

The first site visited lay in the narrow dune-covered belt of desert which separates the outlying tracts of Yawa and Kara-sai in the extreme north-west of the inhabited portion of the Khotan district. I had not seen this area before, and the observations made here, too, of rapidly extending new cultivation were of interest. Thus the long-stretched oasis of Yawa was found to be a creation of the last fifteen years only. But the site between it and the southern edge of Kara-sai proved disappointing (Map No. 20. c. 3). On perfectly sterile soil, between dead tamarisk-cones completely bared of their fuel, I was shown the spot from which some well-modelled relieve figures in hard white stucco like K.S. 001 (Plate X) had been brought to me. No structural remains of any kind survived; but small relieve fragments of similar material could still be picked up in plenty from the eroded loess soil. There could be no doubt that they were remains of the stucco relieve decoration of two Buddhist shrines separated from each other by about 160 yards. All structural remains had been entirely destroyed by wind-erosion; but characteristically enough the reclamation by canals of the areas within 2 miles or so on either side had brought back subsoil water to this ground to within 5 feet or so of the surface.

Temple site  
near Kara-  
sai.

Among the relieve fragments recovered there are a number which are of interest on account of their fine modelling and the good preservation of their surface. Of these may be mentioned the figures of small standing Buddhas in *abhaya-mudrā* pose, such as K.S. 001, 007 (Plate X), represented in several casts; the excellently designed head and torso of a haloed male figure, perhaps a Gandharva, K.S. 005 (Plate X); the representation of what seems worship of the Buddhist 'Triratna', K.S. 0017 (Plate X); and the gracefully executed plaque of a human figure with limbs transformed into foliage, K.S. 0018 + 0029 (Plate X). The relieves show close resemblance in style to corresponding appliqué stuccoes from Dandān-oilik and Khādalik, and like these may have originally belonged to the decoration of large vesicas, etc., but their workmanship is distinctly superior. What, however, is specially remarkable in them is their material, a plaster of Paris of extreme hardness. The peculiar features of this plaster have been noted and discussed in Sir Arthur Church's analysis of a specimen submitted to him.<sup>1</sup> The explanation he gives of the exceptional hardness of the Kara-sai plaster is 'that it has been gently burnt after having been fashioned into form'. He assumes that this burning was intentional, not accidental, and this assumption seems to be supported by the fact that none of the pieces show discoloration by fire as so many of the burnt plaster of Paris relieves from Kighillik,<sup>2</sup> while only in a few (see K.S. 0028, Plate X) does the surface appear cracked as it always does in the latter. The majority of the pieces present a surface of remarkable smoothness, which recalls that of ivory or porcelain and which has so far not been satisfactorily accounted for. A few retain traces of the original colouring.<sup>3</sup>

Relievo  
fragments in  
plaster of  
Paris.

From Kara-sai I took my way eastwards across the Kara-kāsh River in order to explore temple remains which 'Abbās, one of my 'Taklamakānchis', declared that he had discovered in the belt of high sands separating the twin rivers of Khotan between the central portion of the oasis and their junction at Koshlash. The route followed enabled me to see parts of the recent canton of Bōgar-ming (Map No. 20. D. 3)<sup>4</sup> which my old friend and patron P'an Ta-jên, when in charge of the Khotan District about 1900-1, had created by bringing a new canal from the river along the ancient Bahrām-su-üstang. It stretches for fully 10 miles along the left bank of the Kara-kāsh River, and was said to afford ample land for the two thousand families there settled. As my intention was to travel to Ak-su and visit P'an Ta-jên, whose help as Tao-t'ai had now proved as

Visit to new  
canton of  
Bōgar-  
ming.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix D.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Ancient Khotan*, i. p. 477; ii. Pl. LXXX.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. K.S. 009, 0013-15, 0026.

<sup>4</sup> This is the correct form of the name instead of 'Mogom-ing', wrongly shown in the map from the surveyor's record.