



Non-Fiction

Group 2

The Mogao Grottoes

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Lam, Season Season – 9

The Mogao grottoes is an amazing place located in china 25km southeast of the centre of Dunhuang. Fun fact: did you know that there are 492 caves? A group of the caves at Mogao represent the unique artistic achievement by both organization of space into 492 caves built on five levels and by production of more than 2000 pieces of art and approximately 45,000 square meters of murals among many which are masterpieces of Chinese art.

Who founded the Mogao Grottoes?

The Mogao grottoes were founded by priest Wang Yuanku. Caves were occupied by Buddhist monks from the end of the 19th century up to 1930. In 1900, the priest Wang Yuanku discovered the famous Hidden Library, a trove of 50,000 documents, including the Diamond Sutra, the world's oldest book.

Where the Mogao grottoes are located

The Mogao grottoes, also known as the thousand year buddha grottoes or the cave of the thousand buddha form a system of 500 temples 25km south east The Mogao Grottoes on the cliffs.

They were made in cliffs because the Buddhists think that they need a clean environment free from the interference of secular life as much as possible.

Long ago the Mogao grottoes were used as a trade market. Written in a scroll a large amount of the things they traded were produced in the city and the surrounding regions and sold to merchants including silks of many varieties, tea, ceramics, medicine, jade, animals, food and tools. During the Turpan depression fruit trees and melon grapes grew very well. Every year more than a thousand tons of grapes are exported to foreign countries. Turpan used to be an important point on the silk road.

They were a significant part of history.

The Mogao grottoes, bearing exceptional witness to civilization of ancient china during the sui, tang and song dynasties, are extremely important evidence of the evolution of Buddhist art in the north west part of china, providing an abundance of vivid materials that depict various aspects of medieval politics, economics, culture, art, religion, ethnic relations, and daily dress in western china, so they are unmatched historical value. The unique artistic style of Dunhuang art derive not only from the amalgamation of Han Chinese artist tradition and style assimilated from ancient Indian and Gandharan custom, but also from an integration of the art of the Turk, ancient Tibetans and other Chinese ethnic minorities. The Mogao caves, an outstanding example of Buddhist rock art sanctuary, have a unique artistic achievement and played a decisive role in artistic exchanges, central Asia and India.

The discovery of the library cave at the Mogao grottoes in 1990, together with the tens of thousands of manuscripts and relics it contained, has been appreciated as the world's most exceptional discovery of ancient oriental culture. This important heritage offers invaluable reference for studying the complex history of ancient China and central Asia.

The Mogao grottoes are an amazing historical discovery. They are one of the many tourist attractions of china

A Journey Through Time into the Mogao Grottoes

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Ng, Miranda – 9

The Mogao Grottoes were ancient caves that were home to many paintings, sculptures and treasured literature pieces. The caves were located above the Dachuan River in Gansu Province, China. The caves were once a popular route along the old silk road, allowing the trade of valuable goods across Asia. The Mogao Grottoes were created in 366 AD, but over time, travellers started taking different routes and the caves were forgotten around a thousand years later.

Before the creation of the Mogao Grottoes around one and a half millennia ago, a monk stumbled across a unique cave along the Silk Road and decided to stay. He along with many other adventurous pilgrims found the caves special and they began using them to create sacred art and literature. Over time they dug 492 caves that were preserved with more than 2000 sculptures.

The Mogao Grottoes have unmatched historical value, they were home to the creation of a diverse range of art focussed on culture, religion, economics and politics. The formation of this extraordinary art was linked to the Han Chinese culture, ancient Tibetans otherwise known as Turks, and other Chinese ethnic minority groups. This heritage hub had unparalleled aesthetic talents and gave rise to many masterpieces along with the evolution of Buddhist art.

The Silk Road was not one single route from Asia into Europe, but a range of multiple routes that encouraged trading across these regions. Some historians preferred to call these the silk routes instead of the silk road because it reflects the many paths taken by traders. The silk road spanned 6,437 kilometres or 4000 miles across some of the most extreme landscapes, like the Gobi Desert and the Pamir Mountains. These routes were not maintained, which made the travellers' journeys a lot more dangerous and gave rise to on-route lodging. Although, few travellers completed the entire journey, but rather traded with middlemen along the way.

Among these traders was the famous Marco Polo, who travelled to China with his father when he was only 17 years old. Their journey lasted over three years, where Marco was sent to parts of Asia to gather and trade valuable goods. He wrote about his journey once he completed his travels which led to his fame along with the increase in popularity of the silk routes. He paved the way forward to understanding Asia and the many diverse cultures that they represented.

A variety of goods and resources were transported along the Silk Road. Goods such as silk, tea, jade, spices, precious stones, and porcelain were among the items that were transported from Asia. The travellers would then return with horses, textiles, glass, and manufactured goods to provide alternative value for the consumers of Asia. Horses were also gathered in Europe and brought back to Asia, which contributed to the strength of the Mongol Empire. Gunpowder was Asia's exchange for this which ultimately caused that evolution of war.

These routes provided important cultural exchanges, which united the East and West. Some parts of the silk routes are still preserved today and are listed on UNESCO's World Heritage Sites. The diverse range of cultures allowed ideas and beliefs to expand, contributing to some of the advanced concepts of famous philosophers. These interactions also gave rise to new technologies and inventions that helped us progress towards the modern world we know today. Although, ideas and goods were not the only things that were transported from Asia. Research suggests that the Black Death spread across the Silk Road and devastated Eurasia killing 75–200 million people.

The Mogao Grottoes caves were forgotten because traders started taking other routes. However, they were rediscovered in 1990 by a group of international explorers. This led to the appreciation of the forgotten cultural treasures that the caves were once valued for. The rediscovery was almost like a doorway to the past, where some of the world's most famous paintings, sculptures and literature pieces were found, including the world's oldest printed book. The Mogao Grottoes were truly a heritage site with incomparable ancient value.

Mogao Caves

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Sein, Anabelle – 9

Mogao Grottoes is located in Dunhuang, China. Mogao Caves is also known as Thousand Buddha Grottoes or Caves of the Thousand Buddhas. Mogao Grottoes is a 45,000 square meter cave. The Mogao Caves form a system of 500 temples.

An important stack of books of documents were discovered in 1900 in the weirdly called “Library Cave”, which had been stacked up in the 11th Century. The contents of the library were subsequently spread around the world, and the largest collections are now found in Beijing, London, Paris and Berlin.

The construction/building of the Mogao Caves near Dunhuang is generally taken to have begun some time in the fourth century. During late 19th Century and early 20th Century, Western explorers/tourists have begun to show a lot of engagement and interest in the Ancient Silk Road.

The Ancient Silk Road connects the East and West, connects a network of trading goods. The Silk Road routes from China to the west passed to the north and south of the Taklamakan Desert, and Dunhuang lay on the junction where these two routes came together. The silk road is also surprisingly long, gaining a total of 4,000 miles. The start of the Silk Road starts at Chang’an (Now called Xi’an) and the end of the Silk Road ended in Rome.

The art inside the Mogao Caves has a lot of detail, which goes by a Fancy and Detailed Theme. The Art quality looks old and rusty, and it reminds people about Ancient times. The art is extremely colourful, with colours like Red, Brown, Yellow, Blue, White, and Orange.

The Mogao Caves were cut into the side of a cliff which is approximately 2 kilometers long. As its height, during the Tang Dynasty, there were more than a thousand caves, but over time many caves were lost, including the earlier ones. 735 caves currently exist in the Mogao Caves; the best-known ones are the 487 caves located in the southern section of the cliff which are places of pilgrimage and worship. 248 caves have also been found to the north which were living quarters, meditation chambers, and burial sites for the monks.

In Mogao Caves, there are also a lot of sculptures (Mostly Clay). Currently, there are approximately around 2,400 surviving clay sculptures in Mogao Caves. These were first constructed on a wooden frame, padded with reed, then modelled in clay stucco, and then finished in paint.

Why were the Mogao Caves built on a cliff? Mogao Caves is carved into the cliffs above the Dachuan River. The grotto temple is a place for Buddhism Activities, which is not much different to the other temples. According to Buddhism, monasteries and temples need a clean environment.

Priest Wang Yuanku found the Mogao Caves. Mogao Caves were occupied by Buddhist monks from the end of the 19th century up to 1930. In around 1900, Priest Wang Yuanku discovered the famous hidden library. A trove of 50,000 documents, even including The Diamond Sutra, aka the world's oldest book.

By the Sui and Tang Dynasties, Mogao Caves became a place for the public to worship. From the 4th to the 14th century, caves were constructed by Monks.

The Mogao Caves contain the world's largest collection of Buddhist Art. All the decorated, detailed walls and ceilings, are covered by beautiful paintings following stories of the Buddha, Buddhist sutras, portraits of cave donors, ornamental designs, and scenes of social life.

The material of the paper in the hidden library is Paper and Ink. A study of inks and paper-making by Pascale Richardin and colleagues was conducted on two Chinese manuscripts in the Pelliot collections in the National Library in France.

Currently, as of January 2022, Mogao Caves are one of the most recommended caves rated by locals. It is also the 2nd most recommended cave destination in China.

Mogao Grottoes

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Wraight, Gia – 9

Wow! The Mogao Caves are so enchanting. Peace and nature around everywhere. I'm here to find the oldest printed book in the world. People have theories but that doesn't work for me. I need the real truth and I need to see it.

Drawings everywhere! Large statues surround me. Some are human and some are characters from old fables. Some are scary, like they are threatening me with their stares, especially the Buddhas. Some smaller human statues are beautiful and elegant. Hundreds of them surround me. Each one is different and shows a different personality.

Beautiful artefacts and drawings. Colours everywhere! What do the Mogao Caves not have?

What's that?

A small drawing in red... of a man and a monster?

Wait, is that blood? That can't be right...

It's the only thing that's red in all of these drawings. Who drew it? Why did they draw it?

Whooooosh!

Who's that?

I turn around. There's no one behind me. It must be the wind.

It can't be the wind. It's really hot and humid here.

I'm sure it's nothing.

Huh, what's this on the ground?

Looks like ancient writing.

I look around for clues but there's nothing.

Is it a riddle?

A charcoal voice comes from within the cave.

"The chosen one has come."

"Who said that?"

The voice comes back. "Avar..."

I start to worry.

The floor begins to glow. Drawings of cats, tigers and pigs, the tiles perfectly separated from each other The floor melts away around the drawings.

What should I do?

I take a step back and meditate.

Sweat drips down my face.

which way do I go

THINK! I say to myself.

I finally got it!

Since this is an ancient cave, it must have an old riddle! I remember learning about caves and riddles when I was 200 years old. I remember! Step on the pigs! The cat and tiger always bite!

I take my first step

The tiles around me disintegrate, except the ones with pigs.

This is no ordinary cave.

PLOP! A metal key drops from the ceiling.

What's this for?

Whooshh!

Not this again.

Candles are floating next to me, lighting up one by one, showing a big Buddha statue. On the leg there is a small keyhole. Before I go in, I grab a candle just in case.

What's this?

A secret room?

Roses, candles, and drawings are lined up all around the walls. The thorns of the roses are strong and spiky. The candles can barely hold the fire. Drawings of people and hearts... But that doesn't make sense. Who did this?

Wait, what are those two red dots in the corner? It's weirdly dark there. I hold up my candle to see what it is.

A hairy monster comes out of the darkness.

I freeze.

Is that...

The monster in the drawing?

The monster's eyes are as red as blood, teeth as sharp as a cat's claw. The monster's nose is big and black. It can smell anything! His back is old and crumpled like a camel's back. It has three lumps. He's very hairy, his hair is dark brown and he looks very very very big and strong.

The doors lock and the monster opens his mouth.

His voice is familiar like I heard it before.

It was the voice from earlier.

"I can't believe it! After all these years of being alone, somebody finally came!" the voice is saying

Huh?

The monster talks again.

"This must be very confusing. Let me explain. My name is Mog Wai Yue. I need to see if people are worthy enough to enter."

I say, "Let us fight! Don't be a chicken!"

The monster replies in a confused voice, "I never meant fighting."

"Huh?"

"I think it is so old fashioned so it's always a math quiz!"

I think to myself: Oh shoot! I don't know anything about math except my 2 and 5 times table without thinking. I say it's on.

"Let's start! What's $987-678+12\cdot 7000\times 80+8000.0001(870-799.99)\times 0$?"

Oh, I know this!

