

finds rewarding the work assured me that the wall indeed belonged to a temple.

That this temple had undergone almost total destruction in its structural features, was, alas! plain enough from the lowness of the wall laid bare and the entire disappearance of its original facing. Yet if I could not hope to bring to light here larger sculptures or frescoes, such as the well-preserved walls of Dandan-oilik or Rawak had yielded, there was some compensation in the abundance of decorative details and the ease with which their remarkable hardness allowed them to be recovered. At Rawak the same relieve decoration consisted of unbaked clay so friable that many of the pieces broke in the very attempt to remove them, and the safe arrival of some which I managed to carry to London seemed nothing short of a miracle.

The prospect of gaining fresh materials for the study of that sculptural art which my Rawak finds had first illustrated was not the only reward of the day's work at this site, which had promised so little at first sight. Again and again the practised eyes of my diggers noticed pieces of *appliqué* relieve still retaining tiny flakes of gold,—unmistakable evidence that the greatest part of the wall decoration must once have been gilded. For the first time I had here before me definite confirmation of the hypothesis which I had formed in explanation of the gold washed from the culture-strata of the ancient Khotan capital marked by the Yotkan site. In that gold I had recognized the remains of that profuse gilding which the old Khotanese, according to early Chinese records, were fond of using in their sacred buildings. But Yotkan had not furnished so far a single intact object with gilding, the friable stucco which alone appears to have been used there having completely decayed in a soil kept ever moist by irrigation.

It was with the feeling of a novel and gratifying archaeological experience that I started in the dusk for my camp pitched at a farm close to the edge of cultivation near the village of Ak-kul. Though it proved to be only two and a half miles away, yet the dunes to be crossed on