

covers the head, and from it projects at the back a large richly decorated gold ring apparently holding a tress of hair.

Special interest attaches to the Bodhisattva's face. Distinctly non-Chinese features are the long and prominent nose, the marked depression below the low sloping forehead, the long and straight eye. The head is equally far removed from the classical type which Gandhāra art propagated. A curious scornful expression is imparted to the face by the eyelid drawn in a straight line across the half-closed eye and by the pouting mouth. Its strangely foreign look remains doubly puzzling where everything else bears so clearly the impress of Chinese workmanship.

PLATE XLII

AVALOKITEŚVARA, THOUSAND-ARMED, WITH ATTENDANT DIVINITIES

THE large silk painting (Ch. xxviii. 006) reproduced in this Plate on the much-reduced scale of one-sixth is a fine illustration of that intermingling of art influences for which Tun-huang provided a classical meeting-place. It shows Avalokiteśvara with a thousand arms seated within a central disc, and outside this some attendant divinities symmetrically grouped. The scheme is thus closely akin to that of the Avalokiteśvara 'Maṇḍala' seen in Plate xvii and fully discussed above. But the number of divinities is much smaller and the composition in general less elaborate, though there is abundance of ornament in the details. The painting is complete except along its bottom, and its colours are remarkably fresh. The rich painted border of flower sprays which encloses the whole suggests the effect of naturalistic embroidery such as is found among the textile relics from the Thousand Buddhas.⁸⁹

Avalokiteśvara's figure single-headed appears here too, seated within a large circular halo formed by his 'thousand arms', each showing the symbolic open eye on the palm. Against this background are numerous inner arms, all except four in the centre line of the figure carrying a multiplicity of sacred emblems well known to Buddhist iconography, such as the discs of the Sun and Moon, trident, Vajra, &c. Owing to the excellent finish, the details of all these, as well as of the rich ornaments which deck the Bodhisattva's body and head, can be made out clearly. In front of the high tiara appears the figure of Amitābha, his Dhyāni-buddha. The Bodhisattva's flesh is shown dull yellow shaded with pink.

The nimbus is made up of a superimposed series of pointed rays brilliantly coloured. It is flame-edged like the border of the circular halo behind. The variegated petals of the lotus seat have also brilliant colours; gilding is used for their outlines as well as for all jewellery, the vessels on the altar in front, and the folds of Avalokiteśvara's robes.

The background is divided into an upper and lower half. The upper, painted a thin light blue (now almost gone) and representing the sky, is sprinkled with small gilded stars and falling blossoms. In its top corners, to the right and left respectively, are shown the Bodhisattvas of the Sun and the Moon seated on their respective 'Vāhanas' of horses and geese, within red and white discs which piled-up clouds carry.

Against the lower half of the background, painted a deep blue and representing a tiled floor, are the haloed figures of the 'Sage' and the 'Nymph of Virtue', kneeling on lotuses to the right and left respectively. The former, an emaciated old man of ascetic type, yet wearing rich apparel, raises his right hand in salutation, and the 'Nymph' carries her dish of flowers, as also in Plate xvii. In the tank below we see again two armour-clad Nāgas holding up Avalokiteśvara's disc. In front of the tank is an altar decked with draperies of exquisitely rendered floral designs and carrying gilt sacrificial vessels.

⁸⁹ For specimens cf. *Serindia*, pp. 904 sq.; Plates cvi-viii, &c.