

That all these pictures, whatever their material and whatever the subjects represented, were intended to be displayed in the shrines at which they had been offered is definitely proved by the interesting record of Sung Yün already referred to.<sup>22</sup> When describing his visit in A.D. 519 to a famous Buddhist temple at a site east of Khotan, which I have, as I believe, identified with the pilgrimage place of Ulūgh-ziārat to the north-west of Domoko,<sup>23</sup> the pilgrim tells us that 'the banners (*oriflammes*) and canopies (or hangings) in embroidered silk which are suspended there count by tens of thousands; more than half of them are banners of the empire of the Wei'. We need not consider here the question whether Sung Yün necessarily means here banners brought from China. But what is important to note is his further statement that among the banners bearing Chinese inscriptions there were many with dates corresponding to the years A.D. 495, 501, and 513; 'there was only one banner which, upon examination of its date, proved to be a banner of the epoch of the Yao Ch'in [dynasty, A.D. 384-417].'

Sung-Yün's  
record of  
temple  
banners.

In this record, for which credit is due to the Chinese traveller's antiquarian instinct, we have conclusive proof that it was customary at such Buddhist shrines to preserve votive offerings of pictures, and obviously of embroideries, too, for prolonged periods. That this pious custom also prevailed at Tun-huang is strikingly illustrated by the great collection of paintings, etc., discovered in the walled-up chapel. It has also its exact parallels in the shrines of the West, from classical times to the present, and has always helped to enrich the adornment of temples and churches.<sup>24</sup> That apart from any aesthetic or religious notions the custom was largely prompted also by a quasi-practical motive needs no detailed demonstration for those who are familiar with places of pilgrimage in the East, or with some in the West either. To show respect for the gifts of previous donors was obviously in the interest of the guardians of the shrines, who benefited by the charity of such donors and were, no doubt, anxious to attract others to follow their example.

Conserva-  
tion of  
votive  
offerings.

It is to this interested conservation that we may in all probability have to attribute two curious classes of artistic remains found among the deposit of the cave. I mean, on the one hand, those very numerous fragments of silk paintings, banner tops, etc., which must have become mere torn remnants long before the hidden deposit received them; on the other, the equally great mass of fabric strips of all sorts which also had found their way there, and which undoubtedly had once been placed in different cave-temples as votive offerings of a sort still common everywhere in the East.<sup>25</sup> I shall have occasion to discuss these 'votive rags' in my next chapter. Here it will suffice to mention the striking evidence which the elaborate patchwork pieces and lambrequins made up of such tatters bear to the care that was once bestowed by the local guardians upon the preservation of even the humblest votive gifts.

Frag-  
mentary  
paintings  
and 'votive  
rags'.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Chavannes, *Voyage de Sung Yun*, p. 14; *Ancient Khotan*, i. p. 456; above, p. 838, note 7.

<sup>23</sup> See *Ancient Khotan*, i. pp. 457, 462 sq.

<sup>24</sup> It may not be out of place to call attention here to the great rôle which, as modern researches have abundantly proved, the use of figured fabrics, painted, woven, or embroidered, and often of a very elaborate type, has played in the adornment of Christian churches since an early period, and particularly during Byzantine times. Many fine specimens of such fabrics dating from the fourth century onwards have been brought to light by recent explorations in Egyptian tombs; cf. Strzygowski, *Orient oder Rom*, pp. 90 sqq., 113 sqq.; Diehl, *Manuel d'art byzantin*, pp. 78 sqq., 247 sqq., where further references will be found.

We shall have occasion, when discussing the ancient fabrics from the Thousand Buddhas, to recur to this parallel,

made doubly interesting by the close influence of Sassanian art which can be traced in the textile remains both of early Byzantine and T'ang times; see below, pp. 907 sqq.

To Prof. Strzygowski belongs the special merit of having emphasized the important part which such figured fabrics, owing to their portability and easy transport, must have played in the powerful influence exercised by the art of the Hellenized East upon the Christian West. Is it too bold to conjecture that Buddhist art, as displayed and developed in China proper, may have been specially aided by the same medium of painted fabrics in asserting that reverse influence westwards which becomes more and more clearly traceable in remains of the later Buddhist art of Central Asia? The subject is too big to be taken up here in passing.

<sup>25</sup> See below, pp. 899 sq., and Pl. CVII-CX for illustrations of patchwork of 'votive rags'.