

birds, or evil spirits ; but neither theory has ever seemed satisfactory ; and in the streamers of the Tun-huang banners, as Mr. Littlejohn perceived, was a much more plausible explanation of their origin. They are a survival. And other details in the Japanese (originally Chinese) system of mounting could be explained, he suggested, by a reference to this forgotten origin.

II

The pictorial treasures brought away from Tun-huang by Sir Aurel, and now divided between the Indian Government and the British Museum, consist of votive paintings (mostly on silk, though a certain number are on paper) of various sizes, some being as much as six or seven feet high ; of a long series of small banners on silk and larger banners on linen ; of one or two magnificent specimens of embroidery, the finest of which is reproduced (Pls. xxxiv and xxxv) ; of outline drawings, and of woodcuts.

The present publication is intended to illustrate the specimens which have most importance for the study of Eastern art.

The paintings and drawings, with a few unimportant exceptions, are all of Buddhist inspiration. At first sight the limitation of scope and the repetition of similar themes may give an impression of monotony. Closer study reveals a remarkable variety. This variety is due to differences of style, which are accounted for partly by the different dates, still more by the different localities at which they were produced, partly by the very varying degrees of skill in the painters who produced them. Being all found in one place, the paintings might be supposed to be all the product of a single local school. But this is certainly not the case, as a brief examination shows at once. There are specimens (of little account as art) which are purely Indian in style and probably Nepalese ; there are examples of the well-defined Tibetan type of Buddhist picture ; there are paintings which are entirely Chinese ; and there are, lastly, a number which contain Indian, Chinese, and possibly Tibetan elements in varying proportions, but are in an intermediate style and may safely be held to be the product of local schools of Chinese Turkestan, and of the region which, on the east, joins it to China proper.

Until a few years ago, scarcely anything was known in Europe of Buddhist painting beyond the famous frescoes of Ajanta in India and Buddhist paintings by Japanese masters, of which the frescoes in the Horiuji Temple at Nara are among the oldest and most celebrated. It was known that the Japanese modelled their work closely on Chinese tradition ; and a few Chinese Buddhist paintings of early periods are preserved in Japan ; but while an extensive series of ancient Japanese *Butsu-yé* exists, corresponding specimens from China are very rare indeed. And if the early Buddhist art of China was little known, still less was known of the intermediate links in the tradition which passed on from India to China through Turkestan. But now, through successive explorations and discoveries, the story of Buddhist art and the phases of its progress eastwards through Asia are fairly plain and familiar. And some of the most illuminating and important documents have been supplied by the discoveries of Sir Aurel Stein.

In the paintings with which we are dealing, the Indian element is obviously very strong, just as 'The Caves of the Thousand Buddhas', where they were found, were hollowed out of the cliff in obedience to immemorial Indian tradition : we are reminded at once of the frescoed caves of Ajanta. But there are other elements besides the Indian, as we shall see.

How did Buddhism penetrate into Central Asia ? From India proper it travelled by way of the extreme north-west frontier, the valley of Peshawar, then known as the kingdom of Gandhara ; thence to the countries lying north, and so eastwards by the great trade-route across the desert to China. Gandhara is the first stage of this long journey : and it was in Gandhara that the Buddhist art of the Further East, as we know it, was first formulated. The now well-known sculptures of Gandhara, a fine series of which may be seen in the British Museum, date from about the first century of our era to about the sixth. They represent a late Hellenistic tradition put to the service of the Indian religion. It was in