

hue. A white girdle is held round the hips by a jewelled belt; its end hangs down in front of the skirt and is tied below in a butterfly knot. From a heavy gold necklet descend jewelled chains, which are gathered together by a large circular jewel at the waist, and then part again to loop up the skirt about the knees. A jewelled anklet seems to gather the end of the under-robe above the feet, and these in either figure are set upon a pair of open lotuses. On the outer sides of the figures gracefully drawn flowers and leaves are shown as if floating down gently through the air.

PLATE XVI

FOUR FORMS OF AVALOKITEŚVARA

THIS well-preserved large silk painting (Ch. lv. 0023), reproduced here on a scale of two-fifths, offers special interest.³⁷ It is the oldest exactly dated painting in the Collection, the dedicatory inscription below indicating the year corresponding to A.D. 864. It also combines in a curious fashion hieratic conventions of Indian origin, such as prevail in the row of four Avalokiteśvara figures ranged stiffly side by side in the upper half, with the more Chinese and more animate treatment of others in the lower half. There the Bodhisattvas Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī are represented in procession advancing towards each other on lotus seats carried by their respective 'Vāhanas', the white elephant with six tusks and the lion, and accompanied by their attendants, just as we have already seen them in the more sumptuous compositions of Plates III and IV. Samantabhadra has his hands raised in the *vitarka-mudrā* and Mañjuśrī in the pose of adoration. Their dress, ornaments, circular haloes, &c., as well as their *cortèges*, here limited to two lesser Bodhisattvas carrying three-tiered umbrellas and a dark-skinned Indian attendant leading the divinity's mount, all show very close agreement with the types displayed in those large paintings. These conventions are shared also by the single Bodhisattva figures in many fine silk banners of the Collection,³⁸ and our dated picture proves them to have been already fully established by the middle of the ninth century.

In contrast to these two Bodhisattvas, always easily identified, only the short Chinese inscriptions by the side of the four Avalokiteśvaras above can tell us which particular form of this most popular Bodhisattva is to be recognized in each figure.³⁹ All are practically alike in pose and dress except for some minor differences. All carry a red or red and white lotus in one hand, and all, except the Avalokiteśvara on the extreme left, a flask in the other. The dress comprises a long reddish-pink under-robe girt round the waist and reaching to the feet; a short tight upper skirt and a deep plastron passing over breast and shoulders. On the upper arms are close-fitting sleeves, half covered by armlets. Pink drapery hangs behind the shoulders and a narrow stole of green and red passes round them; thence it winds stiffly about the arms and ripples to the ground. The figure of the Dhyāni-buddha Amitābha appears on the tiara.

In all the details just mentioned these Avalokiteśvaras attach themselves to a class of Bodhisattva figures, largely represented among our banners, which reproduce characteristic Indian conventions in physical type, dress, pose, and flesh colouring with sufficient closeness to deserve the general designation of 'Indian'.⁴⁰ Their juxtaposition with the more 'Chinese' Bodhisattvas in the lower half of our painting is instructive as helping to bring out the distinctions of the two types.

In the narrow panel below we see ranged on either side of the dedicatory inscription

³⁷ For a reproduction in colours, but on a much smaller scale, see *Desert Cathay*, ii. Plate VIII.

³⁸ For such Bodhisattva banners of the type conveniently designated as 'Chinese', see Plates XIX, XXIX, XLI.

³⁹ Cf. M. Petrucci's readings, *Serindia*, p. 1416 sq.

⁴⁰ For specimens of this 'Indian' type of Bodhisattvas see Plates XXI, XXII; for detailed references concerning banners of this type, particularly numerous among those on linen, cf. *Serindia*, p. 862.