

## Document B

**Source:** Photo of the Dunhuang caves courtesy of the British Library, London, England.

**Note:** For travelers heading west, the oasis town of Dunhuang (“dun-wong”) was a place to rest and resupply before braving the western Gobi and the Taklimakan deserts. Soon after the fall of the Han Dynasty, Buddhist monks began to dig caves just ten miles outside of Dunhuang. In many of the caves, they built Buddhist shrines. Over the centuries, these caves also became storage vaults for many items brought to Dunhuang by Silk Road travelers.

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The interior of a cave shrine at Dunhuang.

**Source:** Description of the Dunhuang caves in *Shadow of the Silk Road* by Colin Thubron, Harper Collins, 2007.

... [The cave] walls were carpeted with hundreds of miniature Buddhas.... In several shrines the ceiling teemed with Hindu angels and lotus flowers.

...[Rolls of manuscripts] revealed a multicultural world, which had barely been suspected ... inventories, wills, legal deeds, private letters. Chinese ballads and poems came to light..., even a funeral address for a dead donkey.... And beside the mass of Chinese prayers are documents in Sanskrit, Tibetan, Uighur, Sogdian, Khotanese, Turki in a mélange of scripts: a letter in Judeo-Persian, a Parthian fragment in Manichean script, a Turkic tantric tract in the Uighur alphabet.

**Writing Journal Entry #2:** Label your entry “Dunhuang, June 1, 200, Evening.” You have traveled more than 1,000 miles with the caravan. Around the campfire at Dunhuang, you listen to fellow travelers discussing the teachings of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism. You sit down to record your thoughts about Dunhuang, the conversation around the campfire, and your visit to a cave shrine. What effect do you think the Silk Road has had on the spread of religion and ideas?