

In front of the altar is seen a richly dressed dancer performing on a projecting terrace, attended by six musicians who are here of a masculine type with long hair like that of Bodhisattvas. Below at the sides remain in part the figures of two subsidiary Buddhas, probably seated, with attendant Bodhisattvas and elaborate canopies, like those shown above the enthroned figures in the centre. On the gangway leading down from the dancer's terrace stands a peacock, and below it appear the heads of six of the Kings, probably twelve altogether, who were represented in the centre.

The lake of the Paradise is seen here only on the top of the picture about the piles supporting celestial mansions. These consist of a high-roofed central pavilion and two open hexagonal shrines with pagoda roofs. These are occupied each by a small seated Buddha and are joined to the central building by curving gangways which slope down steeply to the lake.

The marginal scenes on the right are drawn as always in purely Chinese style and correspond to those in Plate I, the connexion of which with the legend of Bhaiṣajyaguru's last incarnation has already been touched upon.⁷⁷

PLATE XXXVII

BANNERS WITH SCENES FROM THE BUDDHA LEGEND

IN my preliminary comments on Plate XII I have already had occasion to discuss briefly the general characteristics of that interesting series of silk banners which illustrate the legendary life of Gautama Buddha and scenes closely connected with it.⁷⁸ This makes it possible to restrict my remarks on the paintings reproduced in our Plate mainly to the interpretation of the incidents and objects they are intended to represent.

The two banners (Ch. lv. 009-10) shown on the sides of the Plate on the scale of three-eighths form a pair exhibiting common characteristics in all externals and undoubtedly painted by the same hand.⁷⁹ But for the loss of all accessories and some damage to the top and bottom scenes they are both excellently preserved. The drawing is notable for its fine yet vigorous brush-strokes, the colours strong and clear. The painter's skill displays itself particularly in the landscapes of the background, which convey a sense of great width and distance. Like the figures, architecture, spacing, &c., of these banners they are thoroughly Chinese in their treatment.

In the banner on the left (Ch. lv. 009) the topmost scene shows the meeting of Gautama Buddha in a former birth with Dīpaṅkara Buddha. In open country with mountains in the background the Buddha advances to the right followed by two attendants in dress of the Bodhisattva type. With his left hand he touches the head of the boy, the future Gautama, who bows down before him with hands joined in adoration. The boy wears a short deer-skin tunic and is bare-headed. The Buddha's right hand is lifted in the gesture of 'Protection'.

The scene next below, chronologically out of order, represents the first three of Prince Gautama's famous 'Four Encounters' condensed, as it were, into one. It shows with much realism the sick man on his bedstead supported by an attendant, the old man being led by a boy, and the putrified corpse. The first two of these 'Encounters' we have already met with in Plate XII. From the corpse there rises a cloud carrying a small kneeling figure in Chinese secular dress with belted coat and tailed cap. The figure is turned towards a palace-like structure raised on clouds and representing an abode of the blessed.

That the figure of Gautama is absent from the scene may seem strange. But the omission of the ascetic's figure is less surprising. In the fourth 'Encounter' of the legend

⁷⁷ See above, p. 13.

⁷⁸ See above, p. 23.

⁷⁹ For the reasons which account for the banners with

scenes from the Life usually forming small groups or at least pairs, cf. *Serindia*, p. 852.