

Simplified
representa-
tions of
Sukhāvati.

What the exact relation between this work, which is, no doubt, of Central-Asian type, and the ancient Japanese prototype on the one hand and our *Sukhāvati* paintings on the other may have been I am not in a position to investigate. But so much is certain that among the latter we find more than one type represented. By the side of the numerous class referred to above, which presents to us Amitābha's Heaven in a very sumptuous setting, filled with a gorgeous host of Bodhisattvas and minor divinities of all kinds and enclosed between rows of legendary scenes, we have also representations of a far more simple character. At the close of the preceding section I have already had occasion to mention several pictures in which Amitābha appears flanked by Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāma, these Bodhisattvas making up the triad typical of Amitābha's Paradise. From these the transition is easy to a small but interesting group of paintings which show us the chief figures of this Buddha's divine assembly arranged in the characteristic *Sukhāvati* fashion, but lacking the vivid scene of heavenly life and enjoyment which forms so prominent a feature in the large Paradise compositions.

Sukhāvati
paintings of
10th cent.

Thus in Ch. xlv. 008, a silk painting dated A.D. 952, we see Amitābha seated on a railed terrace rising above a lake just as in the last-named pictures. But the personnel is here restricted to six Bodhisattvas and the four Lokapālas ranged symmetrically around the Buddha, neither the celestial orchestra and dancer nor the new-born souls finding a place in the picture. The carefully painted donor figures below furnish accurately datable illustrations of contemporary dress and coiffure in the tenth century. None of the Paradise pictures proper bear dates, a result probably of the damage which the lowest part of these big silk hangings has almost invariably undergone. But in a few at least portions of the donor figures have survived, and a comparison of the dress worn by these as well as by the figures in the side-scenes may yet furnish help towards an approximate dating.⁷ The large painting Ch. lii. 004 (Plate LXII) in its upper half shows the typical group of a Paradise picture, with Amitābha flanked by Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāma and attended also by two minor Bodhisattvas and by one Lokapāla and disciple on either side. The altar with offerings in front of, and the pair of trees behind, Amitābha are characteristic features in *Sukhāvati* pictures. In the lower half scenes of parental devotion are represented, the dress being that of the tenth century, as comparison with the donor figures at the bottom and in the last-named painting shows.

Peculiarities
of style in
Ch. liii. 001,
xlvii. 001.

We have a very instructive pair of paintings, one being probably of older date, in Ch. liii. 001 and Ch. xlvii. 001. Their close interrelation is proved by a number of marked peculiarities in style, composition, colour, treatment, etc., for the details of which reference to the Descriptive List may suffice here.⁸ In Ch. liii. 001, which Plate X, *Thousand Buddhas*, successfully reproduces in colours, we see Amitābha enthroned on a lotus between Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāma, with two lesser Bodhisattvas in front and a row of six well-individualized disciples behind. No lake is represented; but the general disposition of the figures and such details as the two star-leaved trees supporting a gorgeous floral canopy above Amitābha leave no doubt that a representation of this Buddha's

Wei-ch'ih borne by the ruling family of Khotan during the T'ang period, cf. also *Ancient Khotan*, i. pp. 173, 523 n.

⁷ See below, pp. 885, 887 sq., 890.

Ch. xlv. 008 closely agrees in arrangement and style with the linen painting Ch. i. 0014, which shows a Buddha with four Bodhisattvas seated under trees and around what looks like a terrace translated into an altar. The execution is rough. The donors below wear tenth-century costume.

⁸ Cf. below, chap. xii. sec. ii. It may be specially noted that the modelling of the flesh is indicated by high lights

in white, in addition to the usual shading in colour tints. This method, reminiscent of the technique in the *Mīrān* angel frescoes from M. III (see above, p. 504), is nowhere else found among our Ch'ien-fo-tung paintings. Other distinguishing common features in the treatment of details are, e.g., the transparency of the haloes (not found in other Paradise pictures), the panel provided for the votive inscription in the shape of a stone slab, the Apsaras figures sweeping down by the side of the central floral canopy. As regards the identical peculiarities in the donors' costumes, see below, p. 885, with note 10.