

pencilled in with a fine brush in firm, sweeping, and confident lines exhibiting in many of the paintings masterly skill in execution and a thorough knowledge of drawing.

'It seems probable that this final stage of the work was usually executed by a more skilled hand than the earlier parts, because it sometimes happens that the original grey guiding lines have not been closely followed in the finishing outlines, but have been improved. The grey lines are often hesitating and feeble, such as a beginner might make; but the final lines are nearly always virile and positive. The range of palette was wide, including gold. Yet there is scarcely a picture which is not pleasing in its subdued harmony, and many which are exquisite in their balance of glowing tints.'

Here in conclusion brief reference must be made to evidence furnished by the paintings themselves of the treatment that some of them underwent before their deposit in Wang Tao-shih's cave. Repairs in the paintings on silk, often roughly executed, show plainly the damage to which they were exposed while still used for the decoration of cave-temples.³² There are instances also where the work had left the painter's hand unfinished, perhaps because the purchaser was in haste to make his votive offering.³³ In other cases it looks as if an unscrupulous votary, or some priest wishing for appearance's sake to patch up a tattered picture, had added at its bottom another piece showing, indeed, figures of donors, but certainly not the original ones.³⁴ Finally we have evidence that silks, the colours on which might have faded or otherwise been destroyed, were used for fresh paintings palimpsest fashion, or that fragments of older paintings were adapted for use with other compositions.³⁵

Treatment undergone by paintings.

SECTION IV.—SCENES FROM THE LEGENDARY LIFE OF GAUTAMA BUDDHA

The first group of paintings to be described in accordance with the above classification comprises exclusively scenes taken from the legendary Life of Gautama Buddha or closely connected with it. The group is not merely of special iconographic and artistic interest, but also particularly well defined in its range of subjects and style as well as in its external features. As regards the latter we may note at once that all the twenty-six paintings, more or less complete, comprised in the group are narrow silk banners.¹ The largest of these, Ch. xxvii. 001 (Plate LXXVII), measures a little over 25" in length,² and none of the rest are likely to have much exceeded this length, leaving accessories out of count. In width there is also much uniformity, the range varying only from 6 $\frac{3}{8}$ " to 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". As a necessary result of the narrow shape of the banners, we always find in them a succession of scenes arranged one above the other.³ Probably owing to the proportion between the usual length and width of the banners, and from regard for the space demanded by each composition, the number of scenes represented in each banner appears ordinarily to have been four. The banners which are complete as regards length or nearly so always show this number, and for the great majority of the others the same may be assumed with much probability.⁴ But there is evidence of exceptions.⁵

Arrangement of scenes in banners.

³² See, e.g., Ch. 0022; xxvi. a. 003, 005; lv. 0020; lxi. 001.

³³ See, e.g., Ch. lv. 009, 0010.

³⁴ Cf. Ch. xx. 003; lxi. 0010.

³⁵ See, e.g., Ch. 0017, 0098, 00105, 00157, 00461; xxi. 0013.

¹ They are Ch. 0030, 0039, 0071, 00114, 00471; xx. 008; xxii. 008, 0035; xxv. 001; xxvi. a. 003, 004; xxvii. 001; xlvi. 004, 005, 007; xlix. 005, 006; lv. 009-12, 0016, 0021, 0022; lvi. 0032; lxi. 002; and fragments 0019, 00518.

² Excluding the triangular top, here cut from the same piece of silk. Other 'complete' banners, Ch. 0030; xx. 008; lv. 009, 0010, 0012 measure 22" to 24".

³ This vertical arrangement of scenes from the Life of Gautama Buddha is quite common in Indian sculpture, too; for Gandhāra examples see, e.g., Foucher, *L'art du Gandhāra*, i. Figs. 74, 181, 225, 237, 238, etc.; for a later specimen from Sārnāth, *ib.* Fig. 209.

⁴ See Ch. 0030 (Pl. LXXVI), 00114 (Pl. LXXIV); xx. 008 (*Thousand B.*, Pl. XIII); lv. 009-0010 (Pl. LXXIV), 0021. In Ch. lv. 0012 we find four cartouches for inscriptions provided, though one of the corresponding 'scenes' is only a landscape. In the companion picture Ch. lv. 0011 (*Desert Cathay*, Pl. VI) the composition divides itself into four parts though there are only two actual scenes. Ch. xxvii. 001 (Pl. LXXVII) conforms to the general rule if we count the kneeling pair of deer below the second scene as a symbolic representation of the 'First Sermon' at Benares (see below, p. 859). The fragments of Ch. 0071 (*Thousand B.*, Pl. XII) also belong to four scenes. In the pair Ch. xlvi. 004, 005 and xlvi. 007 (Pl. LXXV) we have also four scenes, though not all are complete.

⁵ Thus in Ch. xlix. 005 there are only two scenes, and the probable length would have sufficed for only one more.