

from what remained of the projecting mass of rock that once formed the core of the statue; it pointed to a colossal standing figure.

Cellas on
ridge A. III.

Considering the only too obvious effects of moisture on these cellas, the hope of recovering recognizable remains of relievos or more interesting relics under the heavy masses of débris that filled the interior in parts seemed too small to justify the heavy expenditure of time and labour which a complete clearing would have cost. But on the top of the ridge, which at its eastern end has evidently been occupied by a number of small structures, either shrines or monastic quarters, I had the two cellas vi and vii cleared. From a few fragments of painted plaster brought to light in vii it appeared that these, too, were places of worship. In addition to the walls shown in the plan, which probably served mainly to secure level building space, there were remains of terraces built up against the north-east end of the ridge, at a height of 20-30 feet above the level ground. These, too, may once have borne small structures.

The only ruins at Ara-tam which still remain to be mentioned are six small cellas, some only a few feet square, found perched in a line, as Fig. 192 and Plate 48 show, on little spurs jutting out from the foot of the hill directly to the north of A. III. They were found completely empty and were declared to have been searched two years earlier by Dr. von Lecoq, who had paid a flying visit to Ara-tam when on his reconnaissance tour eastwards on behalf of Professor Grünwedel's Mission. With what result I have not been able to ascertain.

Date of
Ara-tam
shrines.

My own search of the ruins had yielded no definite chronological evidence. But, in view of the close resemblance which the remains of the fresco decoration in the rock-cut cellas showed to designs familiar to me from the later cave-temples of Ch'ien-fo-tung, it appears to me highly probable that the Ara-tam shrines dated from the period of Uigur dominion (ninth-twelfth centuries), during which Hāmi is likely to have enjoyed protracted spells of peace and prosperity. It is more difficult to guess the date at which Buddhist worship had finally ceased at the site. We have seen above that at the time of Shāh Rukh's embassy (1420) Buddhism still continued to be professed at Hāmi by the side of Islām. Clear chronological evidence, such as a site definitely abandoned to the desert might have easily yielded, was not to be looked for at a place which, favoured by its abundant water-supply and fertile soil, must have ever invited continued occupation. That the advantages and facilities for archaeological work which are offered by ruins within the cultivated areas, along the south foot of the T'ien-shan and far away from the desert, have their antiquarian drawbacks also is a lesson I first learned amidst the pleasant surroundings of Ara-tam.

March from
Hāmi to
Toghucha.

On November 2 I left Hāmi for Turfān, after having completed the safe packing in twelve wooden cases of the additional manuscript acquisitions from Ch'ien-fo-tung, which so far had to travel in huge bags and without adequate protection. Regard for the available transport and our survey-work induced me to follow the rather circuitous high road which, for the sake of wells and some chances of grazing, keeps close to the foot of the T'ien-shan.⁷ By doubling marches where

⁷ The first portion of the line followed by the high road, as far as Ch'i-ku-ching (Map No. 66), lies on what must always have been the most direct route from Hāmi to Guchen ('*Posterior Chü-shih*', the later *Pei-fing*) and the other fertile territories along the north foot of the T'ien-shan. Whenever these were safely held by the Chinese, traffic from Hāmi towards the West is always likely to have followed this northern route during the summer months in preference to that leading via Turfān. The further portion of the high road to the latter leads over very barren stony slopes as far as Chik-tam, but offers at least halting-places with water.

Of this there is practically none now on the corresponding

section of the more direct route from Hāmi to Turfān, which leaves the high road at Toghucha and strikes across absolutely barren hills and plateaus to Chik-tam; see Map II in the Russian publication of Captain Roborovsky's expedition which first surveyed it. Donkey caravans to Turfān frequently use this route in the winter. It is this route which the Chinese envoy Wang Yen-tê followed in A.D. 981; cf. Chavannes, *T'oung-pao*, 1905, p. 530, note.

Further south lies the track, quite waterless, which leads from the Shona-nōr depression south-west of Hāmi to Chik-tam. It was first followed by Col. Kozloff in 1895 and surveyed again in 1914 by M. Muḥammad Yāqūb under my