I remember. My father taught me when I was two hundred years young. Too young to even talk yet.

He said that zero times anything is always...

"Zero!"

His eyes begin to fire water works.

"You are the chosen one. I never thought this day would come!"

As the beast disintegrates, I start kneeling down and rummaging through sand for clues. There has to be a reason he turned to sand. As I look through, I look through the sand i find

A small, golden key.

I pick up the key and suddenly a cloud of darkness appears right in front of me.

I open my eyes and see that there is a door.

I unlock the door.

In the center of the room, there is a golden book shining brighter than the sun. Below it, there is a silver stand brighter than the moon.

I drop the key on the ground.

Nothing...

Everything is gone....

Sweat drips down my face like a snail slowly walking. At this point I feel faint.

"I did it!"

Tears of relief and happiness roll down my face like a person going down a slide.

I open the book and start to read it. Something about all of this feels familiar...

I read about the writer's life and it weirdly makes me think of someone, but I can't think of who it is...

As I flip the book from DAY 1 to DAY 1000, all their emotions and actions feel familiar...

My daughter is born! But I am not there to celebrate her. Something happened, I can't believe my daughter was born on the same day I was born, the 10th of May. she will someday meet me.

I freeze. My eyes start to twitch. 10th of May... that's my birthday!

This is my name. This is me.

It all makes sense now... why I barely saw him, why I barely knew him.

The Mogao Grottoes

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Yu, Ethan – 9

The Mogao Grottoes, also known as the Thousand Buddha Grottoes or the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas, are evidence of evolution in Buddhist art in the northwestern region of China. They form a system of 500 temples 25km (16 mi) southeast of the center of Dunhuang.

Situated at a strategic point along the Silk Route, at the crossroads of trade as well as religious, cultural, and intellectual influences, the 492 cells and cave sanctuaries in Mogao are famous for their statues and wall paintings, spanning 1,000 years of Buddhist art.

They provide an abundance of various ancient Chinese politics, economics, culture, arts, religion, ethnic relations, and daily dress in western China. They are bearing exceptional witness to China in the time of the Sui, Tang, and Song dynasties. In the 4th to 14th century, Buddhist monks, wealthy families and locals built the Mogao Grottoes over 1700 years ago. There were many rare artifacts stored in the Mogao Grottoes. These include the earliest printing book. The Mogao Grottoes provides invaluable reference for studying the complex history of ancient China and Central Asia. Dunhuang was established as a frontier garrison outpost by the Han Dynasty Emperor Wudi to protect against the Xiongnu in 111 BC. It also became an important gateway to the West, a centre of commerce along the Silk Road, as well as a meeting place of various people and religions such as Buddhism.

Why was the Grotto built on a cliff? It is because it is a place for Buddhist activity. It was not that different from other Buddhist temples. Monasteries and temples need a clean environment, free from the interference of secular life as much as possible. The cave's remote location has helped it survive for a long time. The caves were cut into the side of a cliff which is close to two kilometers long. The materials found in the library cave offer a vivid picture of medieval China in that time period.

The stable temperature and humidity, the lack of human contact, and long-lasting painting materials make the painting last for a long time in near pristine conditions. Right now, 492 caves are being preserved; it has about 45,000 square meters of murals and more than 2,000 painted sculptures in the Mogao Grottoes.

This treasure trove of writings was collected between the 9th and 10th centuries CE, by Tang and Song dynasty Buddhist monks who carved the cave and then filled it with ancient and current manuscripts on topics ranging from religion and philosophy, history and mathematics, folk songs, and dance

The Mogao caves were first constructed in 366 AD by members of the ruling family in northern Wei and Northern Zhou constructed many caves there, and it flourished in the short-lived Sui dynasty (581–618 ce). By the Tang Dynasty, the number of caves had reached over a thousand. By the Sui and Tang dynasties, Mogao Caves had become a place of worship and pilgrimage for the public.

It was discovered in 1900 in the so-called "Library Cave". It was first abandoned in the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). It was abandoned before 1006 because people of Dunhuang heard about the fall of the

The Buddhist kingdom of Khotan to the Islamic conquerors of Kashgar and sought to avoid the destruction that had occurred to Buddhist establishments there.

The Library cave, which was unsealed by Wang Yuan. He is a Chinese itinerant monk. He was originally from Shanxi province in China. The Mogadishu Grottoes / Caves contain nearly 50,000 ancient silk banners and manuscripts, paintings, fine silk embroideries, and other rare textiles dating from before the year 1000. Words of Wang's discovery drew the attention of a British / Indian group of archaeologists led by Ariel Stein, a Hungarian-born British archaeologist who was on an archeological exploration in the area in 1907.

The artwork of Dunhuang includes more than 10 major genres. In the Mogao Grottoes, there are lots of masterpieces of architecture, culture, wall paintings, silk paintings, calligraphy, woodblock printing, literature, embroidery music and dance and popular entertainment. One type of caves constructed during Tibetan era is the Nirvana Cave, which features a large

reclining Buddha that covers the entire length of the hall. Figures of mourners in murals or in sculptural forms are also depicted along the length of the hall behind the Buddha. The Buddha figure in cave 158 measures 15.6 m long. The early figures are relatively simple and mainly of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The Buddhas of Northern Wei may have two attendant Bodhisattvas, and two further disciples were added in Northern Zhou, forming a group of five.

The Sixteen Kingdoms made 7 caves, Northern Wei made 10 from each phase, Northern Zhou made 15 caves, The Sui dynasty made 70, High Tang made a little bit more than the Sui dynasty with 80 caves, and Early Tang made only 44. Middle Tang made the same amount as Early Tang, having 44. (This era in Dunhuang is also known as the Tibetan period because they were under Tibetan rule. Late Tang has made 60. The Five Dynasties made 32, The Song Dynasty made 43, Western Xia made 82, and lastly, The Yuan dynasty made 10 caves. All the caves combined give 507 caves in total.

Altar hangings, silk banners, wrappings for manuscripts and Monks apparel. The Monks normally use fabric consisting of a patchwork of different scraps as a sign of humility; these therefore provide valuable insights into the various types of silk cloth and embroidery available at that time. These are some types of textiles found in the Library cave.

There are around 2400 surviving clay sculptures at the Mogao Grottoes. These were first constructed on a wooden frame, padded with reed, then modelled in clay stucco, and finished with paint. About 100 of them are biblical texts, covering the entire Hebrew Bible except Esther. Most of the manuscripts are sectarian writings. The murals are extensive, covering a large area of 490,000 square feet (46,000 square metres).

An Amazing Trip to The Mogao Grottoes

Ching Chung Hau Po Woon Primary School, Huang, Yimiao – 10

The old saying goes, “Seeing is believing”. This Chinese proverb undoubtedly applied to my experience of joining a tour to the Mogao Grottoes in the Dunhuang district of Gansu with my family. The Mogao Grottoes are well-known as the Pearl of the oasis in the desert on the Silk Road, for they contain hundreds and thousands of the world’s finest and oldest paintings, sculptures, and literature. Although I had been told how magnificent the Mogao Grottoes are throughout my life, I could understand their magnificence only by visiting the grottoes in person.

“Now, we are standing in front of the murals of the Buddhas,” said the tour guide proudly and pointed at the murals. The murals showed different Buddhas and other deities dressing in blue robes and wearing different accessories like golden tiaras, silver necklaces and bracelets. Although the Buddhas and deities looked stern, tourists like me did not feel intimidated, but calm and peaceful. I was so obsessed with looking at the murals that I almost lost track of time and the introduction given by the tour guide.

“It is a world-famous art shrine integrating architecture, sculpture and painting.” The guide continued. “The grottoes are over 1,600 meters long from north to south, with five floors up and down, with the highest point of 50 meters. There are 492 existing caves, 45,000 square meters of murals, 2,415 painted sculptures and 4,000 flying sculptures. The Mogao Grottoes are large in scale, rich in content and have a long history.”

“Who dug the caves and painted the murals?” I asked out of curiosity. “More than one and half millennia ago, a monk discovered the caves when he was travelling on the Silk Road. He thought the caves were sacred because he could feel the presence of Buddhas there. Therefore throughout the centuries, hundreds and thousands of pilgrims came to dig more caves and create as many murals and sculptures as possible to pay respect to Buddhas and deities,” replied the guide.

It was a mystery that I found myself deeply mesmerized by the Mogao Grottoes. I could not take my eyes off the murals and sculptures for hours. I had a feeling that I had stayed there for a very long time before. It was like my old home. After I went back to my hotel home, I kept searching for a load of information on the Mogao Grottoes on the Internet about this cave until I fell asleep.

The sleep seemed to last for ages. All of a sudden, a cold breeze woke me up. I was not in my bright, comfy hotel room but a dark cave full of tunnels. Then I had a cold feeling inside my head. The moment I touched my head, I screamed like it was the end of the world, “Ahh! My hair! Where's my hair? How come I became a bald man?” Then I looked at my clothes and exclaimed, “Oh my god! I am a monk in a torn cassock. I must have gone back to the past.”

I ran into different tunnels, tried to find an escape route but with no success. When I was about to give up, I suddenly saw a myriad of golden rays in one of the tunnels. I was curious so I headed for those rays.

The tunnel was so damp and gloomy. It also gave a foul smell that made me almost vomit. While I was walking towards the golden rays, a group of bats flew towards me. I quickly squat down so that they could not attack me. At the end of the tunnel, there was a light so bright that I could not open my eyes for a minute. When I could finally open my eyes, I was amazed to see hundreds and thousands of monks painting the murals and making sculptures of different Buddhas and deities in an exceptionally large cave.

The cave was surrounded by the aura of dignity. It turned out that the cave was an altar set up to worship Buddha. The monks were painting the murals and making the sculptures of different Buddhas and deities transferring knowledge to commoners, teaching them to appreciate arts and improve their society. These murals and sculptures must be the precious treasure of our country, for they documented the art and history of the motherland. At that moment, I felt my life was content. I was delighted to spend my whole life studying the art and history of Buddhas, deities and human societies throughout the millennia.

Suddenly, I heard a sound from the sky. The sky said with a gentle voice, “My dear child, it’s time for you to go home. I am delighted to know young children like you still appreciate our arts and culture. I hope you can encourage more people to do that.”

As soon as the sky finished his saying, I heard my mum's voice, "Wake up, son! Look at the clock! It's 10 o'clock in the morning!" It was my mum. Everything was just a dream. But the dream was so real that I thought I could still sense the presence of the monks and artifacts.

After this amazing "adventure", I discovered how precious the Mogao Grottoes are as the historical heritage of our country. I will strive to encourage people close to me to appreciate this cultural treasure and spiritual wealth of mankind by sharing my experience of Mogao Grottoes.

A Fascinating Tale from The Mogao Grottoes

Ching Chung Hau Po Woon Primary School, Ngai, Ching Ki – 11

The Mogao Grottoes are located on the cliff at the Mingsha mountain in Mogao Town, 25 kilometers southeast of Dunhuang City, Gansu Province, China. The caves are scattered high and low, row upon row, with up to five floors above and below it. It is famous all over the world for its exquisite murals and statues.

There are many murals hidden in the Mogao Grottoes. Each mural has its own story. Among them, the most profound one is that Prince Xuan sacrificed his body to feed a tiger. This story was drawn on the south wall of the main room of Cave 254 of the Northern Wei Dynasty at Mogao Grottoes. It is one of the most popular subjects in early Buddhist art.

Once upon a time, there was a big country in Nanzhan Tribe, called Sahara Tannang, which meant 'big treasure,' and it contained five thousand small countries. The King had three sons. The eldest son was named Eunding, the second one was called Diwa, and the third one was called Xuan. Although Prince Xuan was the youngest, he was very kind-hearted and cherished all living things very much. One day, the King took his officials, as well as the queen and his sons, on an outing to the forest. After walking for a long distance, the King was a little tired and hence he took a rest under a tree. Meanwhile, the three young princes were still energetic and they went up the hills, playing around and drilling the woods.

