The trial excavation started along the interior face of the east wall soon confirmed this, but at the same time revealed that a rich mine was here awaiting antiquarian search. In inverse proportion to the small size and roughness of the half-underground hovels brought to light was the amount of the rubbish which seemed to fill them to the roof. From the very start of the digging, pieces of paper and wood inscribed in Tibetan cropped up in numbers. The layers of refuse of all kinds left behind by all the occupants continued to yield such records, complete or fragmentary, right down to the bottom. The first day's work brought the total up to two hundred. Similarly the remains of discarded implements of all sorts, fragments of ragged clothing, arms, etc., were abundant. Everything pointed to the conclusion that these deep deposits of rubbish, rich in archaeological plums—and remarkable, too, for their dirt—had accumulated during a protracted period of Tibetan occupation. Historical evidence from the Chinese Annals of the T'ang dynasty justified my assigning this occupation to the eighth or ninth century of our era.

On the following morning I proceeded on a reconnaissance to a ruin about a mile and a half away to the north-east, which Tokhta Akhun had spoken of as showing remains of sculptures. The ruin proved to be that of a Buddhist temple (Fig. 51). Above the debris encumbering the sides of the base that alone survived, there still showed remains of fine stucco relievos arranged for architectural decoration. On clearing a small portion of the base on the east side I lighted upon fragments of stucco sculptures of large size. Then I felt quite assured that the temple dated from a period far more ancient than that of the Tibetan fort. A