

were almost invariably found intact. I may here note that among all the sculptural decoration of the Stupa court I failed to trace any evidence of wilful destruction by human agency, as distinguished from such casual damage as the spasmodic burrowings of "treasure-seekers" may have caused at some points of the more exposed outer face of the enclosing wall. This observation lends support to the belief, justified by other evidence, that this great shrine was already long deserted and the ruins of its court covered up by the time when Islam finally annexed Khotan.

It is possible that originally a wooden gallery or some similar structure projecting from the top of the enclosing wall offered shelter to the sculptures. But this, if it really existed, must have been systematically removed even before the sand had completely invaded the Stupa court, for only in one place near the inner south-east face did my excavations bring to light some pieces of timber, about 4 inches thick, that might have served for such a structure. Considering how comparatively expensive an article building timber is to this day in the immediate vicinity of a large Turkestan town, we could scarcely be surprised at the early removal of this, the most useful material the deserted shrine could offer.

The total number of individual relievos of large size, which were unearthed along the cleared portions of the south-west and south-east walls, amounted to ninety-one. In addition to these the finds included many small relievos forming part of halos, &c., or deposited as ex-votos before the main images. The position of all statues was carefully shown in the ground-plan and a detailed description of every piece of sculpture, with exact measurements, duly recorded. In addition, I obtained a complete series of photographs of whatever sculptural work appeared on the excavated wall faces, the aggregate length of which amounted in the end to more than 300 feet. It was no easy task to collect all these records with the needful accuracy while directing the successive stages of the excavation in atmospheric conditions trying alike to eyes, throat, and lungs. Though Ram Singh and Turdi rendered, each in his own way, very intelligent assistance, I had myself to remain in the