Suddenly, they saw a tigress in a cave, staring at two little tigers who were snuggling next to him, showing a ferocious look. They were soon dying of hunger. Prince Xuan told his two older brothers, 'this tigress has just given birth to the cubs, and it is breastfeeding the cubs. But it is too hungry to walk that it is dying. If it dies, its children will soon die as well. What a pity!' The two older brothers said, 'yes! They are dying.' Xuan asked, 'so what kind of food does the tiger eat? How can we save them?' They replied, 'it's better to have some fresh flesh and blood.' Xuan asked again, 'where can we find fresh flesh then?' They said, 'it's not easy at all. Also, it would be so unfair to kill more lives in order to save another life!' Prince Xuan lowered his head and thought for a long time. After thorough consideration, he determined to sacrifice himself to save the tigress and the little tigers. He talked to his brothers, 'you two go first! I have something to do, and I'll come later.' When his two brothers left, Prince Xuan rushed back to the cave and lied down in front of the tigress to allow the tiger to eat him. However, the tigress was so weak that it could not even have open its mouth, and could not bite the Prince. Therefore, Prince Xuan picked up a sharp wooden stick on the floor, pierced his body, and shed a lot of blood. The tigress licked the prince's blood, then one bite at a time, and gradually ate the prince Xuan.

The two older brothers waited for a long time, so they rushed back but they could not see Prince Xuan. They remembered the conversation with Xuan about the hungry tiger and they knew he might sacrifice himself to save others' lives. They were shocked and ran to the cave. When they arrived, Prince Xuan had already been eaten by the tiger, leaving some bones and pieces of flesh in the cave. They cried and went downhill to inform their parents. The King and the Queen fainted, like a thunderbolt in the sky, when they learnt about the incident. Minutes later, they regained consciousness and hurried to the cave to look for their son. By that time, they could only collect the leftover bones of the Prince and take them back for burial.

Prince Xuan was very kind that he was willing to sacrifice himself to save other creatures. His spirit is really worth learning from. This is only one of the great stories hidden in the Mogao Grottoes. The more stories you learn from the murals, the more gorgeousness you can appreciate from the Mogao Grottoes.

The Forgotten Mogao Grottoes

Ching Chung Hau Po Woon Primary School, Tse, Tsz Ue – 10

More than one and half millennia ago, a monk decided there was something special about a cave he found at an oasis in the desert on the Silk Road in China.

Over the centuries, thousands of pilgrims arrived and decided to stay, digging more caves, and spending their time creating sacred art and literature.

But time passed, and more than 1000 years later, travelers started taking other routes. The Mogao Caves in the Dunhuang district of Gansu province in west central China were forgotten, becoming little more than a dusty legend.

Then, in the 1900s, local and international scholar-explorers rediscovered the caves. They gradually unlocked its breathtaking secrets. There were hundreds of caverns containing some of the world's finest paintings, sculpture, and literature— including the oldest dated, printed book in the world.

It was like a tunnel to a lost world in the past, scholars had said.

A large number of documents dating from 406 to 1002 were found in the Mogao Caves, heaped up in closely packed layers of bundles of scrolls. In addition to the 1100 bundles of scrolls, there were also over 15, 000 paper books and shorter texts, including a Hebrew penitential prayer.

There are more than 2000 colored statues that were carved about 1500 years ago. More than 1400 statues are well-preserved so they can still be appreciated. You can see statues of Buddha, Bodhisattva, students of Buddha, monks, flying apsaras, God of heaven, God of Earth, and guardians.

My Brief Explanation of Mogao Grottoes

Ching Chung Hau Po Woon Primary School, Yiu, Ho I – 10

So what are the Mogao Grottoes? Here's a basic explanation of them. First of all, where is even this huge place? Magao Grottoes are one of the caves in Dunhuang Caves, which is in Gansu province of China. 'But what is it, a tower or a building?' I hear you asking. It's a thousand-year-old system of thousands of Buddhist sculptures and paintings. When I just said Mogao Grottoes was a huge place, I wasn't exaggerating! The place is forty-five thousand square meters in area. When I first heard about Mogao Grottoes, it was in my General Studies class when I was in primary three. But since my teacher didn't talk about it very in depth, a lot of history and facts were missed. 'Well, how are you qualified to write about Magao Grottoes?' you ask again. Of course I did lots of research on this topic. While researching Magao Grottoes, I found a helpful series of videos that described the art inside it and what was going on. Another source is Wikipedia, which gave me a clear explanation of Mogao Grottoes. In 2018 there was an exhibition of Mogao Grottoes in Hong Kong, but sadly it's not here anymore. I wonder if it'll reopen. I think it would have been an amazing way to get information about Mogao Grottoes. It all started in the fourth century, when a Buddhist monk named Le Zun had a vision of a thousand Buddhas bathed in golden light, which inspired him to construct a cave that would be known as Mogao Grottoes today. At first, Mogao Grottoes served only as a place to meditate for the Buddhist monks, but later on it also served the monasteries that sprang up nearby. Members of the ruling family of Northern Wei and Northern Zhou built many caves there later. Three centuries had past and now we are at the Tang Dynasty. Over one thousand detailed caves of Buddhist art have been constructed at Mogao Grottoes. By Tang Dynasty, Mogao Grottoes had become a place of worship and pilgrimage for the public. A thousand years had passed, from the fourth to the fourteenth century, all this time of monks have been at hard work building these amazing and fascinating caves that make up the gigantic and famous Mogao Grottoes. By then, Mogao Grottoes had become lots of things, including aids to meditation, visual representations of the quest for enlightenment, mnemonic devices and as teaching tools to inform those illiterates about Buddhist beliefs and stories. Later on, a British archaeologist named Aurel Stien and a couple other explorers came and discovered Mogao Grottoes. Although there are many amazing murals and statues inside it, my favourite art work inside Mogao Grottoes is the Nirvana Buddha. This sculpture is a Buddha sleeping on its side, this posture is also called Lion's Posture, the name originated from India. Even though some stories interpret it as if the Buddha has died, this posture of lying on its right is different from lying on one's back as adopted by the dead of the mundane world, indicating that the Nirvana Buddha is not dead. The entire image of the Buddha bespeaks the ultimate realm of enjoying spiritual tranquility. Other than Buddhist art, not all caves are about sculptures and paintings. The 17th cave called the Library Caves stored thousands of manuscripts, scrolls, booklets and paintings on silk, hemp and paper were found literally stuffed inside the cave. These scrolls weigh several tons while all just from paper! There must've been a lot! There is a lot of information I couldn't possibly cover considering how complex Mogao Grottoes is. So in conclusion, Mogao Grottoes are giant Buddhist caves consisting of many murals and sculptures. And if you want to know more about it, I would suggest you to take a look at the Wikipedia. It's an amazing source that tells you all about Mogao Grottoes

The Mysterious Mogao Grottoes

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Wong, Seen Yi Katrina – 11

Mogao Grottoes is a treasure house that was built in 366 AD and is home to great Buddhist art from the 4th to 14th century. It rests above the Dachuan River. Tourists from around the world flock to see its stunning and magnificent sculptures and murals.

Out of the 735 caves, 492 caves are presently preserved. The caves are filled with murals and sculptures of different dynasties and eras, such as: the Song Dynasty, the Sui Dynasty and the Yuan Dynasty.

Cave 61 depicts the landscape of Mount Wutai, where everything is in the picture, including roads, rivers, mountains and so on. Nothing is left out. The Caves 23 and 156 show the scene of workers working in the fields and a line of warriors respectively. Cave 302 from the Sui dynasty displays various cultural exchanges along the Silk road, portraying a camel pulling a cart full of goods during that period.

The Mogao Caves have unmatched historical value, as its murals and works provide numerous aspects of politics, economics, culture, arts, religion, ethnic relations, and daily costumes during that time period. Its artwork can reveal the life of the Chinese in the olden days too. If not for its artwork, we might not know about some things that happened in the past. This is why we need to protect them, as they record important historical events.

The Significance behind the Ancient Buddhist Masterpiece – Tha Mogao Caves

Diocesan Preparatory School, So, Yin Duiin Damien Raphael – 12

By 130 BCE Zhang Qian had just found the Silk Road route, spreading trade, religion and knowledge between China and other countries en-route. Situated in the middle of Silk Road, lies an invaluable ancient masterpiece, now an UNESCO World Heritage site --- The Mogao Caves, which depicts the lifestyle and Buddhism more than 1500 years ago.

When the Kushan empire came to control the Silk Road trade through Central and South East Asia, and because the Kushans patronised Buddhism, many Buddhist centres were built and the Mogao(meaning 'a high place in the desert') caves were built in 336 AD as a sanctuary for meditation and worship. But were those built for the Kushans or tradesmen? Developing over 10 centuries, it has been built as a pilgrimage for the Buddhists like Mecca is to the Muslims, and Jerusalem to the Christians and Jews. The cliffs were carved into 24 kilometres of 492 caves filled with painted scrolls, manuscripts, wall paintings, sculptures and 45,000 square metres of murals with 60,000 written texts in Chinese, Tibetan, Sanskrit, Uighur and Tangut.

The overall architecture of the Mogao caves was Tantric Age inspired, and kept to its origins. They were built using soft gravel conglomerate and many of the early caves used a Buddhist rock-cut chaitya style. Other hall caves used a more traditional Chinese and Buddhist temple architecture style, these hall caves sometimes used a truncated pyramidal ceiling and may also be painted to resemble a tent, or been have designed with a flat or gabled ceiling that imitates traditional buildings. Some caves that are used for meditation are adaptations of the Indian vihara cave planning and have side-chambers that have just enough space to for a person to sit inside. We learned that the caves have kept its form and have existed for sixteen centuries, surviving seven Chinese dynasties, which was a culmination of centuries of historical relic and artifacts.

The art in this cave used a variant of colours which is very uncommon during ancient time due to the fact that multiple colour ingredients are very hard to obtain or needed to be sourced from a various amount of places (that could have possibly been transported from Persia or the Middle East). Also, the craftsmanship of the figures in the paintings is very immaculate need a various amount of detail to perfect these type of paintings. The Magao caves are very valuable by knowledge and how we understand ancient China's art pieces and historical artifacts.

The Silk Road transmission of Buddhism to China may have started in the late 2 AD, but because of the Mogao caves' existence, Buddhism has been widely spread all across China and has become a major religion over centuries. At its peak influence, Buddhism had grown into a major religion from Tang dynasty to Song dynasty. From China, Buddhism was introduced to its neighbours Korea, Japan and Vietnam between 2 AD to 7 AD.

Buddhist institutions built along the caves and the Silk Road offer classical Indian knowledge such as grammar, astrology, and medicine. It was a melting pot for writing and literacy, and a place to learn traditional Chinese medicine, Ayurveda and Tibetan medicine. These approaches to health were later adopted into Sri Lanka, Burma, Tibet and Thailand. The Buddhists were also at the forefront of adopting Chinese technologies such as bookmaking, papermaking, and block printing.

Through the Silk Road, the Mogao caves have been influencing other nations and house many different types of Buddhist thinking, philosophies and beliefs throughout centuries. To this date, Buddhism has not only transformed China's core believes but it has become one of the three major influences in our culture alongside with Confucianism and Taosim, but the Mogao Cave has become a sought-after site that many international scholars seek to understand in terms of its archaeological or art context.

All about the Legendary Mogao Caves

Diocesan Preparatory School, Tang, Chun Yin – 10

I am sure that once you hear the name of the Mogao Caves, you will immediately think of the caves in Gansu that was once part of China's history ---- the Silk Road. And that's absolutely correct! Yet do you know any of its great history or its uses in the past for the people? If you are craving to know, then you have come to the right place. For this episode, I will bring in the Mogao Caves to you today. Let's zoom in!

The Mogao Grottoes, also known as the Mogao Caves or the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas, is situated just after a strategic city in the most famous Silk Road ---- Dunhuang City, which is now in Gansu Province. This famous grotto is along the three most famous grottoes with the Longmen Grottoes and the Yungang Grottoes. Now it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site due to its precious manuscripts and its enormous value for archaeologists to study the Silk Road's past.

The history of the Mogao Grottoes dates back to the 4th century CE, which one book from the Tang Dynasty states that one monk known as Yuezun went across the original site, when the grottoes weren't built at that era, when the monk instantly had a vision of which there were a thousand buddhas bathed in blinding golden light. After days, another monk called Faliang joined him and starting digging caves. After them, more monks started to swarm in and dig more grottoes, and the site grew a lot by time. By the time of the Sixteen Kingdoms, there was already a small community of monks thriving at the site already. While in the era of the Tang Dynasty, there were as much as a thousand caves.

