

of silk and brocade, with a mass of miscellaneous fragments of painted papers and cloth materials. Most of the paintings first found were narrow pieces from two to three feet in length, and proved by their floating streamers and the triangular tops provided with strings for fastening to have served as temple banners. These mountings made them look much more imposing when hung up. Many of them were in excellent condition, and all exactly as they had been deposited, after longer or shorter use.

The silk banners were usually found rolled up, and showed when unfurled beautifully painted figures of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, almost Indian in style, or else scenes from Buddhist legend (Plates VI., VII.). There was no time then for any careful study. But of some external features I soon made sure. All the banners still retained, or originally had attached below, three or four long streamers of patterned or painted silk, which a lacquered or painted cross-piece of wood held in position at the bottom. From the triangular top, which was usually formed by a piece of brocade or painted silk edged with embroidery, there descended a broader streamer on either side. At the top and bottom of the oblong picture small 'strainers' of wood or bamboo helped to keep the banner in shape.

The silk used for these pictures was almost invariably a transparent gauze of remarkable fineness. As these banners floated in the air they would allow a good deal of light to pass through—an important point, since in order to be properly seen these paintings would have to be hung up across or near the porches through which alone the cellas of the temple caves would receive their lighting. For the same reason of transparency most of these banners appeared to have been painted on both sides. Some had undergone damage. This was the result, not of centuries of interment, but of use in the temples, as proved by the care with which rents had been repaired, or in a few cases the whole picture mounted on a backing of cloth or paper.

Whatever the technical advantages in the use of such a delicate material might have been, the attendant risks