

Effect of
conflagra-
tion.

By far the greatest number of stucco fragments was found along the east wall, and especially in the south-east corner; the smallest came from the west side.¹ The most likely explanation appears to me to be that, the fire having started from the west, the friezes on that side fell and were crushed before the larger stucco pieces had been hardened. The relievos on the east wall were longer exposed to great heat and had thus time to get 'fired' before the wooden shelves, etc., supporting them were consumed and brought down all their weight of sculpture. This supposition is supported by the fact that in two of the holes on the east wall the wooden stumps of the supports still survived. For the same reason it is also probable that the great majority of the relievo fragments belonged to the upper friezes. The three coins found within the cella belong to T'ang issues.

Sculptures
in chamber
behind, xii.

Here, as in other shrines previously noticed, the passage enclosing the cella appears to have escaped destruction by fire, but showed plainly the effects of long exposure to moisture. The passages on the east and west sides do not appear to have contained any relievo decoration, and as the plastering of the walls had completely perished, no trace was found of the frescoes with which they are likely to have been once adorned. All the more gratifying is the survival of remains from the sculptural decoration in the chamber, xii, behind. Here careful excavation brought to light groups of richly draped statues, in high relief and nearly life-size, occupying low platforms along the outer walls in the north-west and north-east corners (Figs. 294, 295), as well as a considerable number of interesting small relievos. These had fallen from a stuccoed frieze extending along the outer north wall at a height of about 9 feet from the ground. All the stucco sculpture was found in a very friable state owing to damp, and the removal of any of the statues was quite impracticable. Even the heads, of which three or four were recovered from the débris below, where they must have all fallen early, were in too soft a state to permit of safe transport. The same was the case also with two figurines, only 6 inches high, which were found at the feet of one of the images in the north-east group and evidently represented worshippers, perhaps the donors.

Stucco
images in
passage
corners.

Each side of the groups in the two corners appeared to have comprised five to six standing figures closely packed; but the outermost statues had badly decayed, and the places of some were marked only by the remains of the wooden frames and reed bundles over which their plaster had been modelled. Judging from the drapery and pose, most of these statues appear to have been intended to represent Buddhas. The character of others, as seen on the extreme left in Figs. 294, 295, remained to me doubtful. The style in all the statues is unmistakably derived from Graeco-Buddhist models, and a comparison of the photographs with those of the colossal statues excavated in 1901 at the Rawak Vihāra will show how closely most details of treatment and execution agree.² A very curious feature, and one for which the limitations of my iconographic knowledge did not allow me to find an acceptable explanation, was the appearance in the angle of the north-east corner of remains of a prostrate draped figure, raising its head and breast. The placing of the west and east portions of these sculptured groups in recesses of the outer side walls was obviously dictated by considerations of space for circumambulation. In the same way the position of the whole statuary in the corners may be accounted for by the fact that only there sufficient light could be secured for them from the side passages.

Small re-
lievos from
stuccoed
frieze.

The preservation of the stuccoed cornice once carrying the frieze of small relievos along the north wall was a discovery of particular interest; for it showed plainly how these relievo friezes are likely to have been fixed in the cella xi and elsewhere at this site. The cornice, of which the lowest

¹ The temple not being orientated, the terms east, west, etc., are used only for brevity's sake and as approximate.

² See *Ancient Khotan*, i. Figs. 61-8; ii. Pl. XIV-XVII.