

in size, but of manifest antiquity. Where the sand had blown away, the walls constructed of wattle and plaster were exposed to view, broken down to within a few feet of the ground. Elsewhere the walls could be made out only by rows of wooden posts emerging above the drift sand. All structural remains left exposed showed signs of having been searched by 'treasure-seekers'. The damage done by their operations was often only too evident.

Under the guidance of Turdi, thoroughly familiar with the site which we jokingly used to call his own village, I made a rapid survey of the ruins, which sufficed to furnish unmistakable proofs of their character and approximate date. On the much-injured walls of structures which had been dug into by Turdi and others of his fraternity (Fig. 27), I easily recognized remnants of paintings representing Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. There could be no doubt that I stood amid the ruins of Buddhist places of worship. The style of these frescoes pointed to the last centuries preceding the advent of Islam as the probable date when these shrines and the settlement to which they belonged had been abandoned. Chinese copper coins bearing the date of the period A.D. 713-41 were picked up from the debris-strewn ground near them and confirmed the dating.

Old Turdi felt quite at home in these desolate surroundings. He had frequently visited the site since his boyhood, and his excellent memory allowed him quickly to recognize the places where he and others had been at work before. Fortunately their scanty resources as regards supplies and transport had never allowed them to stay long or to clear structures more deeply buried in the sand. So I could place my camp at a spot from which such ruins as had escaped