

little adorned, who evidently are daughters or relatives of the princely lady. To the inscription painted to the right of her and above the smallest of the girls I shall recur presently. Three poorly preserved figures of men dressed in reddish-brown robes and with the shaven heads of monks precede the family group. A *pendant* to this is presented by the dado on the opposite side of the cella entrance under panel ii (Fig. 216). There we see five richly but uniformly dressed attendants evidently of rank, preceded by three ladies, all of tall stature, whom their peculiar head-dress distinguishes at a glance. The first from the right wears a bejewelled cap with rich pendants of the same shape as that of the princely lady under ii, but a little less ornate in its lower portion. The two to the left of her carry smaller bulb-shaped caps devoid of all ornament.

That the figures just described represent donatrices of high rank was easily recognized from the first. But my satisfaction was great when Chiang Ssü-yeh's reading of the above-mentioned inscription showed me that it was a princess from Yü-t'ien or Khotan who had dedicated this temple and left on its dado a record of her pious foundation.¹⁴ But even without this epigraphic detail I could not help being reminded by this procession, with its dignified graceful figures, of noble wall-paintings still further away to the west and of a far greater royal donatrix: I mean the famous mosaics of Ravenna. In San Vitale they place before our eyes the Empress Theodora with her ladies in all her regal pomp; again in San Apollinare Nuovo they show us great processions of saints carrying offerings which look strangely as if they might have served as models for the noble array of Bodhisattvas decorating the approach to more than one Ch'ien-fo-tung shrine. Devoid of any direct iconographic links as this resemblance is, it may yet prove not altogether fortuitous; for modern researches are making it increasingly clear how much of the inspiration which has influenced Byzantine art on the one side and Buddhist art on the other, as carried to Central Asia and the Far East, was derived more or less directly from the Orientalized Hellenistic art of the Near East.

It still remains to describe the wall-paintings that decorate the porch of Ch. VIII. They are of a type with which I did not meet elsewhere in a corresponding position. The one on the north wall (xvi) had suffered much damage, but there still remained recognizable in the centre a colossal saint (?) walking under an umbrella, preceded by some haloed figures and followed by rows of grey-robed monks with hands folded in worship or carrying offerings. Fortunately the fresco on the opposite wall, i (Figs. 215, 226), had fared better. It is a very spirited work, curiously recalling paintings of old Venetian masters by its rich colouring, free movement, and effect of *plein air*.¹⁵ It displays in the centre a Buddha with the right hand raised in the act of 'revolving the Wheel of Sovereignty', driving on a car which flying divinities at the wheels move through the air. Two gorgeous banners, showing dragons on white ground *semé* with green and blue flowers, float from the back of the car, with their fluttering ends marking rapid movement. A host of celestial attendants, including two carrying globes in their hands and one demon-like, rampant, escort the car in front and behind. Floating above on skilfully painted clouds are seen more groups of genii or saints fully robed and in poses which form a pleasing contrast to the rapid progress of the god's immediate *cortège*. The Buddha's figure has dark brown skin with an upper robe of pale pink gilt

Inscription naming princess of Khotan.

Mural paintings in porch of Ch. VIII.

¹⁴ See Appendix A, IV, for M. Chavannes' translation of this inscription and for notes explaining the historical interest of the title and family name by which the king of Khotan, father of the princess, is mentioned.

M. Pelliot, *B.É.F.E.O.*, viii. p. 504, alludes to this inscription and points out that the Ts'ao Yen-lu to whom the Khotan princess was married is named in the dynastic Annals as a chief of Tun-huang in the tenth century A.D.

Cf. regarding Ts'ao Yen-lu (A.D. 980-1001) M. Chavannes extract from the Sung Annals, Appendix A, V. c.

¹⁵ Among the colours fine shades of blue and green are specially abundant, and it is partly due to their prevalence that the photographs reproduced in Figs. 215, 226 completely fail in rendering the gradation of colours or even in showing all outlines with adequate clearness.