

on his right and Mahāsthāma on his left, the Kwannon and Seichi making up the triad of Amitābha (Amida) in Japanese Sukhāvātī. Between Amitābha and his two Bodhisattva assistants are placed in it Bhaiṣajyarāja and Bhaiṣajyasamudgata, disciples of Śākyamuni, and this makes it possible to identify the figures of disciples which often appear in our Sukhāvātī paintings on either side of the central Buddha.²¹

By the sides and in front of the triad, which in pose and dress usually reflects Indian hieratic tradition more closely than the other figures, we see seated or kneeling groups of smaller Bodhisattvas, varying in numbers but always richly ornamented. The broad main terrace which is occupied by these chief divinities and their attendants, filling the middle portion of the picture, is shown as rising above the lake of Sukhāvātī. On a smaller terrace, running out in front and on a lower level, we see seated a celestial orchestra composed of musicians who are dressed as Bodhisattvas but sometimes display more realistic masculine features. The various musical instruments played by them are of considerable archaeological interest and will be found discussed in the expert notes of Miss Schlesinger.²² The dancer, manifestly female, and probably an Apsaras, whose performance the music is meant to accompany, appears always prominently in the forefront of this terrace, engaged in graceful and rapid movement cleverly expressed by the floating garment and the long scarf waving in her hands.

Two separate terraces rising above the lake in the bottom corners of the picture accommodate each a subsidiary Buddha seated on his altar and attended by two minor Bodhisattvas.^{22a} On the stairs leading down from these terraces to the water there usually appear infants representing newly reborn souls in the act of moving upwards to take their place in the divine assembly, whose joyful abode they are to share thereafter.²³ On a raft or low platform over the lake in the centre of the foreground a Garuḍa is ordinarily presented with four sacred birds before him. Elsewhere on the water float lotus flowers in bud or open, sometimes with infant souls rising from them. The upper portion of the painting is always devoted to the representation of the Celestial Mansions showing halls with wide verandahs, double-storied pavilions, open shrines raised on flanking towers, etc., all in pure Chinese style and perspective. Closer study of this architecture would offer archaeological interest, just as, e.g., the representation of the valances depicted in front of the altars furnishes a very welcome explanation of the large patchwork valances which form such interesting items among the textile relics recovered from Wang Tao-shih's hoard.²⁴ The topmost part of the picture, where preserved,²⁵ shows the deep blue sky filled with small seated Buddhas floating on clouds; flying streamers and canopies; beribboned musical instruments, etc. In conclusion may be noted the frequent prevalence of green tones, especially in the colouring of the background, which is a striking feature of the Sukhāvātī and also of other wall-paintings in the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas.

In the series of paintings just discussed only one, Ch. lv. 0047, retains figures of donors. Poorly preserved as they are, they show distinct resemblance in dress and coiffure to the donors in

²¹ The number of these disciples varies in our paintings. In some they are shaven as monks (Ch. iv. 001; lv. 0047), in some their hair is close-cropped (*Ch. 0051, 0068; liii. 003). In Ch. xxxiii. 003; lviii. 0011 they are absent.

It is worth noting that the four Lokapālas whom the plan shows around the triad are not to be found in the Sukhāvātī paintings here discussed, though we have met with them above (p. 884) in the simplified representations Ch. xlvi. 008; lii. 004. They appear also in Maitreya's Heaven, lviii. 001 (see below, p. 890).

²² Cf. Appendix H; see also *Ch. lii. 003 in Descriptive

List, and above, p. 851.

^{22a} Regarding these subsidiary groups, which M. Petrucci considers always identical with the central Buddha and his attendant Bodhisattvas, cf. Appendix E, III. iv.

²³ For inscriptions defining the rank to be occupied by the infant souls in their new life, cf. Ch. xlvii. 001 (*Thousand B.*, Pl. XI) and Ch. 00216.

²⁴ Cf. for painted altar valances Ch. lviii. 0011; lii. 004 (Pl. LXII). For real ones, see below, pp. 899 sq.

²⁵ See e.g. Ch. 00216 (*Thousand B.*, Pl. XXX).

Minor groups of Bodhisattvas, etc.

Celestial music and dancing.

Groups below central assemblage.

Celestial mansions above.