

mica particles greatly increased the glare, and before long a sensation recalling my experience on the glacier of the Darkot made me aware that my face was getting blistered.

The resulting discomfort was soon forgotten when I arrived at the site of Ak-terek. Of the temple ruin, from which Roze had brought me some interesting decorative relievos in what seemed terra-cotta, no structural remains whatever were visible above ground. But plentiful fragments of the same type could be picked up near a small dune which my guides had taken the precaution to mark by a rag-topped staff. There were small seated Buddhas surrounded by lotus-leaves, flower scrolls and flame-bundles, and other relievos fragments exactly similar in style to the *appliqué* stucco decoration of the halos which I had discovered at Rawak round the colossal images (Fig. 76, 2, 7). Their appearance here, scattered among the pottery débris of a 'Tati,' seemed puzzling; for of structural remains, such as temple walls which might once have borne a corresponding adornment, the level surface of sand showed no trace whatever. Like the potsherds around, these relics of the wall-decoration of an ancient temple rested now on nothing but soft eroded loess.

To search for more substantial remains of the shrine seemed like a piece of true treasure-seeking, without any of the archaeological guidance on which I had learned to rely during my excavations at Dandan-oilik and elsewhere. For a systematic trial trench to show the possible location of walls, the dozen men of Roze's party who had tramped after us in the broiling heat were an inadequate force. But in order not to lose time I let them start digging near the north foot of the dune where the terra-cotta fragments lay most numerous. Chance favoured us more than I could reasonably expect; for after burrowing down in the loose sand for only two feet, Roze himself struck the remains of a fairly thick wall in reddish clay, and the débris layer near it, covering a plastered floor some two feet lower down, began to yield in rapid succession more relievos fragments of the same description. I made the rest of the men clear the wall thus discovered as far as they could follow it before dusk overtook us; and the continuity of