

The central life-sized figure, with its rather hieratic look and severe archaistic pose, is Buddha himself; the indications of rock behind suggest that the scene is laid at the Gridhrakuta or 'Vulture grotto,' famous in Buddha's life-story. The two figures nearest to the Master on either side have suffered sad havoc, probably through want of care and protection before the cave was walled up. They seem to represent his earliest disciples, Kasyapa being still recognizable in the aged face on the right. Outside them we see two richly adorned Bodhisattvas in poses of worship. A similar grouping was observed in some of the oldest frescoes of the site. Above them two graceful Gandharvas on cloud-scrolls support the canopy over Buddha's head. Below we see the donors and their female relations grouped in adoration, on either side of a yellow central panel from which the inscription originally stitched in has unfortunately disappeared.

The colours of the silks used for the embroidery have survived in remarkable freshness and shimmer, far better than the reproduction, owing to unsurmountable technical difficulties, succeeds in showing. The work contained in this picture may be guessed from the fact that merely to stitch it on to a new backing of canvas, a task which was absolutely needed and which Miss E. A. Winter, a lady trained at the Royal School of Art Needlework, performed with great care and skill, took over two months. The damage which this fine piece of embroidery had suffered before its final deposition is shown by earlier attempts at repairs, and confirms the impression of its high antiquity derived from other indications.

A word of mention must be given to the fine embroidered cushion cover seen in Fig. 197. Its floral ornamentation and tracery is remarkable, both for its harmonious colours and for its close affinity to designs still common in modern embroidered work of Turkestan and China. Were it not for the ascertained date of the walling-up of the chapel, we should scarcely have suspected that this piece of domestic art went back to at least the tenth century A.D.

But questions even more curious in their antiquarian aspects are raised by the remains of woven art fabrics