

PLATE III

PAINTED FRAGMENTS FROM MĪRĀN, SHRINE V

M. V. Dado

THE general plan of the building closely resembles that of M. III. This portion of a dado is from the left hand (going clockwise) of the northern arc of the circular cella surrounding the stūpa enclosed in the shrine. The component portions were photographed in New Delhi, for colour reproduction, in sections and in joining them on the flat, the border lines are necessarily slightly distorted; but this does not affect the accuracy of the continuity of the scheme. According to Sir Aurel Stein's account the dado extended right round the cella wall, interrupted by the entrance opening on the east side, and possibly by a similar opening on the west, where, however, the structure was in too ruined a condition to afford evidence.

The general scheme consists of a heavy floral garland, carried on the shoulders of youthful supporters placed at regular intervals and undulating completely round the shrine. From each hollow formed by the downward droop of the festoon between supporters rises a typical head and bust of a man or woman.

It is a motive widely used in Gandhāra sculpture, but it does not seem to have survived into later periods in India or Central Asia. Festoons of fruit and flowers, depending from ox-skulls, were used to adorn temples in ancient Rome as offerings; and the motive, in decoration, has persisted widely in the West, but not quite in the form of a continuous garland carried by human supporters. In the Renaissance and later, the festoon hung from skulls, masks, ribbon bows, or rosettes.

The supporters in our example, reminiscent of Italian *amorini* who have adopted Eastern habits, are sometimes clothed in Persian garments consisting of a narrow-sleeved tunic and Phrygian cap, and sometimes only in a scanty loin-cloth.

The first supporter on the left is of Persian type with a very attractive, intelligent, and animated face. He is dressed in green with a Mithraic cap of the same colour. In the hollow between him and the next supporter was a female head and bust, now too defaced to make out. Quoting Stein: 'she was dressed in a reddish-brown vest with black stole' and 'the right hand seemed to hold the end of a three-stringed musical instrument'. The next supporter is also faded. He seems to face to the left, and the fingers of his left hand, grasping the garland, appear just above