

Among the Tun-huang paintings there is at least one (Pl. xxxviii) which seems to be in an earlier style than the rest. This painting of Buddha attended by divinities of the Planets comes nearer to the style we find in Ku K'ai-chih, both in its finer, drier line, in its proportions of the figure, its generally more primitive aspect, and its comparative freedom from Indian influence. The bannered chariot may be compared with the chariot in the Ku K'ai-chih picture in the Freer Collection. And yet this picture is dated with a year corresponding to A.D. 897, actually later than the 'Four Forms of Avalokiteśvara'. Similarly a woodcut, dated A.D. 947, is much ruder and more primitive-looking than another dated A.D. 868. These facts and comparisons warn us of the danger of attempting to assign dates too confidently. It may well be that the paintings which are actually the earliest have the least primitive aspect. Another example which has an archaic air is the small picture of Kṣitigarbha enthroned, on blue silk (Pl. xxxix); but here, too, we may doubt whether the primitive features may not be due to provincial style preserving old tradition rather than to actual antiquity. At the same time it must be remembered that dates going as far back as the fifth century A.D. are found among the manuscripts heaped in the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas; there is no reason therefore why some of the paintings should not be considerably older than the earliest dated specimen.

One or two paintings in the collection seem to have been added to the hidden store at a later date. Such is the painting reproduced on Plate xxxviii of Avalokiteśvara conducting a soul. This is exceptionally well preserved, and both the style and the costume of the woman point to a date more recent than late T'ang. It is a painting of great beauty.

We may now return to the question of the way in which Indian subject-matter was fused in Chinese style.

As we have seen, the narrative-pictures, depicting episodes from the Jātakas, were originally painted in a purely native manner, the whole theme being bodily translated into Chinese terms; and this tradition persisted, and even in Japan the Buddha legend is given a Chinese dress. But with the devotional pictures it was different. As early as the fifth century, Chinese artists, as we know from the sculptures at Yün-kang, were copying the Gandhāra types of the Bodhisattvas, though, as M. Petrucci has observed, the Gandhāra tradition appears at Yün-kang 'à l'état de débris, comme une chose finissante'. We may suppose that the copying of Gandhāra models went on for a time side by side with the complete translation of Indian story into Chinese formula. But by degrees the Chinese genius asserted itself; and probably the advent of Wu Tao-tzū and a few other men of genius gave a fresh character to the Buddhist art of T'ang.

The Chinese genius is strong just where the Indian genius is weak. The bent of the Indian artist is to pour out his emotions and imaginings in a torrent, shaping them to form and colour as they come; he delights in exuberance and a fine excess; he cannot bear to leave a corner of his space unfilled. If we compare the Ajañā frescoes with the best of the Tun-huang paintings, say with that partly reproduced on Plate III, we feel a different instinct at work. The Indian painters draw their figures and animals with an admirably expressive power and sense of life; they have freshness of vision, and spontaneous vigour, and directness of emotion. And it is part of their spontaneity that in grouping figures together they accept the accidental appearances of form, with a result that is often restless to the eye. In the Tun-huang painting we feel that the artist obeys an instinct which controls the complex lines of many grouped figures into a continuous reposeful harmony; a subtle relation between form and form and between group and group is set up; these relations rather than delineation of objects engross the painter. There is a sense of movement in the passage of the great Bodhisattva on his pacing elephant, preceded and attended by blessed beings, but it is as if they moved to music; and the sinuous streaming of the cloud on which a cluster of happy souls is borne enhances this effect of serene and rhythmic motion. This subtle unifying instinct of design inheres in the Chinese genius.

Look, again, at the small paintings of Jātaka scenes at the side of Plate I, and note even there the use of spacing. In contrast with Indian artists, the Chinese understand to the full the power of suggestion and the value of reticence. They know how to foil forms in move-