

In the bottom corners stride in violent movement many-armed demonic Vajrapāṇis in red and blue against a vividly painted background of flames. With their fiery hair and grotesque features, and by the Tantric emblems they brandish in their hands, they show closest kinship to the monstrous divinities of Tantric origin in which the imagery of Tibetan Buddhism delights. Below them there kneel in adoration two small figures, one with an elephant's head on the left and another with that of a rat on the right. In these we may, perhaps, recognize Gaṇeśa, familiar to Hindu mythology, and the 'king of the sacred rats', famous in Khotan local worship.⁹⁰

In these figures and in a variety of other details to which Mr. Binyon has very justly called attention,⁹¹ we have striking indications of that mixed style of painting to which Indian prototypes, Iranian and Central-Asian influences, and Tibetan taste have all contributed elements, albeit in very disparate proportions. Yet it does not need the Chinese inscriptions, found in a few of the cartouches and containing epithets of the respective divinities, to convince us that we owe this highly finished painting to Chinese workmanship. This has left its marks clearly in a mass of exquisite detail and in that perfectly mastered technique which accounts for the strong decorative effect of the whole.

PLATE XLIII

AVALOKITEŚVARA WITH LOKAPĀLA ATTENDANTS

THE silk painting reproduced here with a reduction to one-third of the original (Ch. 00121) is a particularly fine example of Indian tradition preserved in Chinese Buddhist painting. The picture, damaged at the top and still more at its bottom, shows us Avalokiteśvara seated on a flat Padmāsana in the pose of 'royal ease'. The shapely right hand hangs open over the raised right knee, while the left hand, now lost, evidently rested on the other knee and held the long spray of purple lotus which rises beside the head.

The figure of the Bodhisattva is presented in accordance with Indian iconographic canons. But the ease and distinction of the drawing, which the simplicity of the figure and the scarcity of colour make all the more noticeable, betoken the Chinese artist's brush. The slender-waisted body leans towards the left shoulder; the limbs are long and slim; the head erect. The face is young and clean-shaven with an expression of serenity in the downcast slightly oblique eyes and the finely curved lips. The hair rises in a high cone above the three-leaved tiara, the front of which shows Avalokiteśvara's Dhyāni-buddha, Amitābha. The flesh is left uncoloured.

The dress is confined to a short crimson *laṅgōṭī* wrapped about the loins, a thin transparent skirt hanging about the legs, and a narrow scarf entwined on the breast. The jewellery is of the type usual in 'Indian' Bodhisattvas, but plain. The elliptical nimbus and circular halo behind the figure are painted in pale blue and green. In the background are shown feathery floral sprays of a type common in printed silk fabrics from the Ch'ien-fo-tung hoard.

In the top corners appear the small figures of two Lokapālas in mail armour, Vaiśravaṇa on the right and Virūpākṣa on the left, both seated on rocks. Corresponding figures of the other two Guardians of the Regions, no doubt, occupied the lost bottom corners.

⁹⁰ See *Ancient Khotan*, i. pp. 120 sq., 264 sq.; ii. Pl. LXIII; *Serindia*, iii. p. 1277.

⁹¹ See above, p. 9.