

The bottom corners of the Paradise are filled by the twelve armed Kings, the generals of Bhaiṣajyaguru, who act as protectors of the Law. They kneel six a side upon small terraces with gangways sloping down into the lake. They are treated in appearance and dress like Lokapālas, but carry no distinctive weapons. Their hands are joined in adoration or else hold sacred vessels, jewels, &c.

Turning to the sides of the picture, we see the main terrace flanked by two-storied pavilions, both of distinctively Chinese architecture, and close by them trees carrying rich foliage but no flowers. The upper chambers of the pavilions are open and show small Bodhisattvas sitting on railings, pulling up reed-blinds or otherwise enjoying their leisured life. The lower chambers contain only unoccupied lotus seats and appear to have just been abandoned by two subsidiary Buddhas, who are represented as advancing, each with two attendant Bodhisattvas, on to projecting wings of the main terrace. The dress of the subsidiary Buddhas is exactly that of the presiding Bhaiṣajyaguru, of whom M. Petrucci takes them to be repetitions, and the expression of their faces is similarly mild and pensive.

The marginal scenes, of which Plate I shows the better preserved ones on the right side, have been identified by M. Petrucci as representing incidents of the legend of Bhaiṣajyaguru's last incarnation as a Bodhisattva. Without reference to the text of the Chinese Tripiṭaka which records this legend, but of which the translation prepared by M. Petrucci is not at present accessible, no interpretation of the different scenes can be attempted here. Judging from the inscribed cartouches, at least five scenes are represented in the predella portion actually reproduced in our Plate. That the treatment of the figures, the dresses, the landscape is in purely Chinese style is an observation uniformly applying to all side scenes to be found in 'Maṇḍala' pictures from the 'Thousand Buddhas', as well as to the banners representing episodes from Gautama Buddha's life-story (see Pls. XII, XIII, XXXVII). Mr. Binyon in his Introductory Essay (see above, p. 7) has discussed different possible explanations of the striking assertion of Chinese style and feeling in these scenes. Here it may suffice to draw attention to the skill with which the rapid movement of the animal figures appearing in our scenes is rendered, and to the clever use, observed elsewhere also, which is made of hill ranges and similar landscape features for dividing the several scenes into clearly marked compartments without sacrificing the effect of the whole as a connected story.

A combination of special qualities renders this painting of Bhaiṣajyaguru's Paradise one of the most impressive pictures in the Collection and proves it to be from the hand of a master. As Mr. Binyon happily puts it, we see in it 'delicate expressiveness of drawing combined with a glowing animation of varied colour. . . . The artist has been able to control his complex material and multitude of forms into a wonderful harmony, without any restlessness or confusion; and we are taken into an atmosphere of strange peace which yet seems filled with buoyant motion and floating strains of music.'

PLATE III

A CELESTIAL ASSEMBLAGE

THE observations just quoted apply with equal force to the large painting on silk (Ch. xxxvii. 004), of which Plate III reproduces a little more than the left-hand half on the scale of about one-half. The painting itself, which though incomplete on all sides still measures close on six feet across by five feet in height, represents but the upper portion of a much larger composition. Judging from what survives of the central figure in the lower broken part (see *Serindia*, Pl. LIX), the picture as a whole was meant for a 'Maṇḍala' of the thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara, the Kuan-yin of Chinese Buddhism. But the heavy band of rhomboidal ornament which, as seen near the lower edge of the Plate, passes behind the halo of this large central figure clearly marks off the divine assemblage in the upper portion from the rest as a well-defined theme by itself.