

by lesser and more nearly human divinities. These supreme figures are, however, treated with special conservative respect. Hence their drapery always reproduces with fidelity the type fixed after Hellenistic models by the Graeco-Buddhist sculptures of the Buddha.

Pictures representing single Bodhisattvas, whether on silk, linen or paper, are on the other hand very numerous. There are marked differences in style and treatment, but the influence of Graeco-Buddhist tradition is very noticeable throughout in drapery and ornaments. Significantly enough, Bodhisattva paintings of special artistic merit are to be found mostly among the numerous representations of Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of Mercy. The position occupied by him in the Buddhist Pantheon of Tun-huang was in fact as predominant as that of Kuan-yin or 'Kwannon', the so-called 'Goddess of Mercy', is in modern Buddhist worship of China and Japan.

In the painting (Fig. 103) which shows Avalokitesvara standing in a characteristically Indian pose and holding a twining spray, the faded colour only helps to bring out the excellence of the design and the delicate drawing of figure and face. Two forms of Avalokitesvara, almost life-size, show a dignity and grandeur of design which seem derived from an original executed by the hand of a master.

The Avalokitesvara shown in a fine paper painting (Fig. 102) seated by the water on a bank under willows and holding a willow branch in his right hand is of interest because, according to Japanese tradition, an emperor of the Sung dynasty (twelfth-thirteenth century) is supposed to have first seen in dream Avalokitesvara as here depicted. But our painting proves the subject to have been treated in China