At the era of the Sui and Tang Dynasties, the Mogao Grottoes were so famous that the site became a place for worshipping and pilgrimage. The caves also began to have Buddhist paintings and architecture as representations for the quest of enlightenment and teaching tools for Buddhist beliefs. For the caves, the major caves, which were the most important or large ones, were funded by people which had a very high status in China, such as the local administrators, noble families and even the emperor for some time. The minor caves might have been funded by people with a much lower rank, for instance, merchants and local residents.

Regrettably, right after the Tang Dynasty, the Mogao Caves were almost forgotten due to that the once bustling Silk Road started to lost its former uses and became much less popular for merchants and travellers to pass, since the road's environment wasn't like the roads we have today---- there were harsh places to go. For example the deserts in Central Asia and the icy mountains in northwest China, which made people very difficult to pass through and get to their destinations. As well, the routes to China from the western world started to be dominated and welcomed by the via sea routes. At that time, taking the sea routes were much longer and had to take up more time, but people thought it was better due to the fact that it was less dangerous and they would take up less risk in the process. After the domination of sea routes, the once principal city Dunhuang's population started to decline quickly and soon the city was nothing more than a little town. At the same time, the Silk Road was unpopular within travellers and vanished with the Mogao Grottoes, leaving these two once crucial routes and architectures not more than a past memory to the people.

Hundreds of years went by, and in the start of the 19th century, the archaeologists of Western European countries such as France and Britain got interested in the ancient Silk Road and many of them had begun to travel to China to get their hands on the precious information of the past to research for. Alas, they did not get any information on the Silk Road or the Mogao Caves, and went back with nothing.

Time passed, and one year, a Chinese Taoist named Wang Yuanlu went by the site and found some caves which were filled with sand by time. He decided to revive those caves and see what absorbing things there were inside. After he shovelled away the sand, there was actually nothing! Then, he saw something like a wall inside, he felt very curious and walked inside. It was an ancient Chinese styled door! So, he opened the door, and guessed what did he see? He saw loads of historic paper manuscripts, and some medium-sized Buddha statues made of porcelain. He took some rolls of the manuscript, and ran to the county administrator's place and showed them to him. The administrator was fascinated at the sight of it, but thought of the expense needed to transport the ancient manuscripts, and told Wang to reseal the caves instead. On the contrary, some scientists and archaeologists heard all about Wang's incident and immediately went to the site to take scripts to study.

Some people noticed that there could be some scripts lost, so they started to do actions to protect these precious scripts from being taken, since there were rumours that some of the manuscripts were stolen or copied. After many scenes of foreigners and armies destroying many of the precious scripts, finally in the year 1987, this place was justified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and has been widely promoted and visited by lots of people from the world ever since.

I sincerely hope that you all like this introduction of the past and well known Mogao Grottoes. Thank you very much!

New Tales from the Mogao Grottoes

Diocesan Preparatory School, Yan, Zi Rui – 10

Background and history

Lying just 25 km away from an Dunhuang, one of the cultural hotspots of the once-legendary Silk Road, the Mogao Grottoes, otherwise known as the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas, are a breath-taking series of caves bearing numerous masterpieces of Chinese art and literature from over a millennium ago.

Legend has it that in 366 AD, a Buddhist monk named Yuezun had a vision of a thousand incandescent Buddhas on the face of a cliff near the oasis town of Dunhuang in the Gobi Desert, inspiring him to start excavating the cliff face to make his vision a reality. As the years went by, fuelled by the rise of the Silk Road, a community of pilgrims and monks from all over Asia and Europe arrived and settled in the caves, producing a unique melting pot of cultures where manuscripts, carvings, and sculptures of Buddhist, Confucian, Daoist, and even Christian ideologies were created.

For the next 10 centuries, the community thrived, and the caves witnessed the rise and fall of the Sui, Tang, and Song dynasties. Each dynasty added their own touch to the caves, with their inhabitants spending their time forging a treasure trove of works depicting every aspect of their lives – from their religious beliefs to their political relations, from their arts to their daily dress, and from their economics to their entertainment. Sadly, as the Silk Road, the lifeblood of the Grottoes, ran its historical course and fell into disuse in the 14th century, the Mogao Grottoes suffered the same fate, fading into the memories of a select few as time churned on. Soon, the caves were but a forgotten legend, the abandoned entrances choked by sand pouring in from the storms of the Gobi.

While a few pilgrims still visited the sites at the time, the true glory of the caves lay buried in plain sight for another five centuries, until a Daoist monk named Wang Yuanlu stumbled upon a hidden door to the sealed up caves once again, leading to the great rediscovery of the ancient relics buried within. In the years to follow, a surge of archaeologists from all over the world flocked to the caves, slowly unlocking the secrets of that once-lost world.

Historical significance

As explorers sought to uncover every inch of the Grottoes, the vast expanse of the cave system soon came to light. Spanning a distance of 1.6 km and containing 492 known cells, the caves feature over 2000 painted sculptures of religious figures, and over 480,000 square feet of murals depicting religious events, influential people, and scenes of life in their time.

Part of the historical significance of the caves lies in how it bore witness to life in the civilizations of Northwest China throughout ten tumultuous centuries. Through masterclasses of artistic achievement, each cave portrays its own snapshots and tells its own stories of Oriental culture. For example, Cave 302, established in the Sui dynasty, holds one of the most breath-taking depictions of cultural exchange along the Silk Road, immortalizing the scenes of commercial life of merchants and traders along the iconic route. Cave 23 of the Tang dynasty shows workers labouring in the fields, while other caves showed scenes of war, shining light on different aspects of daily life in this famous era. Among the art produced in the Song dynasty, Cave 61 contains the *pièce de résistance* – an early work of Chinese cartography representing the grand landscape of Mount Wutai, including the flowing rivers, bustling cities, sacred temples, dusty roads, and little caravans.

Not only are the caves and the works within them kaleidoscopes to a lost age granting us a peek into life a thousand years ago, the area also marks the artistic and religious exchange between different cultures, and is testament to the evolution of Asian art over time. During its active years, the location of the Mogao Grottoes brought in artists from various religious backgrounds and countries, hence playing a central role in the exchange of ideas between these communities. This is made abundantly clear by the immense variety of art in the caves, ranging from Buddhist rock art to styles assimilated from Indian, Gandharan, Turkish, and Tibetan cultures. Yet, there is no greater evidence of this exchange than the very first cave discovered – the Library Cave, containing tens of thousands of manuscripts and relics capturing the very spirit and knowledge of their times, earning its place as the crown jewel in the study of history of ancient China and central Asia.

Reflection

The story of the Mogao Grottoes serve as an inspirational tale in many ways. From the one man who started it all, to the united band of explorers who were determined to preserve and protect all that the caves had to offer. Today, the Grottoes stand tall as a proud reminder of our past. I had my breath taken away by the sheer variety and volume of wonders that those caves contained. In a way, the Grottoes not only represent the culture and dreams of our brothers from another era, but also a beacon directing one's imagination once again to the countless wonders awaiting curious explorers. Throughout our history, humanity has always been an inquisitive species, and here in modern Hong Kong where the focus has been

shifting ever greatly onto the many different stresses of life, perhaps just once in a while, we should remember our dreamer roots and celebrate the spirit of adventure and imagination — even if it is as simple as meeting new people, appreciating new cultures, and maybe even creating testaments of our own wonders. As for the rest of the world, who knows what our ancestors of the distant past have in store for us next? Who knows what other wonders of the world lie waiting, perhaps just in plain sight, as the Mogao Grottoes were merely a century ago? Perhaps with a little bit of that long-lost spirit and a splash of luck, we'll know sooner than we think.

The Entrance To Pure Land Paradise –Facts About The Mogao Caves

ESF Glenealy School, Li, Tan – 8

Introduction

The Mogao Caves(also known as the Mogao grottoes)are one of the world’s most significant Buddhist sites ever made, the first caves were built around the 4th century and the last ones were built around the 14th century. Over the millennium many things have been discovered, many have been taken and many have been built.

Where are the Mogao Caves located?

The Mogao Caves are just 15 miles southeast to a town called Dunhuang, which is located in a droughty desert crossroad on the silk road with a population of 140,000 in 2021. Dunhuang used to be a very popular place to stay for worn-out travellers along the 4000 mile long Silk Road which connects the East and the West by a network of trade routes. At Dunhuang, the weary travellers would thank gods that they had survived the journey, bring back goods to their families and rest.

Why were the Mogao Caves built?

The Mogao Caves were built to honour the popular **Buddhism** religion. Here is the story of how people believed the Mogao Caves were built: One day, a devoted Buddhist monk had a **prodigious** vision, in the vision thousands of colossal buddhas were bathing in golden light on the site of the 1st cave. After the vision ended, he was determined to build what he envisaged. Over the years, the Buddhist monk encouraged many more monks to excavate many more caves and the number surged to over 400 eventually.

Discovery, dispersal and revival

Years passed, traders chose new routes, causing the Mogao Caves to become a dusty legend. It was until 1900, the Mogao caves were rediscovered by local and international scholars and explorers. Four hundred and ninety two caves were discovered but the Library Cave (cave 17) is arguably the most influential because the cave was filled with over 50,000 **relic** items dated from the 4th to the 11th centuries. These scarce relics include paintings on silk, linen and paper, woodblock prints, Buddhist texts and social documents. The Library Cave was secretly sealed off by a sandy wall for half a **millennium** and was accidentally discovered by a Daoist priest, Wang Yuanlu, in 1900, who unofficially named himself the guardian of the Library Cave. The fortunate discovery of Library Cave, however, also marked the unfortunate beginning of the dispersal of the Dunhuang relics.

Many foreign explorers, including Aurel Stein, a British Hungarian descent; Paul Pelliot, a French sinologist; Zuicho Tachibana and Yoshikawa Koichiro, members of Japanese **expedition** team and Langdon Warner who was known to take murals using plastering tape and glue, came to Dunhuang and purchased a great amount of treasured arts and documents for an extremely low price. It was until then, Chinese scholars (now known as Dunhuang Academy) decided that it was time to send all the relics to Beijing to keep them safe. Unfortunately only 8,000 of the 10,000 relic items made it to Beijing, the remaining were either stolen or lost.

A thousand years of art

Between the 4th and 14th centuries, plenty of artists have illustrated in full colour many magnificent wall paintings showing what they believed. Buddhist imagery predominates, yet many other subjects were reflected as well, such as central Asian, Indian and Tibetan. The murals of Mogao are considered as one of the world’s most significant **heritage** sites.

Dunhuang Today

The Mogao Caves are facing many challenges, which include: extreme weather like sand storms and man-made damage such as tourism and pollution. Scientists are manufacturing many ways of helping to keep the caves secure. Here is one of them: Digital caves are one of the most innovative solutions to preserve the Mogao Caves. Arts and documents are available in digital forms, i.e photos, holograms and google earth. It is possible to visit the Mogao Caves at any time and anywhere on your fingertips (except for when your phone is not charged).

Conclusion

Over the years, the Mogao caves have been a major sight of Buddhist arts, but still ahead of us lies many more decades of **conservation** until the Mogao Caves will be finally safe.

Timeline of the Mogao Caves:

366 AD: First cave built by Buddhist monk.

581 AD – 907: More caves constructed (Tang and Sui Dynasty).

1900: The Library Cave was accidentally discovered by Daoist Wang Yuanlu.

1907 – 1925: Aurel Stein and others came to Dunhuang several times.

1930 – 1940: Chinese scholars inspected the Mogao Caves.

1944: National Dunhuang Art Institution established.

1950 – 1984: Professionals started rebuilding the Mogao Caves.

1987: Became world heritage site.

Now: Scientific conservation

Author's Note

T. Li lives in Hong Kong and was born in 2013 in Southwest London, England. He enjoys reading and writing. Favourite author is David Walliams who is also an English comedian who swam across the English Channel. Tan also enjoys playing sports such as Ping Pong, Football, Tennis and Swimming. Tan has a younger sister named Fearne, and lives with his mother and father on Robinson Road.

Glossary: definition comes from Dictionary.com

Buddhism: [boo-diz-ulm] a religion, originated in India by Buddha.

Prodigious: [pruh-dij-uls] wonderful or marvelous

Millennium: [mi-len-ee-ulm] a period of 1,000 years.

Relic: [rel-ik] a surviving memorial of something past.

Expedition: [ek-spi-dish-uhn] an excursion, journey, or voyage made for some specific purpose, as of war or exploration.

Heritage: [her-i-tij] something that is handed down from the past, as a tradition.

Conservation: [kon-ser-vey-shuhn] the act of conserving; prevention of injury, decay, waste, or loss.

