

PLATE XII
PAINTINGS FROM BEZEKLIK

Bez. i. A-D

As the plan shows, this fragment comes from the back of the partially destroyed statue-base standing in the cella. It represents part of a canopy and Bodhi tree, with a group of *devatās* looking towards it.

The supporting frame of the canopy is the dark red-brown band with yellow edges and studs, with terminal fleur-de-lis palmettes at the ends. Above the band is a group of three bell-shaped, striated domes, doubtless representing jewels, each surmounted by a flame finial. From the lower edge of the frame hangs an elaborate valance consisting of a double row of V-shape tabs in front of a narrow band of grey and white vertical stripes edged with silver guttae. Behind these are draped two rich red festooned cloths edged with larger guttae; and in front of each cloth hangs a festooned golden band carrying at its centre a large golden boss or rosette with four small ball-jewels disposed round it. At each of the upper ends of the gold bands is a pale-green ball-jewel and a pair of jewels lies midway between. From the fleur-de-lis terminals of the canopy band depend tassel-shaped pleats of cloth, each with a central pleat composed of imbricated V-shape tabs of many colours. A similar pleat hangs in the centre. Growing from below is a tree bearing great daisy-like whorls of long green leaves with pink peony centres, which partly encircle the canopy. A frieze of festooned red cloth with pleats and bows, and trimmed with silver guttae, is arranged along the top. All this complicated arrangement of drapery represents similar adornments in actual materials used in Buddhist shrines. Considerable remains of such hangings were found by Sir Aurel Stein in one of the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas.¹ They are mostly of silk, and the little guttae are real silver. It is probable that the materials were used to drape a real baldachino, erected over the cult statue that stood in most of the shrines, and that the painting is just a pictorial presentation of such drapery.

Below the frieze the *devatās* are grouped in rows of two each. Whether in this plate they are standing or sitting, as in Bez. i. H, I, plate XIII, or kneeling, as in Bez. i. M, N, is not clear, but they all seem devout and attentive to the discourse presumably being delivered by the Teacher (missing). Variety is given to the figures by differences in complexion, coiffure, and nimbus. All but one wear hand-

¹ See *Serindia*, vol. IV, plates CIX, CX.