

a Paradise in the West, where souls who believe in him may be born and rest for a long age, or in popular belief for ever. Śākyamuni, we note, has no longer the supreme position, though sometimes he is painted as reigning over a Paradise, or, as in the large embroidery-picture (Pl. xxxiv), standing on the Vulture Peak, the scene of his last teaching.

As Avalokiteśvara is incarnate Pity, so, among other great Bodhisattvas, Mañjuśrī embodies the Spirit of Wisdom, Samantabhadra stands for the power of the Church, Kṣitigarbha is the breaker of the powers of Hell and the illuminator of its darkness. Bhaiṣajyarāja is the lord of medicine; and Maitreya is the Buddha that is to come.

Besides the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, the Lokapālas or Demon Kings who guard each one of the Four Quarters of the World are frequent figures in art. These are survivals of primitive demon-worship adopted into Buddhism.

The subjects of the Tun-huang paintings are, then, single figures of Bodhisattvas, especially of Avalokiteśvara, or of the Lokapālas; small pictures of scenes from Gautama's life, or the Jātakas, stories of his lives in previous incarnations; and representations of the Western Paradise. This last subject is sometimes highly elaborated, with an immense number of figures of the blest grouped in pavilions and terraces built about a lotus lake. Flowers are rained through the air, and celestial beings dance and sing for the delight of the souls dwelling in the Happy Land of Amitābha's creation.

All this carries us far indeed from the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path—the simple doctrine in which Śākyamuni taught the means of Salvation here on earth. Much of this later Buddhism was doubtless an accretion from other faiths with which it came in contact on its progress through Asia. Amitābha may be a borrowing from the worship of Mithras; and certain of the Bodhisattvas may have been originally deified heroes of lands into which Buddhism made its way. In Eastern Turkestan, Manichaeism, the religion founded by the Persian Mani in the third century A.D., found a home; and at Turfān—one of the oases which have been explored—Manichaeans, Buddhists, and Christians were living peaceably side by side.

For the study of religion, then, the art found in the various sites on the borders of the Taklamakān and Lop deserts is of extraordinary interest. But, as art, it is of a local and provincial type, and though often of considerable merit, it nowhere rises beyond a certain level.

### III

But at Tun-huang we are within the frontiers of China proper; and Chinese art during the T'ang period, seventh to tenth century A.D., was at its grandest height of power. The extraordinary interest of these paintings is that, though a great number of them are, as we might expect, obviously provincial productions (e.g. Pls. xxiv and xxvi), others belong to the central tradition of Chinese Buddhist painting; and as scarcely any such paintings of the T'ang period are known to exist, the importance of this group, for the study of Chinese art, can hardly be overestimated.

How do we know that these paintings belong to that central tradition? We know it from the early Buddhist paintings of Japan, of which noble masterpieces (some perhaps actually Chinese) are preserved in the Japanese temples. Even if we did not know that the early Japanese painters founded their style entirely on the T'ang masters, the Tun-huang pictures, sometimes so singularly close to the Japanese Buddhist art of the same period, would prove it.

Plate III reproduces rather more than the left-hand half of a large painting, which itself seems to be only the upper portion of a still larger composition. The original offers extreme difficulties to photography; and though the reproduction is more successful than might have been anticipated, it is necessary to study the original to appreciate the delicacy of the drawing, especially of the faces of the Bodhisattvas. The serene grandeur of the design is enhanced by a pervasion of grace in the delineation of every form. Here, surely, is the hand of a master. Rivalling this in beauty is the large painting of which a