The Caves of the Silk Road

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Lui-Schwille, Tristan – 11

The Splendour of the Caves:

Standing nine storeys tall, and hewn into the cliffs of a sand-strewn valley in China's northern province of Gansu, are found the ornate rock-cut temples known as the Mogao Caves. Situated on the ancient Silk Road near the border town of DunHuang, the Mogao Caves are a breathtaking reminder of China's cultural heritage, dating back as far as the Tang Dynasty. With their immense scale and intricate detail, the Mogao Caves came to house some of the world's finest examples of Buddhist art. Now largely restored and open to the public, the splendour of the Mogao Caves continues to be accessible to tourists and scholars alike.

Modest Beginnings:

Legend has it that in 366 C.E. a devoted Buddhist monk called YueZun imagined he saw the faces of a thousand Buddhas, shimmering in golden light on the rock of DunHuang's SanWei Mountain. This sight inspired him to carve out a small meditation chamber into the cliff face. Inspired by YueZun's example, other monks also began to carve out their own spaces into the rock. These first carved chambers were only a few feet across; however soon after, monastic communities took interest and began carving out large caverns for public acts of devotion and pilgrimage. These would later develop into a breathtaking underground temple that would become globally renowned.

The Silk Road and the Caves:

With the growing importance of the Silk Road trade, the site grew in scale and magnificence. With donors ranging from Emperors to wealthy families and foreign dignitaries, the shrines and tunnels became increasingly elaborate, decorated with religious art of a quality which reflected their social status. As well as Buddhism, many other secondary religions were represented in the Mogao Caves such as Daoism, Zoroastrianism and Nestorianism.

During the eleventh century, the importance of the Silk Road began to decline. This was in part due to conflict in Central and Western Asia; it was also due to the fact that other countries began to learn the process of making their own silk. This latter development meant a reduced need to rely solely on China for silk; the economic importance of the Silk Road began to decline, finally collapsing altogether; it is understandable that many of the Caves fell into disuse.

Important Discoveries:

The decline of the Silk Road could have been the end for the prominence of the Mogao Caves. However, during the early nineteenth and twentieth centuries, European travellers began to show interest in the Silk Road and the cities along its route, and with this began to develop global awareness of the Caves and of their significance.

Soon after the existence of the Caves once again became widely known, an important discovery was made; a Daoist monk called Wang YuanLu uncovered a walled-off section of a cave, behind which was found what would come to be known as the "Library Cave." This contained nearly fifty-thousand ancient religious paintings, items of silk embroidery and other rare textiles. Well-preserved by the arid environment, these rare artifacts included the world's oldest printed book, printed in 868 C.E., almost six hundred years before the first printing press in Europe.

The Need for Preservation:

Now, in the twenty-first century, the Caves are more popular than ever. Yet with larger numbers of tourists and the climate in Northwest China rising, humidity levels in the Caves have increased; this in turn risks damaging the well-preserved but fragile wall paintings inside. To relieve the pressure of visitors, there is now a daily limit on the number of tickets which may be issued. As well as a daily limit on tourists, the DunHuang Academy and government have organised a program to research what protective materials would be best used to preserve the Caves.

The Mogao Caves are truly a spectacular site. They possess a cultural and historical significance that is unmatched by any other cave site from around the world. At the same time, we must remember the fragility of the Caves which reminds us of the importance of preservation – such that future generations may continue to have the opportunity to marvel at their size and detailed design, and also at the role of the ancient Silk Road itself.

New Biography of Mogao Grottoes

Kingston International School, Huang, Yiming – 10

Mogao Grottoes, also known as Thousand Buddha Caves, is located at the western end of the Hexi Corridor of Sweet Potato Province, 25 kilometers southeast of Dunhuang City, on the cliff at the foot of Mingsha Mountain. The West Thousand Buddha Caves, Yulin Grottoes and East Thousand Buddha Caves together form the Dunhuang Grottoes.

The Mogao Grottoes are located at a strategic point along the Silk Road. It has been a battleground for the military since ancient times, and it is also a meeting place for religion, culture and knowledge, and a transit point for trade between the East and the West.

In 366 AD, when the eminent monk Le Zun passed by Mingsha East Road, he suddenly saw golden light shining like ten thousand Buddhas, so he dug the first cave on the rock wall. Le Zun's inadvertent actions started a thousand-year-old cultural legend. The construction of the Mogao Grottoes has never stopped for more than a thousand years since then. It has witnessed the rise and fall of Chinese democracy, chaos and governance, and has been ruled by the Central Plains Dynasty, Tubo, Xixia and local separatist regimes successively. Despite the change of dynasties, people have always insisted on the construction of the Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang. Everyone invariably carried out careful carving and depiction of the Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang on the basis of their predecessors, until Jiayuguan was blocked by Emperor Jiajing. The Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang were gradually abandoned in the dust of history.

Until June 22, 1900, the Taoist priest Wang Yuanlu, known as Wang Taoist, who was in charge of the grotto, invited Yang, who came to write the scriptures, to insert a lamp in the crack of the wall, and found that the wall was empty, so he found a secret room. There are more than 40,000 pieces of classics, histories, books, collections of various documents and paintings from the Western Jin Dynasty to the Song Dynasty. Among them, the stolen treasures have been robbed in more than ten countries and regions, and there are also Western archaeologists who bought many murals/scriptures of the Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang and brought them back to their home countries to donate to museum collections. Among them, there are 13,700 collections related to Dunhuang in the British Museum. It is the place with the largest collection of Dunhuang cultural relics in the world.

Mogao Grottoes is a large-scale cave temple that integrates painting, sculpture and architectural art, with murals as the mainstay and statues as auxiliary. The murals of Mogao Grottoes are located on the four walls of the caves, on the top of the caves and in the Buddhist niches.

As China becomes more open and convenient in transportation, people from all over the world can come to China by plane and high-speed rail to visit the extensive and profound cultural relics of the Mogao Grottoes, appreciate the splendid Dunhuang frescoes and watch the majestic grottoes. The murals in each grotto can bring out a historical story, such as the meditation Buddha statue in Cave 259, which is nicknamed "Oriental Mona Lisa". The cave was built in the Taihe period of the Northern Wei Dynasty and was one of the early Dunhuang caves.

I also traveled to the Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang with a tour group in the summer of 2018, visited the grottoes, and learned and gained a lot of historical knowledge from different dynasties. Back in Hong Kong, I also shared the experience of this trip with my classmates and encouraged them to visit these majestic buildings in Dunhuang during the holidays.

As a Chinese, I am very proud and proud that China has preserved such a long history and culture of the Mogao Grottoes.

The Mysteries of the Buddhist Cavern

Marymount Primary School, Choi, Ki Ching Victoria – 11

Located above the serene waters of the Dachuan River, the sacred hideout for the medieval Buddha artworks is carved into the jagged cliffs. The remarkable Mogao Caves, a collection of nearly 500 caves in the cliffs to the south of the city, contain the largest depository of historic documents along the Silk Roads and bear witness to the cultural, religious, social and commercial activity that took place in Dunhuang across the first millennium. The word 'Mogao' means 'peerless', and the historical caves undoubtedly live up to its name. A nostalgic, evocative atmosphere hangs over the majestic towering mansion, and as Wang Yuanlu, a monk who founded these richly endowed grottoes determined, the home for the Buddha architecture was meant for something special.

The Mogao Caves, also known as the Thousand Buddha Grottoes, has been home to 2,400 clay sculptures and 45,000 square meters of treasured ancient murals. The Mogao Grottoes are considered one of the most monumental and resplendent collections of Buddhist representation in the world. These caves were elaborately painted, the cave paintings and architecture serving as aids to meditation, as visual representations of the quest for enlightenment, as mnemonic devices, and as teaching tools to inform those illiterate about Buddhist beliefs and stories. This remote sanctuary is a sacred wonder, which throughout the centuries many have made the pilgrimage to pay homage and to witness its splendour with their own eyes. Some images depicted the grand solemnity of Buddha; others the terrors of Hell for the wicked. It was a common belief that deities appeared to the faithful in visions, and the scenes were thus taken as accurate depictions, an earthly glimpse into otherworldly realms. Though located near the scorching hot desert, this sector had become infested with crossroads due to the iconic representative of Buddhism and became a popular accommodation to visit during the fourth century.

The construction of this elevated region of religion was initially constructed in 366 AD by an itinerant monk named Yuezun. Positioned in Dunhuang, the monk believed in a spiritual and meaningful connection between him and this array of fierce rocks. As legend has it, the monk was making the long journey to the Western Paradise. Crossing the Gobi Desert, he stopped by Sanwei Mountain, near Dunhuang. There he found a special spring and, having quenched his thirst with its sweet waters, sat down to rest. The mountain gradually grew an unnatural radiant gold, and Yuezun envisioned thousands of luminous Buddhas emerging and perching on the cliff face, and the divine scene invigorating him to excavate the cave. Buddhist monks began to pour in, cultivating their thoughts with the currently flourishing Buddhism. Mogao quickly became a pilgrimage site for Buddhists, artists, officials, and many others. From time to time during the magisterial Tang dynasty, striking statues and sublime murals would be transported into the moderately expanding assemblage of grottoes. The Mogao Caves illustrate not only the religious importance of Dunhuang however, but also its significance as a centre of cultural and commercial exchange.

This leads us to the ginormous part of the Mogao Grottoes' location that participated in producing this exalted site. If it weren't for its headquarters in the well-known Silk Road, it might not have resulted in such a quintessential mark of history being visited by bustling tourists every moment of the day. The municipality of Dunhuang, in northwest China, is situated at a point of vital strategic and logistical importance, on a crossroads of two major trade routes within the Silk Road network. The Silk Road routes from China to the west, and Dunhuang lay on the junction where these two routes evolved together. One of the most prominent caves, known as the 'library cave', contains as many as 40,000 scrolls, a depository of documents that is of enormous value in understanding the cultural diversity of this Silk Road city. The arrangement of the documents provide a spectacle of Dunhuang as a vibrant hub of the Silk Road trade and give an indication of the range of goods that were exchanged in the city. According to these detailed scrolls of important history, the range of goods transported into the cave to aid the grottoes are countless. They include fragrances and silk, and a tremendous amount of precious stones. Crafts and skills also moved along the Silk Roads as traders and craftsmen met and exchanged notes, and a small number of scrolls in the Mogao Caves illustrate the use of woodblock printing in Dunhuang, a technique that originated in China in the early 8th century.

But as time drove by in a racecar, with the decline of the Silk Road, the Mogao Caves were slowly neglected by the outside world. But as distinct sea routes opened and more agile ships were constructed, land caravans slipped into obsolescence. China, moreover, lost control over large portions of the Silk Road, and Islam had commenced its long migration over the mountains from Central Asia. Sparse monks scrambled over to the caves during the early 11th century, distributing tens of thousands of manuscripts and paintings in a small side chamber adjoining a larger Mogao grotto. No one is certain about their acknowledgement on this matter, but the only definite answer is that the chamber was sealed up, plastered over, and concealed by murals. The secluded cache would remain entombed for 900 years until 1900 when a Taoist priest named Wang Yuanlu became the sanctuaries' self-appointed guardian, many of the abandoned grottoes were

buried in the sand. But they were vaguely ignored. It would take another encounter with the West to reveal the secrets of the caves—and to sound China's patriotic alarms. From then on, miscellaneous people would jam-pack the caves. Some Chinese officials, echoing their counterparts in Egypt and Greece, have called for the Mogao artefacts to be returned. Foreign curators, meanwhile, contend that their museums have saved treasures that might otherwise have been lost forever. Despite this ongoing debate of ownership over these treasures, the Mogao Grottoes are undeniably distinctive.

The History of The Mogao Caves

Marymount Primary School, Fung, Ching Yau Roselle – 10

When I first started learning about the Mogao Caves, I felt overwhelmed by the richness of its history, the mystery hidden in the cave art and the sheer number of buddha statues found there. With the stunning façade of the nine-storey building with red porticos at the entrance, the Mogao Caves looked like a setting straight from a movie. Why did someone build such beautiful architecture in the middle of a desert? What stories lie behind the paintings and sculpture? A million questions sprang up in my head and I started doing research on the internet. It was satisfying to find the answers to my questions. Now, let me share my answers with you.

WHAT are the different names of the Mogao Caves and HOW did they come about?

