

Gandhāra that the types of Buddhist art became fixed. It was there that the type of Śākya-muni himself was first invented, or rather adapted from the ideal forms of Hellenistic sculpture. For some centuries after the Buddha's death, Indian artists had always refrained from representing the image of the Lord.

The Hellenistic element, apparent in poses, in drapery, in decorative motifs like the acanthus-ornament, tends to become submerged in the later phases of the art, though something of it still persists recognizably in the Buddhist art of remote Japan, even to-day. At a desert site of Khotan, the little kingdom lying at the southern edge of the Taklamakān Desert, beyond the mountains on the north-eastern frontier of Ladākh and Kashmir, Sir Aurel Stein found on his first expedition (1900-1) the remains of settlements abandoned to the encroaching sand about the third century A.D. Among these remains were heaps of letters and documents written in early Indian script and language on wooden tablets, tied with string and sealed; and in most cases the seal was a Greek seal, engraved with a figure of Athene, Heracles, or other deity. Again, at Mīrān, a site near Lop-nōr and much further east, Sir Aurel, on his second expedition, discovered Buddhist shrines adorned with frescoes of about the fourth century A.D. painted in the style of late classical tradition.

Fascinating as are these traces of Greece and the West in the midst of the Asian deserts, the influence of Hellenism was not profound or formative. India was the main influence on the culture of the cities once flourishing along the chain of oases in the deserts west of China, Buddhism the great civilizing factor, and Gandhāra the source from which the local schools of art drew their inspiration. Gandhāra art was itself not without some admixture from Persian sources; and Iranian motives of decoration are found in these desert sites, as they are found in China itself, just as some of the Tun-huang manuscripts are written in the Iranian dialect called Sogdian. The art of Turkeṣtān is full of mixed influences, the reflection of its civilization.

And what of China? For during the second century B.C. and the two centuries following China pursued a policy of political and military expansion westward, with a view to opening up trade-routes, consolidating her frontiers and protecting them from the ravages of the Huns and other tribes; and Eastern Turkeṣtān became a Chinese protectorate. Though afterwards China's hold became weakened and her power receded, in the seventh century A.D., under an Emperor of the great T'ang dynasty, the whole region came again under Chinese government, and the Empire's political sphere of influence was extended as far as the borders of Persia and the shores of the Caspian. But Chinese influence seems to have been confined mainly to administration, and to have affected but little the culture of the people, though traces of it are discernible in their arts and industries, ever more marked as we go further east.

This way passed the old great high road between east and west, by which the Chinese silks were carried overland to Antioch and the Roman Empire. It was a highway for commerce, but also for ideas and religions. And the early centuries of our era were marked by an extraordinary ferment of mystical beliefs both in east and west. While Christianity and Mithraism were contending for supremacy in the Roman Empire, Buddhism was making its victorious progress eastwards. But it was no longer the simple ethical doctrine preached by Gautama. Mahāyāna Buddhism, as the later development of Buddhism is called—the Great Vehicle, as opposed to the Hīnayāna, or Small Vehicle, of the original doctrine—was first formulated about the first century A.D. It was no longer the salvation of the individual which was the aim of the devout, but the salvation of the whole world, towards which the Bodhi-sattvas strive unceasingly out of their boundless love for every sentient being. The Bodhi-sattvas in this new phase of Buddhism became more and more the object of popular worship. They are either men who, having won the right to enter Buddhahood, refuse that peace for the sake of suffering mankind, or else celestial beings who assume a human form. Of this last order of beings is Avalokiteśvara, whom the Chinese know as Kuan-yin, and the Japanese as Kwannon; the favourite object of adoration in Mahāyāna Buddhism. He appears in art both in male and female form. In later art the female form is almost universal, but in the Tun-huang paintings the male form is predominant. Avalokiteśvara is the spiritual son of Amitābha, the impersonal Buddha, the Light of the Enlightened; and Amitābha is said to have created