

of the Hīnayāna school and were replaced by a more modern composition appropriate to the superior claims of the Mahāyāna development, or, again, to make room for a picture to gratify a generous donor. This is pure supposition. The useful deduction is that these palimpsests help to support the assumption of a considerable period of development of the art.

The paintings represented by the accompanying reproductions are selections from those recovered by Sir Aurel Stein during his several expeditions into Chinese Turkeṣtān in the years 1900–16. They may be conveniently grouped geographically under two heads; those from sites to the south of the great Taklamakān Desert and those from the north. Within the first of these groups are sites lying along the old Silk Route between China and the West, Farhād-Bēg-yailaki, Balawaste, Khādalik, and Mīrān. The sites on the 'Route of the North' are Karakhōja, Toyuk, and Bezeklik, all in the Turfān district.¹ Chronologically the paintings extend over a period of several centuries. Period, locality, racial complexities, theological and ritualistic divergencies have impressed their varied influences on subject, mode of expression, and craftsmanship.

Well-defined styles mark respectively predominant Indian and Chinese inspiration. Others combine in varying degree the influences of both. South of the desert where Indian qualities predominate Persian influence intrudes. In the north, Chinese characteristics are modified by Tibetan, Uigur, and perhaps others. The factor common to all the compositions, although variously expressed, is the Buddhist legend; but the rich possibilities offered by Hindu and Tantric importations stimulated the imagination of Chinese and Tibetan artists, who were probably more concerned with the stronger attraction of the decorative possibilities than with the spiritual sense which inspired the earlier Indian renderings. While all are linked together by the common bond of one basic religion the manner of expression differs widely. Examination of the great mass of mural paintings brought to light by Grünwedel, von Lecoq, Stein, Pelliot, and other archaeologists in the course of their investigations of the many Buddhist shrines surviving in Chinese Turkeṣtān reveals a bewildering diversity of style and treatment. This is not surprising having regard to the complex social and political conditions prevailing in that region during the period covered by the existing examples of painting—roughly, seven centuries—and even long before. The dominant power had passed from one to another of races differing in ideals and

¹ See Sketch Map, plate D.