

folds which the Graeco-Buddhist style of Gandhara derived from classical models.

That the abandonment of the temple had taken place centuries before the Tibetan occupation became highly probable when close to the base of one statue I discovered a fairly large fragment of a Sanskrit palm-leaf manuscript in Brahmi characters. The material showed that the manuscript had been written in India, and the type of the Brahmi script that its date could not be later than the fourth century.

But the influence exercised by classical art was revealed still more impressively when I started exploration at a cluster of mounds suggesting much decayed Stupas about a mile to the west of the fort. On clearing the smallest of these mounds I came upon the remains of a solid structure, square outside but circular within. It had once carried a dome and enclosed a small Stupa. Heavy masses of debris fallen from the vaulting and the upper portion of the rotunda walls completely blocked the circular passage around the Stupa base. Fragments of painted stucco cropped up here rapidly. It became evident that the interior walls of the rotunda had once been adorned with frescoes. Yet when the digging there reached a level of about four feet above the floor and a delicately painted dado of winged angels (Fig. 54) began to show on the wall, I felt completely taken by surprise. How could I have expected by the desolate shores of Lop-nor, in the very heart of innermost Asia, to come upon such classical representations of Cherubim?

As in eager excitement I cleared head after head with my bare hands, I rapidly convinced myself that the approach to classical design and colour treatment was closer