

rewarded by the discovery of art remains far older and of far wider interest than those relics of Tibetan occupation.

These came to light from the debris mounds of some Buddhist shrines surviving wind erosion and scattered over the bare ground in the vicinity of the fort. These shrines, as conclusive archaeological evidence showed, must have been in ruins long before the Tibetan occupation led to the erection of the fort. At the ruin to which my attention had already been directed on my first visit to the site, two stories could be clearly distinguished. Destruction, mainly by wind erosion, had completely removed the stucco decoration from the upper one. But when we came to clear the lower one from the encumbering masses of debris there came to light half-engaged columns of strikingly Persepolitan look and scanty remains of life-size statues which once filled the niches between them (Fig. 51). As the heavy debris was being removed along the passage which once enclosed the whole oblong fane we soon came upon a colossal head in stucco, representing a Buddha. It measured fully seventeen inches across the temple. As the material was merely a coarse clay mixed with straw, the lifting and subsequent safe packing of this heavy mass of sculpture was no easy task.

This and several other colossal heads subsequently unearthed all showed with equal clearness modelling in Graeco-Buddhist style. The origin of this and several other colossal heads was revealed when the clearing of the passage showed its outer wall to be lined by the torsos of six huge figures seated with folded legs. Across the knees they measured a little over seven feet. The surviving drapery of these colossal seated Buddhas proved how closely the sculptor in far-away Lop had followed the elaborate arrangement of the