Different names have been given to the Mogao Caves (Chinese: 莫高窟), each with a different story behind. To begin with, 'Mogao' used to be the name of an 'administrative district' in the Tang dynasty. However, the name 'Mogao' also bears the meaning of "peerless" or "none higher than", which makes sense since the Mogao Caves is situated in the desert and "mo" could also mean "desert" in Chinese.

The Mogao Caves is also called the 'Thousand Buddha Caves' (Chinese: 千佛洞) because there are almost over a thousand Buddhas inside the caves. It could also relate to the legend of how a monk called Yuezun had a vision of a thousand Buddhas appearing at the site in 366AD, which I will explain further later.

It is also called the Dunhuang Caves or Dunhuang Grottoes. A 'grotto' is a small cave, either natural or man-made, usually used for religious purposes. Dunhuang is the nearest city to the caves. The name 'Dunhuang' means "blazing beacon" as it used to be a frontier outpost where beacons of fire were used to warn its citizens of attacks by nomadic tribes.

WHAT was special about Dunhuang?

Dunhuang was an important city on the frontier of China. It was established as a garrison outpost by the Han Dynasty Emperor Wudi to protect its citizens against the invaders, Xiongnu, in 111 BC and since then it had become an important centre of trade along the Silk Road. Not only was it a trading centre, it was also a meeting place of various people and religions such as Buddhism, Taoist and ideas from the west.

WHEN and HOW were the grottoes built?

A writer, Brook Larmer, wrote in National Geographic, "The caves began as a vision of light." This was because legend has it that in 366 AD, a wandering monk named YueZun passed by the Singing Sand Mountain in the desert where the Mogao Caves are today. There he had a vision of a thousand radiant, golden Buddhas shining on the face of a cliff. He thought it was a vision sent to him with a purpose, and that was why he began to excavate the caves. He started to chisel a small coffin-sized cell into the rock used for meditation. Later, the monastic communities began to carve out bigger caverns with images of Buddha for worship.

YueZun not only dedicated his life to building the caves and meditating there, he also started a movement that lasted for over a period of a thousand years where monks and scholars continued to construct caves and create sculptures, murals and manuscripts from the 4th to the 14th century.

What can you find at the Mogao Caves?

The Mogao Caves comprises of a series of grottoes situated about 25 kilometers southeast of the city of Dunhuang in Gansu Province. The grottoes are carved out of the sandstone cliffs of Mingsha Mountain and extend about 1600 meters from north to south.

Without dispute, it is the greatest collection of Buddhist art found in a single location anywhere in the world. There are numerous temples and shrines with sculptures, murals (wall paintings) and manuscripts. The remaining Mogao Grottoes contain about 45,000 square meters of mural paintings, and more than 2000 painted sculptures. In the Mogao Caves, there are a total of 735 original grottoes, of which only 492 of them survived over time.

Another major discovery happened in the 1900's. In the early 20th century, a Taoist monk named Wang YuanLu was taking care of some of the grottoes. He discovered a hidden cave behind a wall. It turned out that he made a discover of the century! What he discovered was later known as the 'Scripture Cave' or 'Library Cave'. People referred to the

manuscripts found inside the Library Cave as 'Dunhuang Manuscripts' and they were sealed off inside the cave sometime early in the 11th century. There were a lot of complete sutras in Chinese, complete paintings and complete Tibetan, Sogdian, Khotanese texts, nearly 50,000 ancient manuscripts, silk banners and paintings, fine silk embroideries and other rare textiles and scrolls.

However, without knowing the significance of his discovery, Wang Yuanlu sold many of these manuscripts off to foreign explorers for small sums of money.

Conclusion: What have I learnt from my research of the Mogao Caves?

Learning about the Mogao Caves is like solving a mystery to me. I am so glad to learn more about this important historical and cultural heritage. The amazing treasure-trove of Buddhist art gives us an accurate idea of what life was like before. The legends and stories about the murals, Buddhas, caves, monks and priests make the Mogao Caves an endless source of imagination. Because of all these, the Mogao Caves were designated a World Heritage site in 1987.

I hope reading my research has given you an interest to visit the Mogao Caves in the future. You can travel there by air or by train, but remember to book a tour online or in-person!

Tales from the Mogao Grottoes

Po On Commercial Association Wan Ho Kan Primary School, Kaur, Ashmeet – 13

More than one and half millennia ago, a monk thought there was something special he found at an oasis in the desert on the Silk Road in China. The Mogao Caves also known as Thousand Buddha Caves is a massive group of caves filled with Buddhist Statues.

The caves are found on the side of a cliff which is close to two kilometers long. During the Tang Dynasty, there were more than a thousand caves, but over time many of the caves were lost, including the earliest caves. 735 caves currently exist in Mogao and the best-known ones are the 487 caves located in the southern section of the cliff which are places of pilgrimage and worship. 248 caves have also been found to the north which were living quarters, meditation chambers, and burial sites for the monks. The caves at the southern section are decorated, while those at the northern section are mostly plain.

The art of Dunhuang covers more than ten major genres, such as architecture, stucco sculpture, wall paintings, silk paintings, calligraphy, woodblock printing, embroidery, literature, music and dance, and other popular entertainment.

The caves are example of rock-cut architecture, but unlike Longmen Grottoes the local rock in Yungang Grottoes is a rather soft gravel conglomerate that is not suitable for either sculpturing or elaborate details. Many of the early caves developed from earlier Buddhist rock-cut styles are seen in India, with a square-sectioned central column, with sculpture in niches representing the stupa around which worshippers bow and gain blessings. Others are caves influenced by traditional Chinese and Buddhist temple architecture.

Dunhuang was established as a frontier garrison, an outpost by Han Dynasty Emperor Wudi to protect against the Xiongnu in 111BC. It also became an important gateway to the west, a Centre of Commerce along the silk Road, as well as a meeting place of various people and religion such as Buddhism.

Tales from the Mogao Grottoes

Po On Commercial Association Wan Ho Kan Primary School, Kaur, Tajvir – 10

In Mogao Caves, there are many paintings, more than two thousand statues, magnificent works on silk and paper, thousands of ancient manuscripts, such as sutras, poems, and prayer sheets, which in 1900 were found sealed in one of the caves and then dispersed to museums throughout the world.

There are 735 caves in Mogao. There are also a lot of Buddhist art and stories hidden there. Mogao caves are very important for us because they are important evidence of the evolution of Buddhist art in the northwest region of China.

The caves are strongly linked to the history of transcontinental relations and of the spread of Buddhism throughout Asia. For centuries the Dunhuang Oasis, near which the two branches of the Silk Road forked, enjoyed the privilege of being a relay station where not only merchandises were traded, but also exemplified the ideas of the Chinese, Tibetan, Sogdian, Kho tan, and Uighur. Hebrew manuscripts are also found within the caves.

The Mogao Caves were included in the World Heritage list in 1987. This site was put under top-level protection by the government. In 1961, the Mogao Caves was listed as one of the State Priority Protected Sites by the State Council and was put under the protection of nation laws including the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultures Relics. The Regulations for the Conservation of the Mogao in Dunhuang, Gansu Province (2002) has confirmed the boundaries of the conservation area, and the Master Plan for the conservation of the Mogao Caves at Dunhuang (2006–2025), which has been reported to the Gansu Provincial Government and will be issued soon, adds the area for the control of construction, which overlaps with the buffer zone. The two directives are the most important measures taken for preserving the authenticity and integrity of the Mogao Caves. The Administrative Institution of the Mogao Caves has been cooperating with international counter parts to study conservation and site management and looks forward to continuing its work in preserving the heritage of the site.

The goal in the future is to implement the measures put out in the management plan by the scheduled time, to learn from advanced experiences in heritage site conservation and the authenticity and integrity of the heritage site and its setting, and to make its full historical information and value available to future generations.

The location of the Mogao Caves and its settings are faithful to the authentic historical context in which they were created. The design, materials, traditions, techniques, spirit, and impression of the caves, wall paintings, painted sculptures and movable cultural relics still exhibit the characteristics of the periods in which they were created. The continued utilization of the Mogao Caves for tourism has indeed promoted its historic significance. Conservation plans have established the guidelines for the caves' utilization and conservation and therefore will ensure the authenticity of the site and its setting

The Mogao Grottoes

Regents Primary School of Shenzhen, Chen, Yunqing Leona – 10

A long, long time ago,

there was a secret nobody knew.

A secret that traveled back to ancient times.

When Dunhuang had not yet become the home of thousands of caves.

That secret traveled through the rivers, went across the mountains and was finally buried in the desert.

Not until the child picked up that leaf was the secret revealed. A long, long time ago,

an ugly monster attacked a peaceful village where people had faith in Buddha

It set fire to burn the town and took away all the children.

Parents cried for rain, but not a single drop of water came.

The Wise said, “There must be something that the monster fears... Build the Buddha!”

Everyone worked together to build the Buddha, and it worked!

It scared the monster and called the rain! He brought back all the children that had been taken away

And by then, citizens built the Buddha statues year after year, generation after generation, becoming the Mogao caves people visit today.

The Mogao Grottoes

Regents Primary School of Shenzhen, Xiao, Ziyue – 12

The Mogao Grottoes is a mysterious place, a network of 492 caves spanning a vast area, richly and entirely decorated by 45,000 murals and 2,415 clay sculptures. They are a treasure house of murals, sculptures and other cultural relics. They are the largest and the most abundant Buddhist art place.

More than 1000 years ago, a monk discovered The Mogao Grottoes. He and others dug caves together and put their sculptures into the caves, but 1000 years later, travelers began to explore other places. The Mogao Grottoes had been forgotten. However, in the 1900s, explorers rediscovered the caves and discovered many artifacts. In A.D.366, during the Eastern Jin Dynasty, a monk named Yue Seng chiseled the first cave here. The endeavor continued the chiseling through later dynasties, including the Northern Wei, Western Wei, Northern Zhou, Sui, Tang, Five Dynasties, Song, Western Xia, and Yuan. In 1987, UNESCO placed the Mogao Grottoes under the protection of the world cultural heritage list. Therefore, Mogao Grottoes become a legend.

Humans have not fully discovered the secrets of the Mogao Grottoes. Scientists are still studying the secrets of the Mogao Grottoes. They look forward to one day when all the mysteries of the Mogao Grottoes will be solved. The insight these works have given into the history of China is invaluable, and the illustrious heritage of the site echoes throughout its many caves. We are supposed to cherish such treasures from the past.

A Trip To the Mogao Grottoes

Regents Primary School of Shenzhen, Xu, Tsz Lam – 11

I visited Mogao grottoes in the Dun Huang district of Gansu province in west-central China during the summer holiday. I had a taste of its true face, it gave me a deep impression, so I could not forget it for a long time.

On the Silk-Road. It was said that more than one and half million years ago, a monk decided there was something special about a cave he found at an oasis in the desert on the silk Road in China. Mogao grottoes, commonly known as Thousand – Buddha Caves, are located west of the Hexi Corridor. Over the centuries, thousands of pilgrims arrived and decided to stay, digging more caves and spending their time creating sacred art and literature. But time passed, and travelers started taking other routes more than 1000 years later. The Mogao caves were forgotten, becoming little more than a dusty legend.

Then, in the 1900s, local and international scholar-explorers rediscovered the caves. They gradually unlocked their breathtaking secrets. There were hundreds of caverns containing some of the world's finest paintings, sculptures, and literature—including the oldest printed book in the world.

The Grottoes were built in the Qin Dynasty. There are 735 caves, 45000 square meters of murals, and 2415 Clay sculptures, one of the world's most significant artistic works.

When I entered the Mogao grottoes, I saw a honeycomb of caves arranged on the uneven walls, which gave an unpredicted artistic atmosphere. Following the guide's footsteps, finally, we reached the first cave. On entering, I could not help praising highly: "It's spectacular!" Other visitors were also amazed.

After visiting the caves, my heart was deeply shocked. I have to say the works are the best in China. It is no doubt worthy of being a world-class cultural heritage. We must protect them so that this famous treasure house of art will live forever.

Mogao grottoes, I will never forget you!

The History of the Mogao Grottoes

Shanghai Singapore International School, Krishna, Shreyas – 11

What are the Mogao Grottoes?

The Mogao Grottoes, otherwise called the Thousand Buddha Grottoes or Caves of the Thousand Buddhas, is an arrangement of 500 temples, 25 km southeast of the focal point of Dunhuang, a desert garden situated at a junction on the Silk Road, in Gansu area, China. The caverns may likewise be known as the Dunhuang Caves.

