

entrance gate of the quadrangle, could alone be cleared. The portions of the base flanking this flight of steps proved to be coated with a thick layer of white stucco which probably once covered the whole of the Stupa. It was here, sticking to the plaster under a bold moulding at the foot of the base, that I discovered four well-preserved copper-pieces of the Han period showing very little wear. Like subsequent finds of such coins, they had manifestly been deposited as votive offerings, and furnished me with the first indication of the probable age of the structure.

The great archæological interest of the ruins, however, does not centre so much in the Stupa as in the rich series of relievo sculptures decorating the walls of the Stupa court. These were brought to light by the systematic excavations which I commenced as soon as the bands of labourers, quickly collected and despatched by the Beg of Yurung-kash, had joined my camp in the early morning of the 12th of April. In order to avoid the risks of immediate damage to the friable stucco of the sculptures, and to get sufficient room for photographing them, it was necessary to open broad trenches at some little distance from the walls and then to proceed towards the latter, carefully clearing out the sand. Commencing at the inner south corner, the work of excavation was gradually extended along the south-west and south-east walls up to the furthestmost points which the high dunes rising over the east and west corners permitted to be cleared. The photograph, p. 446, shows a portion of the south-east wall with the trenches in course of excavation, along both its sides, and also helps to convey an impression of the mighty ridges of sand immediately surrounding the ruins.

As the work of clearing proceeded, I soon recognised that the main adornment of the walls, both towards the court and outside, consisted throughout of rows of colossal statues in stucco. All the large relievos represented Buddhas or Bodhisattvas, but from the varying attitudes a number of groups could be distinguished, arranged apparently on a more or less symmetrical plan. Between the colossal images at frequent intervals were smaller relievo repre-