

## CHAPTER XIV

### BUDDHIST PAINTINGS FROM THE THOUSAND BUDDHAS

THE paintings recovered from the walled-up cave chapel of the 'Thousand Buddhas' are so numerous and so varied in character that I cannot attempt here more than a rapid review of the chief classes as illustrated by characteristic specimens. In view of the importance attaching to these abundant materials for the study of Buddhist pictorial art as transplanted to China, a few remarks on the data bearing on their origin and chronology may precede that review.

In the first place, it is important to note that the evidence of dated votive inscriptions on paintings entirely agrees with that which, as already mentioned, dated Chinese texts and documents furnish as to the final closing up of the deposit having taken place about the beginning of the eleventh century A.D.

But the small well-sheltered recess may have served for some time before as a place of deposit for all kinds of sacred objects no longer needed in the various shrines and monastic quarters. Anyhow it is certain that some of the objects were of considerable antiquity already at the time when the chapel was walled up. Thus among the thousands of the Chinese manuscripts and documents brought away there are exactly dated ones reaching back as far as the early part