

forming a square of 8 feet inside, were found standing to a height of 2 to 3 feet; but the excavation of the interior brought to light no remains of any sort, except traces of coarsely-done mural paintings made up of the usual rows of small seated Buddha figures. An isolated small structure immediately to the south was also cleared without results.

About 260 yards to the south-east of the last-named ruins, just across the previously-mentioned depression, lay the remains of a large but very coarsely built structure. Though much decayed through erosion and the burrowings of 'treasure-seekers', two wings situated at right angles could still be distinguished; the one facing north measured about 80 feet in length, and the one adjoining westwards about 110 feet. The walls, where still traceable, consisted merely of rushes fixed vertically and overlaid with a thin coating of plaster. Apart from fragments of coarse pottery vessels and a large wooden trough hollowed out of a poplar trunk, which the men thought to have served for storing grain, no antiquarian find of any sort resulted from the clearing of the western wing, except the small fragment of a Chinese document (D. ix. 1). This was found on the floor of the central apartment, which, covered by sand to a depth of about 5 feet, seemed alone to have remained undisturbed. Luckily the legible portion of the fragment, evidently the heading of a document, has proved to mention a date, 'the sixth year of [the period] Chêng-yüan' corresponding to 790 A. D.²⁵, the latest date found in the Chinese records of the site.

Ruin D. ix.

SECTION VI.—RECORDS FROM THE HU-KUO CONVENT

If the structures around D. v failed to fulfil the hopes raised by the finds in the latter ruin, the loss was compensated by the unexpectedly rich harvest of interesting relics yielded by the small isolated group consisting of the cella D. vi and the dwelling D. vii. Situated about half a mile to the south-east of my camp and within 40 feet of each other, the two little buildings were well protected under the slope of a small dune stretching in the approximate direction of north to south. The cella D. vi (see Plan XXVI), which was correctly orientated, measured inside 10 ft. 8 in. from north to south, with a width of 9 ft. 4 in. Outside its four sides ran a passage 4 feet wide, its enclosing walls, like those of the cella, built of the usual timber framework and plaster with a thickness of 6 inches. The entrance to both passage and cella lay from the north. Inside the cella, and towards its south wall, rose an oblong base of plaster measuring 3 ft. 3 in. by 2 ft. 8 in., and 9 inches high. Of the statue which once occupied it no remains could be found.

Cella D. vi.

Notwithstanding the deep cover of sand, about 6 feet above the original flooring, the cella walls were found standing only to a height of $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 feet, a fact clearly indicating that they had been exposed previously to long-continued erosion. Yet what remained of the walls retained its original fresco decoration. Inside the cella each wall-face, with the exception of the one containing the entrance, was occupied by three large painted figures, of which, however, the extant wall portion showed only the feet standing on lotus cushions and the lower part of the drapery. Plate IV reproduces the greater part of the south wall, where the triangular spaces left between the aureoles around the principal figures were filled by smaller representations of Buddhas in dark red robes seated in the 'Dhyānamudrā' attitude. Below the lotus cushion bearing the central figure a boldly-moulded pedestal is shown, resembling in its structural arrangement that actually found within the larger cella of D. ii. A tank with floating lotuses

Fresco decoration of D. vi.

²⁵ See M. Chavannes' translation, App. A., Plate CXVI.