

colours of dress, halo, etc. (Fig. 200). My excavations at sites of the Khotan region had familiarized me with this style of decoration, which must have been common throughout Buddhist Central Asia during T'ang times, and which allowed even a very modest temple cella to boast of its 'Thousand Buddhas.' Elaborate and often very beautiful floral ornament forms the borders of these great stencilled wall surfaces and of the image alcoves. Within the latter the walls are covered either with large figures of Bodhisattvas and other saintly personages (Fig. 191), or else with fine floral tracery, cloud scrolls and the like, as seen in Figs. 200, 201. The rich halos with flame bundles painted at the back of the principal figures are here often a specially striking decoration. The ceilings of the alcoves usually show a divine group, such as the Buddha enthroned among Arhats, cleverly painted in perspective (Fig. 161).

The centre of the side walls in these smaller shrines is ordinarily occupied by a large fresco panel representing a crowded scene from some Buddhist heaven. I have already had occasion to refer to such scenes when discussing the larger paintings on silk which often look like reduced copies of such panels (Chap. LXVIII.). In the one reproduced in Fig. 202 we see a Buddha seated on his lotus throne between somewhat smaller figures of Bodhisattvas and saintly attendants. Pavilions containing other divine figures and shaded by rich foliage are disposed at the sides and behind as an architectural setting. In front of the terrace occupied by the main group are shown three platforms rising from a lotus tank and connected by bridges.

On the middle one, curiously recalling the central marble terrace always found in the artificial lakes of the old Moghul gardens so familiar to me from Kashmir and the Punjab, there is seen a dancing girl performing a spirited dance on a tessellated pavement. Rows of divine musicians, probably representing Kimnaris, play on either side on various instruments. On the side platforms two Buddhas, with bowls and plates of fruit set before them, seem to take their share in enjoying the divine ballet. In a few panels of this class I found also figures of Nagas and