

at the hands of iconoclast Muhammadan visitors. During recent years they had been exposed to further damage from local people, who in vandal fashion cut out small pieces for sale to Europeans. The risk of further destruction in the near future was only too obvious. Careful systematic removal therefore presented the only means under existing conditions of saving as many characteristic specimens as possible of these fine remains of Buddhist pictorial art as developed in Central Asia (Fig. 120). For this long and difficult task I could fortunately utilize the trained skill and manual experience of my 'handy-man', Naik Shamsuddin. Valiantly helped by Afrazgul Khan, he successfully accomplished it in close on two months of continuous hard work. Carefully drawn plans had been prepared for their guidance.

The safe packing of the fresco panels, which filled in the end over a hundred large cases, was carried out in strict accordance with the technical methods I had first applied in the case of the wall paintings from the Miran temples. I cannot describe here how these large panels of friable mud plaster were secured against damage on their long journey to India with the result that, in spite of the risks implied by transport on camels, yaks and ponies over a total distance of close on 3000 miles and across passes up to a maximum of more than 18,000 feet, they reached their destination safely. The setting up of the Bezeklik frescoes in the building erected for their accommodation at New Delhi has taken up most of such time as my artist friend and assistant, Mr. F. H. Andrews, had, during the years 1921-28, been free to devote to the arrangement of the antiquities brought back from my third expedition.

Meanwhile, about Christmas I was able to pay a rapid