

practice, corresponds with armour worn by soldiers in the army of Buddha's enemy Māra, represented on a sculptured stone fragment from Gandhāra in the Lahore Museum. The practical advantage of the upward overlap of the scales lies in the greater flexibility afforded than by having the scales arranged in the reverse way. Other points of interest in this figure are discussed in *Ancient Khotan*.<sup>1</sup>

The wall painting appears to be a confused composition, not fully understood, and for this reason may seem wanting in coherence. It obviously illustrates some legend and has particular significance in presenting a figure which at once recalls the western conception of Venus, here assuming the role of a Nāginī rising from the waters of a tank or lotus lake. The resemblance to the Medicean Venus is so close as to give the immediate impression of that, or one of many similar Greek or Roman versions, being the source of inspiration. We recognize the slight crook of the left knee, the forward droop of the body, the youthful breasts and, most significant, the action of the arms in bringing the beautiful hands into the positions indicative of maidenly modesty. Further aid is afforded to this assumption of virginal coyness by the introduction of an unorthodox vine-leaf 'apron' where western convention would prescribe the traditional fig-leaf. Only one other example in Central Asian art of a leaf 'apron' is known to me, and this occurs on a stone figure of Hāritī among the Gandhāra sculptures in the Lahore Museum, (No. 2100). The leaf in that case seems to hang from a girdle round the hips, underneath the long flowing *sārī*, which because of the introduction of the leaf may be presumed to be semi-transparent. That western influence might be present in the design of the Nāginī is not improbable when one considers the fine Graeco-Buddhist seals found at Yōtkan in the Khotan region and the seal impressions with figures of Athene Promachos, Pallas Athene, and Eros on wooden documents of the second and third centuries A.D. recovered by Stein from sites in the Taklamakān Desert.<sup>2</sup> It is not unlikely that seal gems bearing the figure of this Venus should have reached the Khotan district. But the presence of the leaf 'apron' on such a figure in a Greek or Roman gem is very doubtful and is perhaps an adaptation by the artist.

In the character of a Nāginī our Venus is here decked with ornaments suited to her part, consisting of armlets, bracelets, necklet, and, festooned round her hips, cords carrying rows of little girelot bells. The mass of her hair seems to be tied with a light-coloured band, and it is probable that she bore as cognizance a snake

<sup>1</sup> See *Ancient Khotan*, pp. 251-3.

<sup>2</sup> See *Ancient Khotan*, p. 354.