

in a dado which unfortunately has suffered in parts, rows of female figures richly clad and carrying offerings. The head-dress of all of them is extremely elaborate, with huge pendants and bulb-shaped coiffures. Richer jewelry and somewhat greater stature evidently indicate distinctions in rank. A Chinese inscription on one of these dados, as interpreted on the spot by Chiang-ssü-yeh, and since confirmed by M. Chavannes, conveys the important information that this temple cave had been dedicated by a princess of Yü-t'ien, or Khotan. Full light on her date, as on so many details of these frescoes, may confidently be expected from M. Pelliot, who was able to study them carefully.

The fine frescoes on the walls of the broad passage or porch leading into this cella were exposed to far greater injury. But on the southern wall a large and very spirited piece of work has survived, curiously recalling some old Venetian picture by its rich colours and the stately pomp and free movement depicted (Fig. 205). It shows a colossal seated Buddha riding through the air on a richly decorated car which flying genii keep in rapid motion. His right hand is raised in the symbolic act of making 'the wheel of supreme sovereignty' revolve. A robe of pale pink covers his shoulders, while an under-garment of brilliant azure envelops the body from the waist downwards. Two gorgeous banners showing dragons on white ground strewn with green and blue fleurs-de-lys float behind, and mark the quick movement by their fluttering ends. A host of saints and armed attendants are shown flying by the side of and behind the car. Above float cleverly painted clouds on which small groups of saints stand or kneel.

I may conclude this rapid survey of the pictorial decoration of the shrines by a reference to a fairly large cave (Ch. XVI.) situated at the southern extremity of the site. The general scheme here corresponds closely to that of the Khotan princess's temple, and certain details of execution make it clear that the latter had served as the direct model. But what gave to this shrine a particular interest was the curious fresco composition which covers the whole