Who made the Mogao Grottoes?

The development of the Mogao Caves seems to have started at some point in the fourth century AD. As per a book composed during the rule of Tang Empress Wu, Fokan Ji – *An Account of Buddhist Shrines* by Li Junxiu, a Buddhist priest named Lè Zūn had a dream of 1,000 Buddhas washed in brilliant light at the site in 366 AD, motivating him to fabricate a cavern there. The story is additionally found in different sources, for example, in engravings on a stele in cave 332; in another archive, Shazhou Tujing (Geography of Shazhou). He was subsequently joined by a second priest Falian, and the site progressively developed. The caverns at first served distinctly as a position of contemplation for loner priests. Individuals from the decision group of Northern Wei and Northern Zhou built many caverns here, and it prospered in the brief Sui Dynasty. By the Tang Dynasty, the quantity of caverns had reached over a thousand.

By the Sui and Tang administrations, Mogao Caves had turned into a position of love and journey for the public. From the fourth until the fourteenth century, caves were built by priests to fill in as holy places with assets from givers. These caverns were extravagantly painted, the cavern artworks and engineering filling helped in reflection, as visual portrayals of the mission for edification, as memory aides, and as training devices to illuminate those ignorant to Buddhist convictions and stories. The significant caverns were supported by benefactors like significant holy places, nearby decisionmakers, senior dignitaries. Different caverns might have been financed by dealers, military officials, and other nearby individuals and groups.

Why were the Mogao Grottoes forgotten?

The caves lay forgotten for hundreds of years. The Silk Road fell into disuse by the 1400s, and for centuries Mogao was all but forgotten with the caves' entrances choked by sand from the Gobi Desert. In the 1890s a Daoist monk named Wang Yuanlu appointed himself guardian of the caves.

How was it revealed?

The Mogao grottoes were revealed by a priest called Wang Yuanlu and some foreigners unlocked the breathtaking secrets inside the caves. The priest and the foreigners were fascinated with the beautiful paintings and sculpture.

The Mogao Grottoes

Shanghai Singapore International School, Qian, Johnny – 9

It was the year 366 when Lezun, a monk, travelled to Mingshan Mountain, Dunhuang. Suddenly, he noticed that Sanwei Mountain was bathed in thousands of golden lights, like thousands of Buddhas just appeared. Believing that this indeed was a sign from the Buddhas, he hired men to carve the first Mogao Grotto in history. Following Lezun, another Buddhist monk named Faliang carved the second grotto in history. From then on, carving, painting and preserving of the Mogao Grottoes started to take place.

After Faliang's grotto, people designing the Mogao Grottoes translated the infinite worship to Shakyamuni and the longing for a Buddhist world into early grotto buildings. The first buildings were mostly shapes of Buddhist and Central Column Grottoes. The Buddhist Grottoes' use was for monk meditation. For example, in grotto 285, there is a main square room with a niche holding Buddhist statues used for the purpose of meditation included in the central wall. At the sides, however, the walls are cut into two or four chambers, each large enough for only one person to meditate. In the grotto of central column (or tower temple grotto), a square column starting from the floor and going up to the ceiling stands in the center, each of the four sides had niches cut into them holding Buddhist statues.

During the time of the sixteen kingdoms and the Northern and Southern Dynasties (304–508), Buddhist Grottoes and Central Column Grottoes were the most popular at the Mogao. Buddhist Grottoes came from Indian Vihara Grottoes, while Central Column Grottoes developed from Indian Catiya Grottoes and later changed into Qiuci Grottoes of the Western Regions (Qiuci being a kingdom from the Han Dynasty). However, foreign grottoes were not copied by the grottoes of the periods. Chinese architectural style was introduced by cutters of the Grottoes. The roof of the grotto in front of Central Column was improved into an inversed V-shaped roof, and the middle contained a ridge with slopes on both sides added to wooden parts including tie beams, arches, and rafters.

Hundreds of years ago, thieves and robbers from other parts of the world broke into the Mogao Grottoes. They stole parts of the statues and sold them all over the world. Fortunately, the Grottoes are well-cared by the keepers. They open different caves and close the other ones in order to repair and protect them. You are able to visit eight caves a day.

As you can see, the Mogao Grottoes have lots of uses, they have absorbed a wide range of arts from around Asia and are a tremendous sight, even when you are just visiting. Every piece of art has a story behind it, while each story being more interesting than the last. The Mogao Grottoes are not only a treasure to Asia, but the whole world.

Mogao Grottoes

Shanghai Singapore International School, Vadgama, Durva Miteshkumar – 10

Have you ever wondered about the Mogao Grottoes? Who made the Mogao Grottoes? How were they made? When could they make these caves? In this huge world, where did they make it? For what reason did they make it? So many questions! At the end of this piece, you will be able to share this information with other people or even know more secrets about these mysterious caves. If I were you, I would start reading this straight away!

According to www.chinahighlights.com, the first grotto was chiseled out in 366 AD by a monk called Le Zun. Le Zun was going home when suddenly he saw the top of a mountain glinting with golden light, as if there were thousands of buddhas shining on top. Then he started to believe that the Mogao area was a holy land for Buddhists, and with that, he decided that he was going to stay there and dig caves.

Others were inspired by Le Zun's example and followed him. There were 10 dynasties which kept adding to the Mogao Grottoes! By the time each dynasty ended, there was something added to the Mogao Grottoes. After the Tang Dynasty ended, the number of art works in the Mogao Grottoes reached its peak. There were literally more than 1,000 caves, and each cave contained more than ! Can you believe that? Unfortunately, after the Yuan Dynasty, the Mogao Grottoes were sealed and therefore forgotten by the rest of the world. People sealed them to avoid any damage from wars.

After that, no one tried to rediscover the beautiful caves until the year 1900. However, it became once again popular in the year 1900. A person named Wang Yanlu, made the amazing discovery by accident.

According to ancient-origins.com, in 1900, a hidden door was stumbled upon while sand from Cave 16 was being cleared away. Behind this secret door was a small cave filled with ancient manuscripts and sutras, as well as paintings on silk and paper.

Well, after all this information, I think you should get to know some interesting facts about the Mogao Grottoes. Did you know that there was a replica of the mogao grottoes made in Shenzhen? Visitors can now appreciate the art in detail through an immersive experience that uses cutting-edge technology!

If you like mysteries, there is a very exciting mystery about the Mogao Grottoes! As you know, a lot of people took things away from the Mogao Grottoes, so some people wonder about how many things there were in the caves at the beginning! With 735 caves, there were more than 45,000 square meters of murals and 2,415 colored sculptures of different sizes a long time ago.

According to www.chinadiscovery.com, Mogao Caves is one of the greatest repositories of Buddhist art in the world. You can trace the development of Chinese art over 1,600 years from one dynasty to the next because each dynasty built own caves to record its own features. This site along with Longmen Grottoes, Yungang Grottoes and Maijishan Grottoes are the four greatest Buddhist grottoes in China.

It was only in 1961 that the importance of the Mogao Grottoes was finally recognized by the Chinese people, and it was declared a national monument. In 1987, the Mogao Grottoes were designated a World Heritage site. Over the years, this site has become a tourist attraction and archaeological conservation work is being carried out there. If I were you, I would straight away go and book a ticket to the Mogao Grottoes to see the beautiful scenery with my own eyes.

Tales from the Mogao Grottoes

St. Paul's Co-educational College Primary School, Leung, Callum Gregson – 9

More than one and half millennia ago, a monk decided there was something special about a cave he found at an oasis in the Gobi desert on the Silk Road in China. The Silk Road was an ancient network of trade routes which connected the East to the West. These connections resulted in the trading of goods, notably silk, and the spread of ideas of diseases.

What's the origin of the name "Silk Road"? Silk was a highly valued commodity, indication of social status in ancient times. The Silk Road was the only way to procure silk in China because the country had a monopoly on silk for a long time; its production process was tightly guarded. Aside from silk, many other goods were traded on the Silk Road, including gold, bronze, glassware, tea, spices, gunpowder and textiles. Camels had also been an essential part of trading, either being used to transport goods or being traded themselves.

Over the centuries, thousands of pilgrims arrived and decided to stay, digging more caves, and spending their time creating sacred art and literature. Some of the routes were long but safe, and others were shorter but more dangerous.

But time passed, and more than 1000 years later, travellers started taking other routes. The Mogao Caves (also known as Thousand Buddha Caves or Mogao Grottoes), is a group of ancient caves which were built in different dynasties, situated in the Dunhuang district of Gansu province in west central China were forgotten, becoming little more than a dusty legend.

Then, in the 1900s, local and international scholar-explorers discovered the caves. They gradually unlocked its breathtaking secrets. There were hundreds of caverns containing some of the world's finest paintings, sculpture, and literature – including the oldest dated, printed book in the world.

It was like a tunnel to a lost world in the past, scholars said. It was magnificent, with 735 caves, more than 45,000 square meters of murals, 2,415 colored sculptures of different size. It was like a paradise, full of treasures that combine the travel of people, their beliefs, ideas and technology of the Silk Road. Religion is an important inspiration for art in many countries, and much of the art of the Silk Road was religious in origin. Many of the art of the Silk Road was created to encourage religious devotion, we value it as a source of precious historical information.

The Mogao Caves are filled with extensive and exquisite collections of Chinese landscape paintings. Every surface of the walls and ceilings is covered with painted clay stucco, some 45,000 square meters in all. A lot of the Chinese landscape motifs made their way west along the Silk Road to Persia. Some of the landscape painting background settings shows picture-stories of the daily life of the Buddha, graceful acrobats of the sky scatter flowers and garlands, while dancers and musicians celebrate the beauties of the Buddhist Pure Lands. Some other paintings feature layered-plane treatment of mountains with hard outlines and the trees silhouetted on mountain ridges became prominent features of Persian miniatures. These paintings are now in leading academic institutions such as the British Museum and the Beijing National Library. Scholars have found these materials to be a treasure love of information not only on the history of Buddhism, but also for popular literature and history.

The Chinese sculptures were also discovered in the Mogao Caves, they were beautifully crafted and extraordinarily rare. Some of them even look like Angels crafted them. From these ancient sculptures, there is a motif of the three wise monkeys, and many of us believed that they are bought to China from India through the Silk Road, and eventually to Japan. The three wise monkeys – one covering his eyes, one his ears, and one his mouth, they symbolize the proverbial saying, "See no evil. Hear no evil. Speak no evil." In our modern world, the three wise monkeys still embody the proverb they originally represented but there are various meanings ascribed to them. In social media, their usage is common for expressing feelings of joys, surprise and embarrassment. The images of the three wise monkeys are sometimes printed on t-shirts and figurines.

Thousands of literatures were found and they are valuable assets to teach many generations in the world. The books were well kept although some pages were missing. Some books said there was a battle between Hercules and Zeus, but God came and separated them, and God took them to the Angels' Garden where they could take a good rest. There was a large winged, fire-breathing dragon, the myths often described that the dragon had golden scales, red eyes redder than a phoenix, the dragon's flame hotter than the burning sun and it flew faster than a North American X-15 jet (the current

world record for the fastest manned aircraft) with thousands of rocket boosters. The dragon was indeed guarding a precious golden chest inside the Mogao Cave, inside the golden chest there were gold, precious gemstones, pearl rings, jade necklaces and other luxury items.

Other amazing discoveries of the Silk Road would be the blue-and-white porcelain, which was produced in China from the 13th century onward. This porcelain combines the art of China and other Asia cities such as Southeast Asia and Middle East. Muslim merchants travelled in Chinese coastal cities and introduced the Islamic cobalt-decorated ware to China. Later, potters in South China began decorating white porcelain vessels with cobalt blue, and most of the Chinese blue-and-white porcelain was exported to Southeast Asia and the Middle-East.

The Silk Road from its opening to its closure had great impact on the development of world civilization that it is difficult to imagine the modern world without it. And the greatest value of the Silk Road was the exchange of cross-culture, the groundwork for the development of the modern world we are living in today.

The Secret of the Mogao Caves

St. Stephen's College Preparatory School, Wong, Chung Pui Curtis – 11

I am now in the Mogao Caves, in Dunhuang, China. It is truly an awesome place. Firstly, I will tell you the story about the Mogao Caves. The Mogao Caves literally means “Mo” which stands for “none” and “Gao” which stands for high. Together it means “none higher”. It is also known as the Thousand Buddha's Cave. According to a book written during the reign of an empress named Wu during the Tang Dynasty, a monk called Yuezhen had a vision of a thousand buddhas which inspired him to build a cave there. Here in the caves, lies many dark secrets. It is a place where a thousand buddhas watch you and stare at you wherever you go.

