

much was deposited in the vaults of that building to lie neglected and rotting, a prey to insects and rodents. In 1910 and 1911 Mr. Tachibani, the Japanese traveller, visited the sites.

Sir Aurel Stein's explorations in the Turfān depression at the end of 1914 were mainly geographical and historical, but also very fruitful in archaeological material. The rich results of his labours, especially at Toyuk and Astāna, have been recorded in his great Report, *Innermost Asia*, wherein he deals exhaustively with the geography and history of the region. His discoveries in the ancient graves at Astāna reveal the strength of Chinese culture there, and have been fully described in the Report. In the course of his investigations he examined cave and structural shrines at Kara-khōja, Toyuk, Bezeklik, and other sites, and removed from them a considerable amount of the painted plaster, which he cut from the walls in small sections. These sections were carefully packed and sent to India, where they were reassembled, mounted on aluminium backing, and arranged by me in the Central Asian Antiquities Museum at New Delhi.¹ During reassembling, selected examples were photographed for colour and monotone reproduction in anticipation of their publication in the present work. With few exceptions the paintings are Buddhist of the Mahāyāna canon with some Tantric intrusions. Manichaean texts found in the debris of ruins testify to the presence of followers of Mani, and a few of the painted fragments from the walls of one shrine may relate to that sect.

At Kara-khōja or Idikut-shahri (the 'town of the Idikut or Uigur rulers') the ruins are of free-standing structures. In one of these, besides a fragment of a Manichaean manuscript, some Chinese coins, current during the T'ang dynasty, were found. In a small cave shrine at Toyuk the domed ceiling was elaborately painted with floral scrolls supporting a series of seated figures emblematic, it is believed, of the Moon deity with attendants (plate x). Although in a ruinous state, enough remained to show the general scheme. This dome, reconstructed, is now in the museum at New Delhi. In the many small fragments of painted plaster collected, a few of which are reproduced in plate VIII, the importance of clear contour lines is probably indicative of Chinese influence. But the elements of design, derived from the flotsam deposited by the various invading waves, and the manner of treatment are so combined that, except in a few cases, there is no dominant racial distinction.

Reviewing the paintings of the Turfān shrines generally, most of which cover a

¹ See my *Catalogue of Wall Paintings*. Delhi, 1933.