

PLATE XLIV

FRAGMENT OF STANDING AVALOKITEŚVARA

THIS Plate shows the remaining upper portion of a large silk painting (Ch. 00451, scale one-third) which represented Avalokiteśvara standing without attendants. Considerably broken as the painting is and injured in its surface, we recognize in it a fine pendant to the Avalokiteśvara picture reproduced in Plate XXI. Here, too, we see a figure of the conventional 'Indian' Bodhisattva type imbued with that grace and refined quality which Chinese mastery of fluid line and reposeful design is specially able to impart.

The physical type and the pose of the body, with its inclination to the left shoulder, closely correspond to those seen in Plate XXI. But here this line is counterbalanced by the pose of the head, which leans gently over the right shoulder. The eyes are turned back to the left proper and look down with an expression of mildness and compassion. They are almost straight, and the recurving line added to the eyelids is here absent. Of the willow spray in the right hand only a few faint indications remain.

The dress, jewellery, and colouring agree closely with those displayed by the figure in Plate XXI. But more remains here of the white shaded with pink which is used for the colouring of the body. The nimbus is made up of plain circular rings of dark olive, red, and white. The Chinese inscription of the cartouche to the right still awaits interpretation.

PLATE XLV

VAIŚRAVAṆA CROSSING THE OCEAN

THE small Kakemono-shaped picture on silk (Ch. 0018) which this Plate shows with a reduction to two-thirds of its size is one of the most finished of our Tun-huang paintings. It presents Vaiśravaṇa, the Guardian-king of the North, as he advances on a cloud across the heaving sea, with an imposing suite of attendants, some human, some demonic, but all of them in striking attires. The painting was found in excellent preservation, still retaining its border of purple silk (omitted in the reproduction), and thus it is fortunately possible to appreciate in all details the high artistic merit of a work which clearly is from the brush of a master.

When dealing above with another presentation of Vaiśravaṇa's Progress, the painting shown by Plate XXVI, we have already had occasion to refer to the special importance which the Protector of the Northern Region claims as chief among Lokapālas, and also to the reasons accounting for the popularity of his worship in Central Asia and the Far East. Hence we may turn here at once to the varied points of iconographic interest presented by our picture. The main figure of Vaiśravaṇa, disproportionately large in accordance with a convention familiar already to Graeco-Buddhist as well as to late Hellenistic art, strides ahead to the right, carrying the halberd, his characteristic emblem, in the right hand, and on a cloud rising from his left a small pagoda-shaped shrine, a secondary attribute, also otherwise attested. His face is heavy but not grotesque, with large oblique eyes and heavy eyebrows. The middle of the body is thrown out, giving to the pose an air of ponderous dignity.

His dress is that of a warrior king, as proper to all Lokapālas, but of a particularly elaborate type. His coat of mail reaches down almost to the knees. The arrangement of the scales, shown by a diaper of three-armed crosses, is the same peculiar one already noted