

Stucco
relief
plaques.

of the last Mongol Emperor. The adjoining small grotto, XIII, had been completely renovated with Taoist frescoes and stuccoes. But pious regard on the part of the priests had preserved and stored away in a corner a heap of small stucco relief plaques, all from the same mould, showing a Buddha seated in *dhyāna-mudrā* between Caityas.¹² They were said to have been removed from part of a wall before it was replastered. I actually found the kind of wall-decoration thus suggested in 1914 at one of the cave-shrines of Ma-ti-ssü south of Kan-chou, apparently dating from Sung times. But in view of the smallness of these plaques, only about $1\frac{3}{4}$ by $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches, it seems quite possible that they served a votive purpose.

Fresco
panels of
cella XVI.

The cella of XVI contains fresco panels of superior execution, but proved to be so badly lighted that I could not photograph them. The two on each side-wall represented scenes of a Western Paradise; on the back wall, to the east, fragments of a representation of the 'wind scene' survived. Among the Chinese *sgraffiti* found with some in Uigur (or Mongolian?) and Tibetan on the left wall of the entrance to the cella none apparently bear a *nien-hao*. The shrine XVII, as already mentioned, contains in its cella the upper portion of the colossal seated Buddha image. The richly gilt head showed signs of recent renovation. Fig. 247 reproduces the wall-decoration of the left (or north-western) side of the antechapel. The large and spirited painting of Mañjuśrī on the lion attended by two Bodhisattvas has its pendant in a panel with Samantabhadra on the opposite side.

Sculptures
and mural
paintings of
shrine XVIII.

The shrine XVIII is the largest in the whole series, and on this account some details may be mentioned. The cella, 38 feet by 32, contains a central pillar spared from the rock and measuring 20 feet 4 inches by 18 feet at its base. A niche on each of its four sides holds a large seated Buddha statue, mostly restored, as seen in Fig. 248. The two Bodhisattva figures in stucco once flanking it are destroyed, but two others are painted on either side of the niche, and two disciples in monks' robes appear within it close to the large well-painted flame vesica of the Master. The decoration of the cella walls comprises eight panels, each having a Buddha enthroned between two Bodhisattvas in the centre of five rows of small haloed figures, seated. Variety is introduced by different colours of robes and background (dark purple and light green). The east wall and the corners are occupied by panels that display large figures of richly adorned Bodhisattvas with varying attributes, among them Maitreya. Similar Bodhisattva figures carrying fruit and flowers decorate the side-walls, over 7 feet long, of the passage leading from the cella into the antechapel. They appear also, life-size, in procession on the longer walls of the antechapel, as seen in Fig. 246. The narrow sides of the antechapel, which measures 29 by $10\frac{1}{2}$ feet, are decorated each with a panel showing a purple-skinned Buddha seated above an altar in the middle of four rows of seated Bodhisattvas (Fig. 246 on left). The altar in front of the Buddha (Fig. 259) is covered with a valance and table-cloth in rich colours, and bears a large covered dish between two elegantly shaped jugs. The latter, painted in terra-cotta colour like the dish, very closely resemble in their graceful design the old brass 'Aptābas' still known in the Tārīm Basin and manufactured mainly at Khotan until about the middle of the last century. The black outlines over the terra-cotta ground of the jugs and dish, which the photograph fails to bring out, seemed to me intended to reproduce a kind of open work similar to that which is a characteristic of that fine old Khotan brasswork. Finally, the walls of the porch, $20\frac{1}{2}$ feet deep and 9 feet 4 inches wide, display processions of donors of the type already described.

¹² The following describes the specimens which I brought away:

Wang. 001-7. Stucco relief plaques; seven oblong rectang. casts from same mould, showing Buddha seated

in meditation between two Caityas(?). Hands covered by robe; flame-shaped halo; dark paint. Clay mixed with a little fibre; not fired. $1\frac{1}{8}'' \times 1\frac{3}{8}''$. 005 and 007 Pl. CXXXIX.