

the ladies with the high-waisted skirts and long close-fitting sleeves, and so also the plain coiffure. We see here obviously the fashion of the time when the embroidery picture was worked, and this time must certainly be older than that of our earliest dated picture of A.D. 864.

The quasi-chronological indications thus secured from ladies' changing dress fashions may help to console us for the loss of exact datings in the case of the large and important class of paintings which show us Buddhist Heavens. But before discussing these I must briefly refer to the idea of re-birth which made these celestial abodes of very direct interest and attraction for the pious. The axiomatic Indian belief in successive reincarnations, as strong now as it always was, lies at the foundation of all Buddhist doctrine. The prime object of this is to show the way to escape from the endless chain of fresh births and subsequent sufferings and to attain salvation in Nirvana, *i.e.* the beatitude of final absorption.

Now the Chinese popular mind does not appear to have ever taken kindly to this characteristically Indian pessimistic view of life with its aim at the extinction of individual existence. Chinese Buddhists, less philosophically inclined than Indians, have sought comfort in the belief that souls of pious people might as a reward for virtuous lives and spiritual merits be re-born in a Paradise and find blissful rest there, if not for ever, at any rate for unmeasurably long periods. Pious imagination makes such re-birth in a Paradise take place quite poetically through the virtuous soul issuing as a baby from a lotus bud. And among the Tun-huang pictures we actually find some representations of such happy births of young souls.