

PLATE XXIII
PAINTINGS FROM BEZEKLIK

Bez. iv. A-C

THIS comes from the back of the altar or cult figure in the cella. It is a fragment of wall surface, enriched by a diapered arrangement of rectangles containing seated Buddha figures in varied colourings, and, at the top, a frieze consisting of three horizontal bands of ornament.

The top band of the frieze suggests a cornice decorated with a stylized acanthus leaf motive, running horizontally, with the midrib on the central line and the sides of the leaf folded over to meet, forming a sort of flattened sheath. The leaf is shaded and high lights are added on the edges of the serrations. This motive is repeated in alternate blue and purple-brown colouring, a chevron band dividing the repeats. It has a Sasanian character and occurs, slightly modified, in medieval illuminated manuscripts of the West.

The next band represents a row of mutules, drawn in perspective. The end face of each mutule is ornamented with three little disks, the centre green and the others red, enclosed in a rectangle. The under surface is divided longitudinally, half grey and half brown. On the soffit of the spaces between the mutules are shaded pink half-rosettes; and the metopes, at the rear of the spaces, are green. The Hellenistic character of this band is obvious.

The third band has a repeating, trefoil leaf, half green and half yellow, against a pink ground through which runs a central horizontal yellow stem, behind the leaves. This occurs in Western illuminated work and in stained glass, and has a distinctly Gothic character.

The wall surface below is divided by white lines into equal rectangles, each containing a Buddha figure in *dhyāni mudrā*, hands clasped in lap, seated on a *padmāsana*, with vesica and nimbus and a small canopy of drapery or foliage. The rectangles are so arranged that the sequence of the three colours of the respective robes follows the same order in both horizontal and vertical directions. Above the brown-robed figure is always a red canopy with a yellow fringe; the others have trees behind them. Background and halo colours are suitably varied.

This repetition of the Buddha, very widely used in most Central Asian shrines, besides its spiritual value comparable to that accruing from the repetition of spoken