

PLATE XXVII
PAINTING FROM BEZEKLIK

Bez. xii. A-I

THIS large picture, II feet 10 inches high by 18 feet in length, was removed from the inner end of the south-east wall. At the end of the cella was originally a kind of altar, upon which lay, as on a couch, the recumbent effigy of the departed Buddha—after the attainment of Parinirvāṇa—his head directed towards the west, or, if the orientation of Afrāz-gul's plan is correctly indicated, the south-west. This effigy was doubtless modelled in mud plaster, and had long before been destroyed.

At the bottom of the extremely interesting right-hand section, A to C, the figure seated in meditation is probably the disciple Mahā Kassapa, who would thus be at the feet of the Buddha. There is a calm serenity expressed in this figure, as of all doubts removed and complete composure of conscience attained. His thin grey moustache indicates that he is advanced in years; and his smooth, unwrinkled face that his life has been 'void of cares and strife'. He comes now to keep vigil at the feet of the departed Master. Deep in meditation, he is oblivious of the noisy demonstrations in progress behind him. Although he is clearly Chinese, the whole conception and design of the figure calls to mind some of those of the early Italian painters, but with less of their Byzantine rigidity. There are qualities in this figure such as are not found in any other of our Central Asian paintings. The correct proportions, easy and expressive pose, the delicate contouring of the simple white drapery with its graceful, flowing lines, the conscientious observance of the manner in which the discreetly placed yellow bands follow the folds, all together express the quality of an artist of a different calibre from those responsible for the surrounding work, or, indeed, for any of the other pictures in the collection.

The group of figures above, probably designed by the artist of the Mahā Kassapa, but not executed by him, is full of interest. The loudly lamenting, emaciated old disciple in Buddhist robes is eloquent of unrestrained, vociferous grief; one hand at his ear in a pose common to those who would concentrate their yells, and the other curling itself in nervous action at his knee. His rheumy, wide-open eyes glare despairingly from his tear-sodden face into a future void of all but immeasurable desolation. The two ash-smearred, well-nourished *sādbus*, with