

Fresco
decoration
of outside
walls.

The decoration of the outside of the cella walls consisted mainly of narrow fresco bands about five inches high, containing a succession of miniature representations of Bodhisattvas or Arhats seated in the 'Dhyāna-mudrā' attitude, and coarsely painted on backgrounds of different colours. In the same manner the colours of halos and robes alternated between red, yellow, and white. The whole of this decoration, which Plate III shows on the east and south sides, was in all probability produced by means of stencils. The same kind of decoration was also found on the inside of the low extant portion of the north passage wall. Amidst these conventional designs there appeared on the outside of the cella wall facing south a fresco which, though much effaced, attracted my interest as evidently representing some sacred legend, perhaps of a local character. It is just visible in Plate III to the left in the shadow. It showed three rows of youths riding Bactrian camels or else dappled horses, four or five in each row, each holding a cup in his outstretched right hand, while above one of the riders a bird is swooping down on this offering. The popularity of the subject is attested by my subsequent discovery in other shrines of the site of the well-preserved painted tablet D. VII. 5 (Plate LIX), and of the panel D. x. 5 (see Plate LXII), on both of which a similar scene is figured⁶.

Frescoes on
passage wall
of D. II.

The walls enclosing the passage had suffered badly on all sides, and only of the southern wall did enough remain to show portions of the frescoes with which its inner face had been decorated. There were the feet and lower drapery of two life-size figures, each standing upon an open lotus, and surrounded by a vesica; below them ran a decorative frieze in which lotuses floating in the water and small human figures, perhaps meant for Nāgas, in a worshipping attitude at the feet of sacred personages above, could still be distinguished. Plate III shows the feet of the life-size standing figure to the right with a portion of the frieze below, and on the left the figure of a small seated Buddha filling the triangular space left above the frieze between the lower portions of the two large vesicas. I succeeded in removing safely the piece of painted plaster, D. II. 08, containing the latter part of the fresco, which has accordingly been reproduced with its original colours in Plate LVIII. It shows a Buddha or Bodhisattva in a dark red robe seated in the attitude of argumentative discourse (*nyāya-mudrā*) with crossed bare feet.

Inscriptions
below
frescoes.

The short inscription painted beneath contains six characters in the peculiarly cursive Brāhmī which appears in other inscriptions found at Dandān-Uiliq, and also in certain paper documents from the same site to be discussed hereafter⁷. They have been read by Dr. Hoernle as *dvī pī sā dām śo dā*, and are presumably in the same early Eastern Irānian dialect which Dr. Hoernle's researches have demonstrated to be the language of those documents. The other fresco piece which could be removed from the same ruined wall, D. II. 13, has also, notwithstanding its very friable condition, survived the long journey without serious damage. It shows the feet of the life-size figure to the left standing upon an open lotus and between them an inscription in seventeen cursive Brāhmī characters, some of them rendered indistinct by the peeling off of the painted surface⁸. Here, too, the language seems to be the previously mentioned Eastern Irānian dialect, but no interpretation can be attempted. A third short inscription, in cursive Brāhmī characters, rendered almost wholly illegible by the rubbing off of the paint, was found below two small seated figures which occupied a position close to the ground near the south-east corner of the passage. Finally it may be mentioned that the small piece of painted plaster, D. T. 016 (see Plate LVIII), showing traces of Brāhmī characters which was among the objects

⁶ See below, sec. vi.

⁷ See below, sec. v.

⁸ The reading with which Dr. Hoernle has kindly fur-

nished me is: *bya ja ga ri ja sho bha yi ? re mā pyā da ?*
s(?) ? ?. Doubtful characters are marked by ?.