

the hands of iconoclasts and the zeal of pious restorers. In almost all the shrines I visited, a seated figure of Buddha, sometimes of colossal proportions, was the presiding image; but by his side there appeared regularly groups of standing Bodhisattvas and divine attendants more or less numerous (Fig. 161).

I could readily recognize representations of Dvarapalas, the celestial 'Guardians of the Quarters,' in the richly adorned and gaily dressed figures usually flanking the horse-shoe-shaped platform which bore the sculptured groups in the larger shrines, and here and there also images of the more prominent Bodhisattvas. But for the rest, I realized from the first that prolonged study and competent priestly guidance would be needed. But was there any chance that such guidance would be forthcoming at this sacred site which at the time looked wholly deserted? And how would my honest secretary, himself a stranger to all the intricate details of Buddhist mythology and iconography, succeed in correctly grasping and reproducing the technical explanations of the hoped-for cicerone? Indeed, in this as in so many other directions of enquiry since my arrival at Tun-huang, I had cause to regret bitterly my total want of Sinologist qualifications.

It was pleasing to note the entire absence of those many-headed and many-armed monstrosities which the Mahayana Buddhism of the Far East shares with the later development of that cult in Tibet and the border mountains of Northern India. And still more reassuring was it to see everywhere the faithful continuance of the sculptural traditions as developed by Graeco-Buddhist art. The heads and arms of most statues were, indeed, modern and very distant replicas, sadly inadequate attempts at restoration. But often the bodies and their rich drapery had survived without change, and their exquisite colouring had escaped repainting. The profusion of gilt images, I knew, was an early feature, and so also the frequency of colossal figures of Buddhas in a variety of poses. The pious efforts of recent restorers seemed principally to have been directed towards these. Hence the several giant images of sitting Buddhas, rising through caves with a