

PLATE XXIX

TWO DHARMAPĀLAS AND A BODHISATTVA

AMONG the silk banners reproduced in this Plate, all on the scale of three-fifths, the two on the sides (Ch. liv. 002 on the left and Ch. 004 on the right) show us Dharmapālas, or 'Protectors of the Law'. These divinities are conceived as forms of Vajrapāṇi in fury and are still favourite figures in the Buddhist imagery of the Far East. Originally derived from the ancient Gandhāra representations of the thunderbolt bearer (Vajrapāṇi), they meet us already in the sixth-century reliefs of the Lung-mên grottoes in China.⁶¹ They show there those poses and that exaggerated development of the muscles which, together with other grotesque features, remain characteristics of the type exhibited in a more or less conventionalized form by the Dharmapāla figures in the paintings and sculptures of Tun-huang. These figures, as M. Foucher has justly observed, 'already make us think of the athletic demons of Japan'.

Like the rest of our Dharmapāla paintings, the two banners reproduced here are but slightly distinguished from each other in type and may hence be briefly described together. They are excellently preserved and complete, with head-piece and streamers at bottom, which, however, from consideration of space are omitted in the Plate. Both Dharmapālas have the muscular body in tense attitude, the grotesque head with its furious downward look, and the large richly ornamented Vajra representing the thunderbolt. They stand slightly to one side with the feet planted apart on two lotuses and the head turned back over the shoulder. There is a difference in the pose of the arms and hands. In the banner on the left the Dharmapāla raises his right arm with the hand open threateningly above his head, while the left hand by the side grasps the Vajra. In the other figure the right hand supports the end of the Vajra and the left, with fingers stiffly spread, steadies it half-way up.

In either figure the head shows a grotesque face with enlarged staring eyes, misshapen nose, fierce moustaches, and a beard in long straggling tufts. The flesh is painted light brown. The muscles and joints of body and limbs are emphasized with conventional exaggeration, but with an effect full of vigour. The muscles are drawn in strong black lines to which modelling is added by brushwork in light red or pink. Abundantly decked with jewellery as the figures are, they carry but scanty dress. It comprises a short skirt, bright crimson or scarlet with slate border, which is tied round the hips by a trailing white girdle; also a narrow stole, olive green with brown or pink reverse, which winds over both forearms.

The sinuous lines of the drapery, the fillet ends of the head-dress flying upwards, the coiling clouds above the haloed heads, all help to intensify the expression of violent effort. The same end is well served by the bold lines of the drawing and the strong and clear colours used.

The banner in the centre (Ch. 001) is, but for the lost accessories, in an excellent condition, and shows in its figure a fine example of the Bodhisattva type which has been distinguished above under the conventional designation of 'Chinese'.

The Bodhisattva, as yet unidentified, stands in a peculiar pose not elsewhere represented among our paintings. He stands on an open lotus, with the raised right hand holding at shoulder level a round bowl of mottled green glass with a metal rim. The head is turned three-quarters towards the bowl, while the left hand hangs down by the side. As the weight of the body is carried on the right leg and the body slightly inclines from the right hip towards the left shoulder, attention is cleverly drawn by the pose to the object which the right hand supports.

The face shows conventional features of the 'Chinese' Bodhisattva type in the small slanting eyes, heavy cheeks, and small full mouth. The down-turned corners of the mouth and the wrinkles marked below the outer ends of the nostrils impart a curious expression

⁶¹ For reference to works of MM. Chavannes, Foucher, Grünwedel-Burgess, see *Serindia*, p. 875, note 45.