

or as monks and nuns, which clearly indicates local production for the paintings presented by them.¹²

Notwithstanding all the political vicissitudes to which Tun-huang had been exposed ever since T'ang power westwards weakened, and in spite of the great distance separating it from the interior of China, the settled population as a whole must have retained unimpaired its Chinese civilization and language during the period with which we are here concerned. This is conclusively proved by the concordant evidence of the historical notices, scanty as they are; of the great mass of the manuscripts deposited in the walled-up chapel; of the votive records whether on stone or pictures, and of the character of the last named themselves. It should be noted that the donors of the paintings and woodcuts are invariably presented to us as Chinese in dress and features, whether secular or monastic. That some weight may be attached to this evidence of the pictorial representations of the donors is proved by unmistakable indications of realistic portraiture such as meet our eyes, e.g., in the painting Ch. lvii. 001 (Plate LXVIII), where the father is duly shown with his left eye blind, or in the fine figure of the donatrix in Ch. liii. 001 (*Thousand Buddhas*, Plate X; also title-page).

Chinese civilization of Tun-huang.

At the same time it is certain that Tun-huang, owing to its position on what may not inappropriately be called the great cross-roads of innermost Asia, must always have been specially accessible to influences coming both from the side of Turkestan in the west and from Tibet in the south. That the former had a great and in certain respects predominant share in determining the forms which Buddhist iconography presents in the paintings and frescoes of the *Thousand Buddhas* is obvious. But in the present state of our knowledge it appears very difficult, if not impossible, to make out how much of that impress of Central-Asian Buddhist art made itself felt locally, and how much of it was imported earlier to, and absorbed by, Chinese Buddhism in general. In any case we have ample proof left of local visits of Central-Asian Buddhists from the Tārīm Basin and the adjoining regions to the north and north-east in the numerous manuscripts, found among the hidden deposit, in Sanskrit, Khotanese, Kuchean, and Sogdian, as well as in Uigur.

Influences from Turkestan and Tibet.

Considering that Tun-huang had been for fully a century under Tibetan domination and that the vicinity of Tibetan tribes made itself felt also later,¹³ the presence of a certain number of pictures either showing the influence of Tibetan style or bearing Tibetan legends is no cause for surprise.¹⁴ A small but interesting group of painted banners, showing Bodhisattva figures unmistakably Indian in style and treatment, points to art influence of the more distant south, coming probably from Nepāl and communicated through Tibet.¹⁵ Yet, compared either with the prolonged political connexion or the considerable mass of Tibetan manuscripts and block-prints found in the cave deposit, the proportion of such Tibetan or quasi-Tibetan pictorial gifts must appear very limited. The explanation probably is that though monks of Tibetan origin may have been established in numbers at the sacred site or have been frequent visitors (as they still are nowadays), yet those pious donors who offered paintings for the adornment of the shrines were almost exclusively drawn from the local Chinese population or else content to employ local artists.

Tibetan art influence restricted.

great families as late as A.D. 983. The historical rôle of the Chang and Ts'ao in the Tun-huang region appears to have escaped M. Petrucci's attention.

I may note here in passing that the appearance of the family name of the T'ang dynasty in the designations of the donors of the fine painting lv. 0023 (*Desert Cathay*, ii. Pl. VIII) of A.D. 864 is no proof of non-local origin. The Ch'ien-fo-tung inscription of A.D. 894 (see above, p. 799; Chavannes, *Dix inscriptions*, pp. 77 sqq.) shows us a member of the imperial family settled at Tun-huang as son-in-law of Chang I-ch'ao, who

was its governor and virtual ruler until about A.D. 867.

¹² See Appendix E, II, *Les donateurs*, for Ch. xx. 004, 005; liv. 0011; lxi. 008; lxvi. 002, etc.

¹³ Cf. above, pp. 816 sq.; Chavannes, *Dix inscriptions*, pp. 12 sq.

¹⁴ Cf. for such pictures below, pp. 862, 865, 891, 894; Petrucci, *Annales du Musée Guimet*, xli. pp. 136 sq.

¹⁵ See as regards this group of 'Nepālese' Bodhisattvas, below, p. 862; also Petrucci, *loc. cit.*, pp. 137 sq.