

Evidence of
T'ang coins.

Chrono-
logical
puzzle
explained.

Types of
relievos
from cella
Mi. xi.

Naturalistic
treatment of
heads.

we possess as to the late date up to which the shrine adorned with these relievos was frequented. On the base bearing the statues of the north-east corner seven Chinese coins were found, tucked away behind the feet or otherwise placed securely. One among them bears, indeed, the legend *Huo-ch'üan*, used on the coinage of Wang Mang and ascribed to the regnal period A.D. 14-19. But we know that Chinese coin types were liable to be continued for centuries by recasting. On the other hand, three coins of the *Ta-li* (A.D. 766-79) and *Chien-chung* (A.D. 780-3) periods, besides one *K'ai-yüan* piece, make it certain that these particular images continued to be objects of pious worship down to the end of the eighth century, if not later. It would have been difficult to assume that sculpture made of mere friable plaster, i.e. mud, could have lasted for long centuries without repairs under climatic conditions such as those of Kara-shahr, and equally difficult also to believe that such a lapse of time had not brought about a considerable change in style. Fortunately we are saved all need of conjectural explanation of what might well have seemed an archaeological and artistic puzzle. The discovery of moulds such as those described by Professor Grünwedel and above shows clearly how the sculptural decoration of these shrines could be produced, repaired, or replaced without any appreciable change in style and workmanship for prolonged periods.

The impression gained of the artistic skill of those whose work we see reproduced in the sculptural remains of xii is greatly strengthened by a review of the far more numerous, if less well-preserved, relievo fragments from the cella xi and the hall leading into it. Their variety is as great as their number. Yet obviously the recovered fragments represent but a very small proportion of the wealth of decorative sculpture which the triple frieze of this cella must once have displayed. Of the scenes represented it is impossible to form any definite notions, though prolonged study and comparison with pictorial remains found elsewhere might yet help an iconographic expert to trace the probable connexion between certain groups of relievo figures. That among these groups representations of the Bodhisattva type would be, as they are, particularly numerous was to be expected. They show considerable variety in scale and details, as seen in Plate CXXXIV. The general note on Mi. xi. 00 in the Descriptive List fully explains the way in which variations were produced by the application of separate moulds for limbs, head-dress, attributes, etc. The modelling of the head and body shows close adherence to the type fixed in Gandhāra sculpture. The same observations hold good also of the figures of youthful celestial attendants of which Plate CXXXIII illustrates specimens (Mi. xi. 0064, 0083), and of the small flying genii, probably meant for Gandharvas (see Mi. xi. 0069, 0085, Plate CXXXV); representations of them are frequent, though mostly badly broken. Very curious and uncertain in their interpretation are the emaciated male figures Mi. xi. 0096, 0097 (Plate CXXXIII), which but for the rich adornment might be taken for ascetics. Of interest, too, are the female figures with elaborate drapery of which Plates CXXXIII, CXXXV give specimens (Mi. xi. 3, 0051, 0072). In the first the vivid rendering of the laughing head deserves notice. The figures of mail-clad warriors found in the cella show but slight variations from those previously described.

The large number of heads found without corresponding bodies is obviously accounted for by their more rapid hardening under the effect of fire. The series of which specimens are reproduced in Plates CXXXII, CXXXIII is one of great artistic interest, and shows best the remarkable skill and freedom of naturalistic treatment which asserted itself in this school of sculpture where it was left untrammelled by hieratic convention. This is perceptible even in the fine bearded heads Mi. xi. 00102-4, where the models were obviously of classical origin transmitted through Gandhāra. The second head, though produced from the same mould as the first, shows the skill with which the sculptors of these stucco friezes, mere craftsmen as they were, could modify their productions; for a wholly changed expression of face is obtained here by the incision of heavy lines effected after