time the novel begins, the Hsi-hsia tribe had overrun great portions of the western territories, had established its own capital, and had even developed its own writing system. Since Buddhism was the official Hsi-hsia religion, the Thousand Buddha Caves just outside Tun-huang were restored with the Hsi-hsia conquest in 1036, after years of neglect.

In 1127, the Hsi-hsia in turn were overthrown by the Mongols. The caves, however, retained their importance as a religious site for several centuries more: the murals in the caves date back to the Yüan (1271–1368) and Ming (1364–1644) dynasties. The site fell into general neglect during the late Ming era and lay buried in the desert sands for many years.

At the time of the Hsi-hsia invasion, some person or persons unknown chose one of the caves as a hiding-place for thousands of Buddhist sutras and other manuscripts. These exquisite writings lay concealed for nine centuries until their discovery by an itinerant monk early in the twentieth century. Through the aid of that man, thousands of scrolls and other documents were recovered by archaeologists Paul Pelliot (1878–1945) of France, Sir Aurel Stein (1862–1943) of Britain, Kozui Otani (1876–1948) of Japan, and S. F. Oldenburg (1863–1934) of Russia. These scholars subsequently astonished the academic world with the revelation of the vast cultural and historical significance of the find. *Tun-huang* deals with the circumstances surrounding the concealment of the remarkable cache.

The story begins in 1026. The main character, Chao

Hsing-te, has gone to K'ai-feng to take his Palace Examination. He falls asleep while awaiting his turn for his oral examination and thereby loses his opportunity to take the test. He wanders about the city in despair until he comes upon a Hsi-hsia woman who is being sold in the marketplace. He is drawn by her intrepid spirit in the face of adversity; indeed, his interest in the country of Hsi-hsia itself is aroused by the woman, who to him symbolizes the spirit of the newly founded country. This is the first of two chance meetings—both with women—that will decide his fate.

From K'ai-feng he goes forth to the western territories and is pressed into the Hsi-hsia vanguard, a unit composed of Chinese mercenaries. Chu Wang-li, commander of the unit, is impressed with Hsing-te's educational attainments and his valor in battle, and gradually places trust in him and gives him increasing responsibility. Eventually, Hsing-te asks to be sent to Hsing-ch'ing to learn Hsi-hsia writing. There he becomes one of the creators of the Hsi-hsia–Chinese dictionary and, moreover, his interest in Buddhism is awakened. Before his departure, however, during his unit's invasion of Kan-chou, he had met and fallen in love with a young Uighur princess to whom he promises to return. During his absence in Hsing-ch'ing, the princess is forcibly taken as a concubine by the Hsi-hsia ruler. She throws herself from the city wall to prove her loyalty to Hsing-te. When he learns of her death, he vows to devote the rest of his life to copying Buddhist sutras for the repose of her soul.

One of the major characters is the Chinese commander Chu Wang-li, an indomitable warrior, who for years has fought for the Hsi-hsia army. His destiny, too, is determined by an encounter with the beautiful Uighur princess loved by Hsing-te. Although the princess appears but briefly and dies halfway through the story, her lingering influence on the two soldiers forms a central focus of the novel. The cir-

cumstances of her suicide arouse such rage and desire for revenge in Chu Wang-li that he casts all discretion aside and revolts against the Hsi-hsia emperor. This revolt brings about Wang-li's destruction and moves Hsing-te finally to conceal the valuable scrolls in one of the Thousand Buddha Caves.

Two interesting secondary characters are Wei-ch'ih Kuang and Ts'ao Yen-hui. Kuang is a young man of royal birth reduced to the roles of traveling merchant and highwayman; Yen-hui is a devout Buddhist. Kuang is totally absorbed in making a profit and is oblivious to the rise and fall of tribes around him. His belief in his own invincibility never falters. Even as the death struggle between Wang-li and the Hsi-hsia army rages in the east and the Muslims invade from the west, he attempts to turn the situation to his advantage. Hsing-te plays upon this avarice to persuade Kuang to transport the sutras to the Tun-huang cave. To the dauntless spirit and single-mindedness of the renegade Kuang, Yen-hui's nihilism and religious fervor afford at once a dramatic contrast and a complement.

Tun-huang is not a historical novel in the conventional sense. The true hero of the story is Tun-huang itself, which kept its secret for nine centuries. Despite many battles and other lively scenes of human activity, a deep sense of loneliness and sadness permeates the book. Its theme is essentially the passage of time and the sweep of history. Published in 1959, *Tun-huang* was awarded the Mainichi Prize the following year.

JEAN ODA MOY

A Chapell...

in Japan

L62 敦煌(普及版)

More than a romantic adventure
—an intriguing explanation of
one of the great archaeological
mysteries of western China.

"Early in the 20th century an incredible hoard of Buddhist sutras and other manuscripts was discovered by an itinerant monk in Tun-huang. Archaeologists recovered thousands of documents that had been concealed in the Thousand Buddha Caves for 900 years. The author ... speculated on the reasons for the hiding of such treasures, and this fascinating and exotic novel is the result." — *Publishers Weekly*

"A true historical imagination is exceedingly rare, and [*Tun-huang*] is a superb example of such an imagination at work." — Robert Payne, *Asia*

"Historical reconstruction of a very personal and special kind." — Donald Richie

"An enthralling tale." — *Oriental Economist*

"A unique writer who has managed to escape the often narrow topical bounds of the Japanese novel." — *Japan Quarterly*

AWARDED THE MAINICHI PRIZE

08047683

ISBN 0-87011-576-6

ISBN4-7700-1086-9 C1093 ¥950E (in Japan)