

A particularly interesting element is introduced into the celestial company by the six disciples ranged behind the triad, three a side in ascending tier. They all have the shaven heads of monks and plump solid features; but their alert faces are well individualized and the expression markedly varies, from the jovial smile of the second figure on the right to the serious and even severe look of the last on the left. It is specially regrettable here that, as in so many of our paintings, the cartouches above the different divine figures have not been filled in. The red lotus bud carried by the last disciple on the left and the priest's staff in the hand of the corresponding figure on the right do not help to identify them, nor do the cross-bars on their mantles. The haloes of all these figures, including those of the triad, are only outlined in narrow rings of red and white, the interior being shown as practically transparent—not a usual treatment.

Below Amitābha's lotus seat, and partly covering the front of its pedestal, is the panel for the dedicatory inscription, in the form of a stone slab with a low arched top, carried on the back of a tortoise. Unfortunately the dedication was never inscribed, and we are thus left without means for exactly dating this interesting picture. But very valuable help in this direction is afforded by what remains of the figures of the donors in the bottom corners. That of the man on the right is lost, except for the top of his cap. But that of the wife kneeling on the left is complete and a figure of great charm. It is manifestly a portrait, painted with considerable skill, and was deservedly chosen by M. Petrucci for full-size reproduction in the Vignette of the present publication.

The lady kneels on a mat, her hands holding a long-stemmed red flower. The pose and face admirably express pious devotion. The delicate treatment of the features distinctly recalls that of female heads in a silk painting, unfortunately very fragmentary, which I recovered in 1915 from a seventh-century Chinese tomb at Turfan. The lady's costume, with its pleated skirt high under the arms, small bodice with long narrow sleeves, and little cross-over shawl, as well as her hair plainly done in a small knot on the neck, represent a fashion distinctly older than that to be seen in the donatrices' figures of our earliest dated picture (see Pl. XVI) of A.D. 864. We find the same indications of an early date in the dresses and coiffures worn by the donors and donatrices in the silk painting Ch. XLVII. 001 (Pl. XI), which shares many peculiarities of our picture, and also in the undoubtedly ancient embroidery picture shown in Plates XXXIV, XXXV.¹⁶

This chronological observation lends special interest to a notable point of technique, the use of 'high lights' to bring out the modelling of the flesh, in addition to ordinary colour shading. This is very conspicuous in the faces of the monkish disciples, and equally striking also in most of the figures in Plate XI, but it cannot be traced elsewhere among our Ch'ien-fo-tung paintings. The western origin of this system of modelling has been duly emphasized by Mr. Binyon.¹⁷

PLATE XI

A PARADISE OF AMITĀBHA

IN this large and on the whole fairly preserved silk painting (Ch. XLVII. 001), reproduced on the scale of one-fourth, we have a Sukhāvātī scheme fully developed on lines which, while closely resembling those of the picture last discussed, differ from those of the usual Buddhist Paradise type. It shows us Amitābha and his two chief Bodhisattvas seated on lotus thrones rising from the Sukhāvātī lake, and on the terrace forming the foreground various celestial beings characteristic of Paradise scenes.

¹⁶ For details of the antiquarian evidence concerning the date of these pictures, cf. *Serindia*, pp. 885, 896.

¹⁷ See above, p. 9. Of my other pictorial 'finds' from Central Asia only the mural paintings of Mīrān, approxi-

mately dating from the third to fourth century A.D., show this use of 'high lights'; cf. *Serindia*, pp. 504, 508, Pls. XL-XLV.