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*The Thousand Buddhas: Ancient Buddhist Paintings from the Cave-Temples of Tun-huang on the Western Frontier of China.* Recovered and described by Aurel Stein, with an Introductory Essay by Laurence Binyon. Tokyo: Rinsen Book Co., 1978.

The work under review is, indeed, "extraordinary" in many ways. It consists of two sets of color and black-and-white plates. From plates 1 to 33 it measures about 25 × 21 inches, and from plates 34 to 48 the measurement is 16 × 12 inches. In addition, the text explains in detail each of the paintings. All the components are stored in a neatly-designed hard container. It weighs about 15 pounds and is priced at Yen: 98,000.00 (about \$500). Undoubtedly it is a very valuable book.

The original edition was jointly published by the Secretary of State for India of the British Government and the Trustees of the British Museum. The present edition was printed in Tokyo by the Rinsen Book Company in 1978, and the Academic Press is the agent in the U.S. We shall endeavor to examine the significant points of this collection and outline briefly the origin of these paintings.

The discovery early this century of the Buddhist literary treasure, which was concealed in a chamber in one of the One Thousand Buddhas Caves in Tun-huang marks an important event in Chinese history. It facilitates the study of Chinese culture, especially the social, religious, philosophical, and literary traditions of ancient China, on the basis of the huge collection of manuscripts written in Chinese, Tibetan, and other Asian languages. Additionally, an excellent collection of artifacts in the form of statues, frescoes, paintings of Buddhas and *bodhisattvas* on silk and paper, and printed documents from wooden blocks were also uncovered. There were two western scholars, viz., Aurel Stein and Paul Pelliot, who exerted themselves greatly in collecting the huge number of manuscripts and artifacts from these caves. The former took over six thousand scrolls to the British Museum, London, and the latter provided the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, with another two thousand scrolls. The present collection of about sixty Buddhist paintings is a part of this discovery.

The focus of these paintings is the pantheon of Mahāyāna Buddhism, in which Buddhas, *bodhisattvas*, guardian angels, and paradise congregations are abundantly represented. The Buddhas are Amitābha (plates 8, 10, 11), Bhaiṣajyaguru (plates 1, 2, 3, 36), Śākyamuni (plates 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 34, 37), and Tejaḥprabha (plate 38); the *bodhisattvas* are Avaloketiśvara (plates 14–24, 38, 41–44), Kṣitigarbha (plates 15, 34, 40), Maitreya (plate 9), Manjuśrī (plates 4, 5, 27), Samantabhadra (plates 4, 5, 30), and Tārā (plate 35); the guardian angels are Dhṛtarāṣṭra (plate 28), Vaiśravana (plates 26, 45), Vīrūpaḥṣa (plate 27), and miscellaneous works of demonic figures (plates 46, 48), saints and

monks (plate 32), hermit and horse-dragon (plate 33), and so forth. The several paradise scenes of Amitābha, Śākyamuni, and other Buddhas (plates 8, 6, 7, and 1, 2, 3) are large in size (some of them are about 7' × 5') and grand in style. They show a great assemblage of celestial beings such as *bodhisattvas*, disciples, guardian angels, nymphs, musicians, dancers, attendants, infants-on-lotus, and donors who pay homage to the principal Buddha in the center of the painting. The congregation convenes in a heavenly mansion of richly decorated terraces, courts, pavilions, lakes and elaborate structures in Chinese style. Everything in the composition is symmetrical, well-balanced, and harmonious. The details may be based on the *Sukhāvati-vyūha-sūtra* (*Taishō* No. 366), which describes the beauty of Amitābha Buddha's paradise. But it is the superb skill and imagination of the Chinese artist which transforms fantasy into creative reality. The creations are glorious in color and splendid in execution. In presenting the Buddhas, *bodhisattvas*, and *lokapālas*, the Chinese artists strictly follow the Graeco-Gandhāra tradition in the areas of features, poses, hair styles, apparel, drapery, and color scheme, while in illustrating the Jātaka (birth) stories or life of the Buddha as a prince, they take the liberty of painting the scenes and fashions entirely in the Chinese tradition. Occasionally one notices certain features of a Buddha or *bodhisattva* showing a greater resemblance to the "Chinese" type than that of the "Indian." It is probably due to the natural process of transformation. It is similar to what is known as the Central Asian, Tibetan or Southeast Asian types of Buddhist iconography.

From the numerous paintings dedicated to Amitābha Buddha, Kṣitigarbha and especially Avaloketiśvara *bodhisattvas* (who appeared in fifteen paintings in various forms, about one-third of the entire collection), one can envision the religious sentiment of that period (9th to 10th century A.D.). Amitābha and Kṣitigarbha are associated with saving the souls from purgatory and causing them to be reborn in the Land of Bliss, and Avaloketiśvara, popularly known as God (or Goddess) of Mercy, is a *bodhisattva* who is ever ready to save sentient beings from all kinds of suffering and disaster. The inscriptions of donors recorded in many of these paintings substantiate this religious feeling, which in turn would inspire faith and hope in men of future generations.

The descriptive text prepared by Stein and associates is useful in serving the reader as a guide to these paintings, but, unfortunately, Stein did not know Chinese. Being dependent on someone to interpret Chinese inscriptions for him, he was not aware of the fact that there were misinterpretations. Take, for instance, the statement on page 33, plate 20, in explaining the donor's votive:

The Chinese inscription in the left top corner describes the painting as a gift of a son in memory of his father.

This is with reference to the Chinese words:

Nü-ti-tzŭ Ch'iu-liang yung wei kung-yang

女弟子九娘永為供養

The correct translation is:

The female disciple Miss Number Nine made this for perpetual veneration and worship.

There is another type of error related to dates in the inscriptions. It is hard to detect unless one checks with Chinese historical documents. We have an example in plate 22 (page 34). Our translation of that inscription is as follows:

On the 15th day of the 7th Moon in the 10th year of T'ien-fu, the year of golden horse (keng-wu) (we) record the completion of the work.

The term "Ti'en-fu" (Heavenly Renewal) refers to one of the reign titles of Emperor Chao-tsung (888–904) of the T'ang dynasty. It lasted for about three and one-half years, from 901–904. Therefore, there is no such thing as the "10th year of T'ien-fu." On account of the zodiac sequence we are able to identify the year as 910 A.D. It is possible that due to difficulty in communication people in the Tun-huang area might not know the change of reign titles immediately.

This collection of Buddhist paintings offers an opportunity for the study of Buddhist art as transplanted from India through Central Asia to the Far East, and for examining the development of Chinese art in the T'ang period. Also, because of the close cooperation between art and religion one is given a chance to speculate on the subtle influence of popular Buddhism penetrating deeply into the heart of the Chinese masses through the artistic creations of Buddhas and *bodhisattvas*.

It is needless to say that art historians, lovers of Oriental art, and scholars of Asian civilization will greatly benefit by the study of this unique collection of Tun-huang paintings. As the price of the book appears to be prohibitive, may one hope that museums, art galleries, and university libraries might extend a helping hand in the matter?

W. Pachow