

PLATE XVIII
PAINTINGS FROM BEZEKLIK

Bez. iii. S-U

FROM the south-west corner of the outer west wall of the cella. The Buddha figure, with elaborate vesica and nimbus, stands with each foot on a separate lotus, his left hand raised in *vitarka-mudrā* and the right resting lightly on the loop of his garland. His heavy-lidded eyes are rather downcast with eyebrows drawn each in a single black line over red, meeting in the centre and the red continuing downwards to contour the nose. There is no outline to the lower lid but the whites of the eyes were painted white. A small moustache is shown as a fancifully scrolled thin black line painted over a slightly broader grey one. On the forehead is a small red circular *tilaka*. The grey-black hair has a closely scalloped edge of red next the forehead, and a high basin-shaped *uṣṇīṣa* with a small fan-shaped jewel at its base. The shading colour of the pale flesh has faded away.

Between thumb and first finger of the left hand a small web is indicated, criss-crossed with red to give it the texture of the web between the toes of a goose. Although this is claimed to be one of the distinguishing attributes of the Buddha, it probably owes its origin to a popular misinterpretation of the occurrence in sculpture of the strengthening web of stone or stucco, reserved by the sculptor as a safeguard against the accidental breaking of spread fingers.

Robe and under-garments are of the regulation kind, and the garland here is very fine. Between the elaborate links composed of golden disks, triple leaves, and jewels are connecting strings of small beads. Details of the tassel are more clearly visible in plates XVII and XXII.

Vesica and nimbus have outer borders of repeating Chinese cloud scrolls, and the field, painted with long zigzag bands of changing colours, producing something of the effect of oil on water, indicates the effulgent prismatic rays of light that streamed with dazzling brilliancy from the Master's body.

The lotus flowers under the feet have little resemblance to reality, but, in common with most of these blossoms in Bezeklik paintings, they are a composite invention of Chinese inspiration. The shading of the petals has the quality of embroidery, to which reference has already been made.¹ But whether the painter borrowed the treatment from the embroiderer or vice versa is not determinable.

¹ See p. 64.