

PLATE XXIV

TWO PAPER PAINTINGS OF AVALOKITEŚVARA

THE two pictures reproduced here both represent Avalokiteśvara and are painted on paper; but their interest varies greatly in character. The one on the right (Ch. i. 009, scale two-thirds of original) shows the Bodhisattva sitting by the water on a bank under willows. This representation of Avalokiteśvara is found only in one other picture of our collection and claims special iconographic interest because, as Mr. Binyon points out, according to Far-Eastern tradition 'it was an Emperor of the Sung period who first in a dream saw' Avalokiteśvara as he is here depicted 'and commanded the dream to be painted; but, no doubt, the subject is of earlier origin'.⁴⁷ We shall see below that in the case of Kṣitigarbha, too, the evidence of the Ch'ien-fo-tung paintings proves a certain iconographic type to have developed earlier than Japanese tradition would lead us to assume.

Avalokiteśvara, dressed and adorned in the style of an 'Indian' Bodhisattva, is seated with the right foot tucked under and the left pendent, resting on an open lotus which rises from the water. His right hand holds a willow branch and his left the usual emblem of the flask. The whole figure is enclosed in a large circular halo drawn in red outline. A group of conventional willow trees fills the right segment of the halo and rises above it. On the opposite side there appears above on a cloud the small-scale figure of a man in a Chinese magistrate's robes and head-dress, kneeling with hands joined in adoration. Two boys wearing their hair in rolls behind the neck stand at his back. A draped canopy extends across the upper end of the picture. At its bottom, on the bank bordering the water, is shown an altar. Flanking it on the right appears the donor, carrying a censer and wearing the black coat and wide-brimmed hat characteristic of tenth-century male costume. Four cartouches distributed over the picture have remained uninscribed.

The drawing is careful and the execution superior notwithstanding the simplicity of the colour scheme, restricted mainly to scarlet, light blue, and pale green.

The picture reproduced on the left (Ch. 0054), on the scale of three-fifths of the original, has some interesting peculiarities. Above we see seated on a rectangular platform a Bodhisattva who from the attendant divinities and the emblem, a tall vase, held by the one to his right, may safely be assumed to represent Avalokiteśvara. His dress, coiffure, and accessories are those of Bodhisattva figures of the type above distinguished as 'Chinese'. The decoration of the platform, which, as the lions' heads appearing in pairs below within arched openings show, is meant for a *śimhāsana* or 'lion's throne', reproduces textile patterns manifestly influenced by 'Sassanian' models.

The presentation of only the left half of the god's 'Maṇḍala' is an unusual feature but accounted for by the narrow shape of the painting, no doubt intended for a banner. It comprises below two Bodhisattvas standing in adoration, next a pair of haloed monks, above them two Lokapālas, and at the top a trident-carrying demon. One of the Lokapālas is characterized by his jewelled mace as Virūdhaka, Regent of the South. To the right of the central deity and below the canopy three infants are shown kneeling on a cloud and playing on flute, mouth-organ, and clappers. Below them again and by the side of the large halo stands a small Bodhisattva, also carried on a cloud and clasping the tall vase already referred to. It is stoppered and mottled blue and white, obviously in imitation of glazed ceramic ware.

The lower portion of the painting is filled by a procession moving to the left and comprising a high Chinese dignitary in the centre and his numerous retinue. In this central figure, who is attended by two men holding crossed fans over his head and is obviously the donor, we may in all probability recognize one of those local chiefs who, as we know from Chinese historical notices and inscriptions, ruled the region of Tun-huang in the ninth and

⁴⁷ Cf. Mr. Binyon's note in *Guide to an Exhibition of Paintings, Manuscripts, and other Archaeological Objects*

collected by Sir Aurel Stein in *Chinese Turkestan*, British Museum, 1914, p. 12.