

Subjects of  
mural  
paintings.

The wall-paintings from the passage and chamber, all executed in tempera over clay plaster thickly mixed with straw, have been completely reproduced in Plates CXXV, CXXVI, and specimens of them in colour also in Plate CXXIV. A detailed description of them all will be found in the List below. Plate CXXV shows the continuous series, Mi. xiii. 5-9, recovered from the north wall of the chamber. It presents to us, in two scenes separated by a yellow band, Buddhist monks grouped before a teacher and a row of other monks retired within rock-caves in the forest and writing sacred texts. Taking into account the direction followed in the course of the Pradakṣiṇā, it is obvious that these scenes were intended to be viewed from left to right, and further that the scenes on the west wall (Mi. xiii. 11, 12) precede them, while those on the east wall (Mi. xiii. 1-4) follow them.<sup>5</sup> The paintings on the east wall (Plate CXXVI), which continue those of the north wall just mentioned, are divided into three scenes, each marked off from its neighbour by a yellow band. The scene on the left shows an aged monk holding pen and Pōthī leaf, with young monks kneeling before him and a celestial being, probably a Gandharvī, floating down from the sky and scattering flowers. In the middle scene we see another aged teacher faced by adoring disciples and with a Gandharvī descending from above. The right scene represents a Buddhist monk floating upwards on a cloud, while below five young monks and three haloed divinities kneel in adoration. Finally, in a recess spared from the east wall and facing north, we have a narrow panel (Mi. xiii. 1) that represents two Bodhisattvas kneeling one above the other. The panel Mi. xiii. 11, from the corresponding recess of the west wall, shows above a monk and below a Bodhisattva kneeling. The adjoining portion of the painting on the west wall was almost completely lost, and the same was the case with the one which must have occupied the north-west corner. But of the scene depicted in the middle a fragment survived, Mi. xiii. 12 (Plate CXXVI). This shows on the left a young monk doing *pūjā* to a seated teacher wearing a yellow robe. From above a monk is seen sweeping down carried by clouds, while in the foreground on the right there kneels a boy gaily dressed, probably the last of a row of worshippers, now lost, facing to the right.

Panels illus-  
trate sacred  
story.

That the whole series of panels was meant to illustrate one and the same sacred story is highly probable; but its identification must be left to a competent iconographic expert. The panels of the east wall suggest that the story ended with the translation of two aged 'Masters of the Law' to some Buddhist heaven as Arhats or Bodhisattvas. Perhaps it is they who are represented in the two divine figures of the last panel, Mi. xiii. 1. Rough as the work on the whole is, it is effective by its boldness, and that in spite of the limited range of the colours. Considering the very poor light of the chamber—I could find no trace of windows—the want of careful drawing and of general attention to details is perhaps scarcely surprising. Nevertheless a certain power of characterization is displayed, especially in the heads of the old monks. That these wall-paintings are much later than the period which produced the moulds for the rilievo decoration previously discussed can scarcely be doubted. A more definite indication of the chronological limits may be left to those scholars who have had occasion to study the pictorial remains of Kuchā and Turfān in full detail.

Paintings  
probably of  
Uigur  
period.

Some reason for attributing them to the Uigur period may be found in the fresco fragment, Mi. xviii. 0014 (Plate CXXVI), the only other piece of wall-painting recovered by me at the site,<sup>6</sup> and also, perhaps, in a curious incidental feature. I mean the position in which pens and Pōthī leaves are held by the writing monks of the scenes on the north and west walls. As explained in the

<sup>5</sup> The numbers given to the different panels merely mark the order in which they were removed from the walls. These numbers, with the help of the inset plan of Pl. 53, show also the exact position originally occupied by the various

panels. But they have no bearing upon the interpretation of the scenes, which must proceed from left to right and therefore in the reverse sense to the numerical order.

<sup>6</sup> See below, p. 1199.