I wonder about the story of the Mogao Caves. Who was Empress Wu? Why did the monk Yuezhen have a vision? It was so long ago that no one has these answers, but I can imagine how he built a thousand caves through his hard work. I can also imagine how the Buddha came to life in his vision and now lives in the caves, spiritually watching everyone from above.

The dark and dank feeling inside the caves made me feel disgusted and a shiver went down my spine. “Hello,” I said, and the booming echoes came bouncing back at me. I was surrounded by buddhas of different shapes and sizes. I stood in awe in the cave, amazed with one of the buddhas in particular. It was large and stately, sitting there almost 4 times as tall as me. Its eyes were the size of tennis balls and I was scared but also amazed. I could imagine it rising from its seat and suspended in the air for some time. The atmosphere in the cave was horrifying but intriguing.

I discovered many buddhas and it was amazing, but it was also kind of scary because there were echoes from the walls of each side, and the buddhas looked like they are staring at you— a visual illusion. It seemed like the eyes are following your every movement, but they aren't moving. When I came out of the caves, it was amazing. It was something special and I guarantee you won't regret going there as well. You have to visit it at least once before you die.

It is such an amazing and special place. It has inspired me to find out more about Chinese history and my heritage. In Hong Kong we see many buddhas and it seems quite ordinary but because of the Mogao Caves I am inspired to learn more about the Buddha. Buddha was an amazing man and an amazing historical figure but what does he have to do with my life? Through my experience of going to the Mogao Caves, I feel superbly motivated by the Buddha. Buddha was a spiritual man and many people did many good things to respect him. I have realised that the secret is not in the cave but the secret lives inside our hearts and in our actions.

What are the Cultural Impacts of the Mogao Grottoes' Discovery Within and Outside of China?

Stewards Pooi Kei Primary School, Wang, Alice – 11

French sinologist and orientalist, Paul Eugene Pelliot once remarked in a letter about the Mogao Grottoes, 'During the first days, I attacked nearly a thousand scrolls a day.' The Mogao Grottoes, located in Dunhuang, China, contain nearly 500 temples and the finest Buddhist artwork in the world. Daoist, Wang Yuanlu first discovered the library cave which contains the majority of the artifacts in 1900 when he was cleaning. However, at that time, not just Wang, no one knew or understood the value of the relics, except a Chinese academic – Ye Changzhi. He suggested transporting all the antiquities to Lanzhou but was refused, since there was no funding. Ironically, one government official even thought that his own writings were of better quality than the historical texts found in the grottoes. Eventually, the dismissal of the documents' importance caused the valuable contents to be raided by foreign archeologists. As of now, a large portion of the sacred pieces have been transported to overseas museums, such as ones in Paris, London and Berlin. It is widely agreed that the valuable pieces in the grottoes had been 'stolen', which is not the truth. The real reason behind the loss of these pieces is because no one realized the value of them. They did not comprehend how precious the documents in the caves were. No one could have known that the grottoes would one day become a discovery that stuns the world with its substantial influence within and outside of China, even in the realm of pop culture. This particularly rings true for the historians studying Chinese heritage and culture.

The Mogao Grottoes are a window into China's past. They give an insight into historical China and the socio-economic characteristics of the dynasties during that particular time. There are many ancient and current manuscripts relating to philosophy, history, mathematics, art, poetry, religion (Buddhism, Judaism, Nestorianism), and even medicine. This treasure trove of information is useful for the modern-day person to understand the religion and lifestyle of the ancient people, which further encourages appreciation for the study of Chinese history, and even the history of Chinese music. Many are stunned to learn that there are notable exchanges and crossovers in Asian and Western music. Interestingly enough, the documents about Buddhism have deepened people's knowledge about its history and origins, sparking an interest in many. This shows that despite many people considering this as an overall loss of priceless heritage, the Chinese have still gained in the bigger picture. On that note, it should be clarified that the pieces which now reside overseas were in fact not a disrespectful or unjust trade. That being said, it is understandable for the modern-day person to consider foreign archeologists' actions as unjust and deceitful, as they concealed the true value and importance of the relics at the time. However, is it not evidence of China's generosity and passion in spreading its culture too?

Dunhuang, where the Mogao Grottoes are located, was a giant cultural mixing pot. In the early ages, it allowed people to peacefully come together. During the peak prosperity of the Silk Road, Chinese and Western cultures were able to meet at the grottoes. Different faces from all over the world were blended together through wall paintings, and some pieces have even absorbed the strengths of ancient art from Iran, India and Greece, amongst other places. It is proof that cultures have been historically mixed and embedded everywhere. This was the start of alleviating racism, xenophobia and the removal of racial boundaries. Hence, the benefits and significance of Chinese heritage crossing international borders by far outweigh any type of loss. Ultimately, it has contributed immensely to decreasing discrimination and increasing foreigners' understanding and knowledge of Chinese culture.

Being the biggest and the most perfect grottoes in the world, the impact of the Mogao grottoes' discovery is vast – its influence in pop culture is still evident. It has changed the image of many religions in people's minds. For example, some consider religion as insignificant, however, the influences of the grottoes have made them speechless. Whereas, in modern art it has provided inspiration for artists and musicians, even changing their styles. On top of that, there is a specialized subject in universities called 'Dunhuang Studies', allowing people to be educated on the antiquities found in the grottoes specifically. To deepen the public's understanding of this magnificent site, virtual reality exhibitions have been created which explore new storytelling techniques. These killed two birds with one stone, as they minimized carbon dioxide exposure and humidity at the real site. They were a significant step in blending ancient history and modern technology, creating new mediums for storytelling. As a whole, it is evident that the famed grottoes will continue to inspire creations and various art forms. Hopefully, there will be similar exhibitions in the future.

Overall, the Mogao Grottoes are a crucial discovery in history, ancient art, and commerce. Their impact can be witnessed everywhere, even in foreign countries and modern-day culture. They give insight into Chinese heritage, customs and religion. The most essential part is that they open the door of Chinese history to people in China and all over the world.

Therefore, as one of mankind's precious treasures, the Mogao Grottoes should have a chance to be repaired and most importantly, they should be closed off to the public. Even though some will consider it a regrettable choice, it is imperative to ensure the preservation of the priceless artifacts. Lastly, it would be a great endeavor and honor for archeologists to continue discovering additional caves and spread Chinese culture even further to other nations.

My Own Three-Day Experience of The Mogao Grottoes

The British International School Shanghai, Puxi Campus, Lee, Hajin – 11

1st February 2022

I've really been enjoying my first few days in Dunhuang with my friends so far. On the First day, we enjoyed the flabbergasting views of the Mogao Grottoes (or 莫高窟 in Chinese) from our hotel room, tasting the local food and I especially enjoyed one dish in particular: a food I'd never even heard of before called Niang Pi Zi(酿皮子), which is a yellowish, jade-like food, that's spicy yet sour. I gobbled it up like a hungry wolf as we checked-in and unpacked our stuff in our traditionally decorated hotel room.

2nd February 2022

On the 2nd day, the first thing me, Zhang Li and Li Shan did was to start to head towards the tourist centre (just a five-minute walk) to purchase the tickets. The person who sold those said that there were 3 options: Option A: a tour that you can visit 8 caves, 4 museums and a few movies, with transportation directly to the grottoes. And the B&C option (for native Chinese people) so we chose option A, got on the shuttle bus and started to head towards the grottoes in a terrific speed...

It was amazingly big and mystic. "Wow! I never knew they had the knowledge to build something like this 1600 years ago." I thought, as we sauntered towards the entrance of the Mogao Grottoes. Thinking of this, I remembered a legend my friend used to tell me: in the year 366 AD, a monk called Yue Zun, once had a dream of Golden Buddhas'. Therefore, he decided to turn this dream into reality, which is the present Mogao Grottoes. As I looked up, my eyes got fixed at a magnificent giant buddha statue staring all of us. Well, technically, sitting. I wondered to myself, "How come 1600 years passed and the caves are in a perfectly clean state apart from some peelings?" Well, I guess my friend, Zhang Li, somehow read my mind, because he taught me that it hadn't been discovered for 800 years since it was finished...until the early 1900s, when another monk with a surname of Wang, discovered it and sold some of the scrolls he discovered to a British person for approximately 200 pounds and the sad fact that those still haven't been returned to China still, even though 110 years passed after that incident.

The first cave we looked at was the one with a king-looking Buddha sitting, cross-legged, with people who seemed like his servants, looking down, and so was the rest similar to those. As I did so, I thought to myself: "So the person who made the caves must've gotten inspiration from Buddhism." As we headed towards the last cave (which I expected to be pretty much the same as the other caves), What I saw, blew my socks off-how wrong I was! The moment I entered, I was surrounded by an atmosphere of different ancient Chinese wall paintings of creatures, which I think were waiting for us to come, greeted me in a happy mood; I never knew that the grottoes contained Chinese culture AND Buddhism! So, after we spent a once-in-a-lifetime-experience sightseeing the Mogao Grottoes, we returned to our hotel (since the museum we were supposed to go was closed due to renovation); I really wanted to visit the museum, but unfortunately, we couldn't; it was full of priceless information and ancient things I didn't want to miss out on!

After that, we went out to the city centre from our hotel for some dinner (Chinese food, of course.). Surprisingly, it turned out that the city of Dunhuang contained lots of tasty restaurants! After thinking for a long time (because we had so many options to savour) we went into this luxurious restaurant which sold many Chinese dishes including Niang Pi Zi, Donkey meat, which seemed extremely disgusting, noodles, hot pot, and many others. In the end, I had to eat Donkey meat, which was actually so good that I even licked off the plate! After dinner, we went back to our comforting hotel room like the speed of the wind, and dozed off as loud as a sleeping bear because we were extremely exhausted!

3rd February 2022

The trip has nearly come to an end. We booked the High-Speed Railway to Shanghai which will take 24 Hours (A lot) at 8pm. So, during the time we have, we decided to go to some other places in Dunhuang like the Crescent Moon Pool, The Mogao Grottoes Museum (Luckily, it was open today), the Dunhuang Temple, and so on. After we finished the busy sightseeing around Dunhuang, it was already 5pm so we rushed to the train station as fast as lightning and grabbed some fast food, and Zhang Li kindly bought the train tickets for us (since me and Li Shan didn't know how to do so) and hopped on the train to Shanghai. On the train, I had a really cool dream of talking to the golden Buddhas, like the dream Yue Zun had 1900 years ago. I wish that I could revisit the Mogao Caves with my parents, since it was an amazing and terrific adventure I could never forget in my lifetime.

Mogao Grottoes

Yaumati Catholic Primary School (Hoi Wang Road), Bok, Tsz To Lukas – 10

One of China's well known art, the Mogao Grottoes are located in the south-east of the centre of Dunhuang, an oasis on the Silk Road in the Gansu province. The caves are also referred to as the Thousand Buddha Grottoes or Caves of the Thousand Buddhas. They exhibit various forms of art that include architecture, sculptures, paintings, calligraphy and literature, but the most famous one is the murals.

The murals in the caves were created from the fifth to the fourteenth century, and many earlier ones were re-painted at later points within the period. They are extensive, covering an area of more than 490 000 square feet! Most of them hang on the walls or ceilings, with geometrical shapes or plants filling the space not taken by the figures. Images about Buddhas are common. The murals look awesome!

The grottos are found along the side of a cliff that is nearly two kilometres long. During the Tang Dynasty, there were more than one thousand caves. However, only 735 caves exist nowadays.

Cave 17 was discovered by Wang Yuanlu. It came to be known as the Library Cave. It is located off the entrance leading to Cave 16 and it was originally used as a memorial cave for a local monk, Hongbian, on his death in 852. Hongbian was from a wealthy Wu family and was responsible for the construction of Cave 16. The Library Cave may have been used as his retreat. The cave originally contained his statue. A large number of documents dating from 406 to 1002 were found in the cave in the form of packed layers of scrolls. Nowadays, scholars are still discovering what the documents are saying.

At present, the caves are a popular tourist destination. Although many people visited the caves, they are still mysterious. Many scholars said that the caves were like tunnels to a lost world. Regarding who created the caves and many other similar questions, they are like the priceless relics hidden in the caves, awaiting to be uncovered.