

Good and refined as the drawing is, especially in the faces and hands of Bodhisattvas and donatrices, we meet elsewhere with details which have not been highly finished. As in other paintings of this class, the prevailing colour is crimson on dull light green, with orange on the Bodhisattvas' robes and the tiles of the terrace, turquoise blue on the altar-cloth, &c.

PLATE VIII

AMITĀBHA'S PARADISE

THE painting (Ch. lviii. 0011), which this Plate reproduces on the scale of two-fifths, is a good specimen of a fairly numerous group of pictures which represent Amitābha's 'Western Paradise', or *Sukhāvātī*, as it is named in Sanskrit. It has lost the side scenes and its extreme top and bottom, but is otherwise well preserved. Though not as large as some representations of this, the most popular of Buddhist Heavens, nor quite as sumptuous in its pageantry, our painting yet well illustrates all the typical features of the series. The uniformity with which the general scheme is observed in these Sukhāvātī pictures of our Collection, more than a dozen in all, points to prolonged evolution before even the oldest of them was painted.

On the principal terrace we see the presiding Buddha, Amitābha, seated with his hand raised in the *vitarka-mudrā*. The Bodhisattvas seated on both sides, Avalokiteśvara to the right and Mahāsthāma to the left, make up the triad typical of Amitābha's Paradise as determined by inscribed representations and familiar from an early period also to Buddhism in Japan. Between them and in front, by the side of the altar, appears seated a host of lesser Bodhisattvas. The altar carries vessels with offerings and is draped with a valance decorated with triangular tabs and streamers; it is of interest as exactly corresponding to the large silk valances I recovered from the walled-up chapel.¹⁰ In the background above, partly screened by the elaborate canopies of the triad, are seen the celestial mansions in the shape of pavilions and towers of purely Chinese style.

A portion of the terrace projecting in front of the altar is occupied by a dancer and six musicians, to whose strains she performs. Here, too, the dancer's rhythmic movement is emphasized by the sinuous lines of the stole which she waves in her hands and by bands fluttering upwards from her head-dress. Mouth-organ, clappers, psaltery, flute, and two differently shaped lutes are the musical instruments played on. At the foot of the gangway descending to the water of the lotus lake is shown a figure suggesting a seated Bodhisattva as seen from the back. The lotus seat and the curling drapery of a stole are clearly recognizable. The bent arms seem to support some offering, perhaps like an Indian 'Dālī', as traces of red flowers and of leaves can be made out in the original.

Lotus flowers and rocks appear rising above the water. In the centre of the foreground is a black-tiled platform, on which are assembled a Garuḍa, peacock, crane, and some smaller bird resembling a duck but partly effaced. On either side of this platform there rises from the water a terrace bearing a subsidiary representation of Amitābha's triad. The pose of the Buddha is the same as in the main group above, but both the Bodhisattvas by his side are here shown with hands joined in adoration. This repetition of the divine triad in the bottom corners is very frequent in the pictures of Amitābha's Paradise. The representation of a newly born soul seated on a lotus and floating up the gangway which leads to each of these subsidiary groups is a pleasing addition to this conventional arrangement.

The workmanship of the painting is throughout careful and well finished. From a background of dull green crimson, orange-yellow and white stand out as the prevailing colours. The last is largely used on the decorated haloes and 'Padmāsana's', or lotus seats, as well as for the flesh of all attendant figures. The absence of black and blue is marked in the general colour scheme.

¹⁰ See *Serindia*, pp. 899 sq., 984 sq., Pls. CIX, CX.