

PLATE IX

LEGENDARY SCENES FROM A PAINTING OF MAITREYA'S PARADISE

THE scenes reproduced here, on half the scale of the original, are taken from the top and bottom portions of a large and well-preserved silk painting (Ch. lviii. 001) of Maitreya's Paradise. For a reproduction of the whole picture and for its special points of iconographic interest, as the only representation in our Collection of that famous Tuṣita Heaven in which the future Buddha of the present world period is supposed to reside, a reference to *Serindia* must suffice here.¹¹ The Chinese inscriptions which render the attribution of this Paradise to Maitreya certain (even though the Bodhisattva appears in it as a Buddha, a status which he is yet to attain) are taken from the text of the *Maitreya-vyākaraṇa-sūtra* and accompany legendary scenes shown in the top corners and along the bottom of the painting. These scenes, as seen in our Plate, are not formally separated from the Paradise proper, but merge into it at the bottom and are above only divided from it by a range of pine-clad mountains.

The inscriptions and the legendary scenes to which they refer were to have been interpreted in MM. Petrucci and Chavannes' separate volume in the *Mémoires concernant l'Asie orientale*.¹² The materials prepared for it by those lamented collaborators are not at present accessible to me, and in the absence of textual guidance the descriptive notes on the scenes must here be brief. In the scene above on the right we see three men in Chinese magisterial costume seated along a table on a terrace, while before them two men stand right and left of a large disc, provided with a tripod (?) and suggesting a metal mirror into which a third smaller figure appears to gaze. To the left, between two inscribed cartouches, are shown three men seated behind a table, the centre one being on a lotus seat. Their head-dress is the same black hat with broad flaps sticking out sideways which is worn by the three seated figures to the right and which, as stated above, is always found in the representations of donors on our tenth-century paintings.¹³ Still further to the left is depicted a husbandman in lobed and tailed cap, driving a plough before which are harnessed a dark bull or cow and a smaller whitish animal of the bovine species, apparently reluctant to move on.

In the left corner scene we see a personage in official dress seated on a small platform or throne before the gate of what seems to represent a walled palace. To the left of him a demon-like figure is shown striding, while on the right he is being approached by a group comprising a Buddha and two smaller figures of monkish disciples. A little to the right of this group stands a layman in adoring pose; above the whole there appears a dragon-like monster descending on a cloud. In the background to the right within the arched opening of a reed hut is seen a pair, apparently man and wife, seated on a low platform before which stands erect a lady wearing the wide-sleeved dress and the elaborate coiffure familiar from the donatrices of our tenth-century pictures.¹⁴

If the significance and interrelation of the top scenes at present escapes us we have less difficulty about the general interpretation of those at the bottom of the picture. On the right and left the scenes placed below the flanking terraces of the Paradise manifestly show conversions to the Buddhist Law. On the right is seen a personage elaborately dressed and obviously of high rank, who is seated upright on a square platform, with feet on a footstool, undergoing tonsure by a monk. Four men in secular costume, holding rolls of paper in their hands, stand behind him. Three others attend in front, one of them holding a wide dish to receive the cut hair and a second carrying a vase. In the background stands a groom holding three elaborately caparisoned horses. Their figures are well drawn with elegant small heads, broad shapely breasts, and slim legs. Two are white and one red. Their type closely recalls

¹¹ See *Serindia*, pp. 890, 1082 sq., Pl. LVIII, and M. Petrucci's notes in Appendix E, *ibid.*, p. 1408 sq.

¹² Cf. *Serindia*, pp. 835, 890, note 38.

¹³ See above, p. 17.

¹⁴ See, e. g., Plate XXII.