

laterally, and in most parts perched also one above the other. But the number of grottoes thus excavated in tiers varies greatly without any close regard to their respective heights, and that though the available rock face keeps a fairly uniform elevation to where the southern end of the main series of caves is approached, as seen on the extreme left of Fig. 191. Thus, whereas at both the northern and southern ends the rock face, as far as at present exposed, displays only a single line of cave-temples (Figs. 193, 191, respectively), as many as four or five successive tiers may be counted elsewhere, as seen in Fig. 197. Only for short distances, as e. g. near Ch. IX (Fig. 197) and between the two shrines containing colossal Buddha statues (Fig. 199), is it possible to recognize something corresponding to regular rows or stories. The two last mentioned temples stand in a separate category by themselves; for in order to secure adequate space for the giant clay images of seated Buddhas close on 90 feet high which they were meant to shelter, a number of halls were excavated one above the other. Each of these provides light and access for a portion of the colossus, which rises unbroken to the top through a continuous cavity at the back.

In front of most of the shrines there had been originally antechapels or porches of oblong shape carved out of the rock. Their back and side walls, as well as the ceilings, still retained paintings in tempera which were often faded, now fully exposed to view from the outside owing to the fall of the facing walls (Figs. 195, 199). These in many cases, especially the larger ones, are likely to have been carved out of the rock. But in others they appear to have been replaced, whether originally or on restoration, by wooden verandahs, often still surviving in front of the upper grottoes (Fig. 197), though generally much decayed. In most cases access to, and communication between, these upper shrines seems to have been assured by means of wooden galleries, now marked only by the wooden rafters which once served to support them, or more frequently still by the mere holes into which they were fixed (Figs. 195, 197). The rock-cut or wooden stairs, which were required for the same purpose, had crumbled away almost everywhere, and even rough ladders were to be found only before a few caves which had undergone manifestly recent restoration.

Many of the shrines high up on the rock face had thus become quite inaccessible. But the disappearance of porches and verandahs, sometimes even of the outer wall of the cella (Figs. 195, 196), made it easy to see that the interior arrangements and decoration of these upper shrines, mostly of modest size, did not differ in any essential way from those prevailing in the cave-temples carved into the foot of the cliff. Access to these offered no difficulty, even though fine drift-sand and alluvial deposit from the bed of the stream, which had been allowed to accumulate during centuries of neglect, had covered the ground in front and also the original floor of the entrance in places to a height of as much as 10 feet (Figs. 195-7). The loss of light that necessarily resulted in the interior from this partial blocking-up of the approach was compensated by the fact that even here, low down, the outermost portion of the rock wall had generally crumbled away completely, and thus left the inner passage leading to the sanctum directly exposed to the sun.

The ground-plan and general structural arrangement of these caves showed a striking uniformity. Outside there came first a kind of oblong antechapel which, owing to the cause just mentioned, was found badly injured in most cases. Where restoration had taken place recently, the front had been closed by a wooden construction with big doors and windows, and this feature is likely to have been present also in the original design. From this antechapel the cave-temple proper was approached through a high and rather wide passage, which alone admitted light and air to the interior excavation. This consisted everywhere of a single rectangular cella, usually almost square in shape and with sides up to 54 feet in length, hewn out of the solid rock and provided with a high conical roof. Within the cella, which is usually a little deeper than it is wide, the larger shrines had generally a big rectangular platform, elaborately decorated in plaster and facing the entrance (Figs. 200, 213; Plates 43-5).

Porches and approaches of cave-shrines.

Cave-temples at foot of cliffs.

General structural arrangement.