

Amitābha, closely draped, raises his right hand in the *vitarka-mudrā*, while his left, mostly destroyed, is held against the breast. His flesh is yellow, as usual, his hair grey with outlines and close curls indicated in black as if copied from statuary. On either side of him is an elaborately decorated pillar with a flaming jewel at the top. Two trees with leaves as already described in Plate x rise behind him and support a canopy ornamented with rich floral scrolls. Two Apsaras sweep down on either side of it, just as seen in Plate x and the embroidery picture, Plate xxxiv.

Similar trees carrying many-tiered canopies rise over Avalokiteśvara seated on the left and Mahāsthāma on the right. Two attendant Bodhisattvas, in equally rich attire as theirs, stand by their sides with hands in varying poses. The flower-spotted materials of the Bodhisattvas' robes and the graceful figure of the attendant to Avalokiteśvara's right may be noted. At the back of the triad a wall of many-coloured marble blocks bounds the lake. In the air above descend Buddhas seated on clouds; cleverly drawn figures of naked infants, representing reborn souls, float with outspread stoles, while beribboned musical instruments symbolize harmonies pervading space.

On the lake swim ducks, emblems of happiness, and oval lotus buds rise enveloping infant souls. Inscriptions beside the lotuses describe the rank taken by the soul in its new life. There is no altar before the Buddha, as in other Paradise scenes, no dancer or musicians, no celestial mansions. But a sacred vessel is borne on a lotus from the water before Amitābha and small Bodhisattvas kneel on either side. In front of them again, on a wooden platform, are grouped a two-headed Garuḍa, a phoenix, duck, crane, and peacock.

On the terrace which fills the whole foreground are seated Bodhisattvas four a side and well spaced. By the rail in front are two half-naked infants, no doubt newly born souls, one advancing slowly, the other dancing or running. Both hold flowers or berries and have, like the infants in the sky, their heads shaved except for a two-lobed tuft of hair over the forehead and one over each ear.¹⁸ Between them and the Bodhisattvas are shown large flaming jewels on lotuses.

In the middle by the side of a slab, arched at the top and intended for a dedicatory inscription but left blank, are shown the small figures of the donors. On the right kneel two men with long belted coats and small lobed and tailed caps. Their attire bears close resemblance to the quasi-archaic dress in the Jātaka scenes as presented by our banners, and also to that in certain reliefs of the early Buddhist cave shrines of Yün-kang and Lung-mên.¹⁹ The costume and coiffure of the lady kneeling on the left agree exactly with those of the donatrix seen in the preceding Plate and the Vignette. As regards the chronological evidence which these details of attire afford, I may refer to my remarks on that Plate.²⁰

With the picture reproduced in Plate x our painting shares also a number of other characteristic peculiarities, such as the use of 'high lights' for the modelling of the flesh; the unobtrusiveness of the haloes, which are transparent and often shown only in outlines; the flower patterns spotting the materials of the robes, &c. On the other hand, striking differences of composition, such as the total absence of the celestial mansions in the background and the ample spacing of the figures, make it clear that we have here preserved a specimen of a Sukhāvati scheme developed independently of the orthodox type which prevails among our Ch'ien-fo-tung paintings, whether on silk or mural, and which has become stereotyped in Japan.

There is a general absence of vivid colours in our picture. Dull green, with grey and black for the tiled terrace in front, prevails in the background, and dull green, light pink or red, and greenish grey in the colouring of figures and accessories. This quiet and coolness of colouring and a certain emptiness of the background give an effect of air and space which such crowded compositions as the Paradise seen in Plates I, II lack. The drawing is free and rapid but rather rough in detail.

¹⁸ These two-lobed tufts of hair recall those shown on the heads of the angels and *putti* in the wall-paintings of the shrines excavated by me at Mirān; see *Serindia*,

Figs. 134, 138, 140; Plates XL, XLI.

¹⁹ Cf. *Serindia*, p. 850 sq.; also below, p. 23.

²⁰ See above, p. 21.