

dhist saints moving in dignified procession (Fig. 82). In many of the smaller cellas the wall paintings showed diapers of small Buddhas or Bodhisattvas just as I had seen them on the walls of shrines at Dandan-oilik and elsewhere. Combined with elaborate floral designs and tracery they served also to adorn the ceilings of the large cellas. In these the walls generally bore large panels of frescoes bordered by floral scrolls of striking beauty. Painted dados, often representing worshippers, in some cases Buddhist monks or nuns, extended below these panels.

The panels were filled by elaborate compositions, containing large numbers of figures. Those which showed Buddhas surrounded by a multiplicity of Bodhisattvas, saints and other divine attendants, were obviously representations of Buddhist heavens. Other panels displayed scenes, bewildering in their variety, which looked as if taken from mundane life (Fig. 83). Short Chinese inscriptions inserted on cartouches, suggested that these scenes were taken from sacred Buddhist legends. But only after similar scenes among the silk paintings which I recovered from the 'Thousand Buddhas' had been submitted to expert examination in London could I feel sure that these mural paintings illustrated Jataka stories, legends from previous births of the Buddha.

Throughout these legendary scenes with their freely drawn landscape backgrounds, their Chinese architecture, the bold movement and realism of their figures, a distinctly Chinese style prevailed. It was the same with the graceful and often fantastic freedom of the cloud scrolls, floral tracery and other decorative motifs. But all the principal divine figures, just as those around them, multi-