

century which illustrate various sacred images and shrines of Buddhist India. M. Foucher has conclusively proved that their painters, in all that concerns essential points, have always been at pains to reproduce faithfully the stereotyped models furnished by long-continued traditional imagery.³⁴

In what form our painter had received the types he thus conventionally reproduced is uncertain. But the clearly preserved Graeco-Buddhist style shows that they were indirectly derived from Gandhāra, and early transmission through Central Asia is obviously most probable. The question may be hazarded whether the votive object aimed at in the painting and its assumed prototype was not that of securing the religious merit which might have attached to an actual pilgrimage to those distant sacred sites. The drawing in mere outlines with little or scarcely any colour, similar to the technique of certain Khotanese mural paintings, and the perished state of whole portions of the silk seem to point to the painting being of early date.

PLATE XV

TWO FORMS OF AVALOKITEŚVARA

THE predominant share which the Bodhisattvas claim in popular Buddhist worship as developed under Mahāyāna influences is illustrated by the fact that about one-half of our Ch'ien-fo-tung paintings are devoted to their representation, whether singly or along with attendant divinities. However large may be in devout speculation the number of different Bodhisattvas, popular imagination had already in the North-Indian home of the Mahāyāna system been concentrated upon a small select group of Bodhisattvas. Among them Avalokiteśvara, the Bodhisattva of Mercy, occupies the foremost place, and the frequency of his representations among our Tun-huang paintings is just as marked as the popularity of his female manifestation, known to the Chinese as Kuan-yin, to the Japanese as Kwannon, the Goddess of Pity, is in modern Buddhist worship throughout the Far East.

The large and fairly well-preserved painting (Ch. xxxviii. 005), reproduced on the scale of one-third in Plate xv, presents two almost life-size figures of Avalokiteśvara standing erect and facing each other. Their outer hands are raised in the *vitarka-mudrā*, while the Bodhisattva on the left carries in the other hand a yellow flower, and the one on the right a flask and a willow sprig. These are well-known attributes of Avalokiteśvara.³⁵ Which of his many particular forms are intended may be determined from the inscribed cartouche above, of which no translation is as yet available.

The figures, drawn with much care and painted in a wealth of harmonious colours, reflect a certain grandeur of design which breaks through the hieratic conventions of pose and externals. Except for the oblique eyes these conventions are all unmistakably Indian in type and origin. But equally clear is the change, here seen in highly perfected technique, which their treatment has undergone by the eyes and hands of Chinese painters. We notice their distinctive touch quite as much in the grace and dignity of the features as in the mastery of sweeping line with which the rich robes of the Bodhisattvas are treated. The features are finely drawn and delicately shaded with pink; the ears are elongated and show hieratic convention in a particularly striking fashion. The fine drawing of the shapely hands curiously contrasts with the clumsy foreshortening of the feet.

Dress, coiffure, and jewellery are of the elaborate style, often displayed by our Bodhisattva banners;³⁶ but the ornamentation, though carefully treated in detail, is not overdone. On the front of the tiaras is shown Avalokiteśvara's Dhyāni-buddha, Amitābha. From lotus buds at their sides descend rainbow-coloured tassels. The garments comprise shawl-like stoles, lined with light green, under-ropes of Indian red, and long skirts of orange

³⁴ Cf. *Iconographie bouddhique*, i. 40 sqq.

³⁶ See Plates XIX, XXIX, XLI.

³⁵ For the willow-spray symbol cf. below, Plate XXIV.