

crest, now lost in the general obscurity of that part of the picture. Standing at her right side is a small nude male figure, seeming with outstretched arms and up-lifted foot to be trying to climb up her hip and to be impatiently pleading for her assistance towards his ambition. From the rectangular stone-edged tank or lake with its graceful lotus flowers issues a canal or river similarly bordered; and along the near bank can be seen two or more dappled horses trotting towards the left. Above the saddle of the right-most horse appear the head and shoulders of a man. Whether he is in the stream, as Stein believed, or sitting on the horse is not clear, although the saddle seems to be empty. Farther to the left is the upper part of a duck, and beyond, in the same direction near another dappled horse or riding it, is another man. Whether it is the repetition of the same person and horse illustrating successive incidents in a legend is a problem at present unsolved.

Stein considered that there was evidence in the picture itself and in certain surviving traces of local tradition, indicating the probability of its illustrating a legend current at the time of the visit of the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Hsüan-tsang in the 7th century A.D. As recorded by Hsüan-tsang the story tells of the sacrifice of a great officer of state in the interests of the people's welfare. A local stream, upon which irrigation depended, having ceased to flow the king asked advice of an Arhat (Buddhist priest) as to the cause and remedy of the trouble. The Arhat recommended propitiation of the 'dragon' (Nāga) dwelling in the stream by sacrifice. This being done, a woman emerged from the water and explained that the flow of the stream had failed owing to the death of her husband—the Nāga. She, the Nāginī, said that matters would be righted if she were given a minister of noble birth in marriage. Whereupon a great officer of state offered himself as the sacrifice on condition that the king should found a convent. This was agreed to, and the minister, mounted on a steed, entered the water and disappeared. The stream resumed its flow and, shortly after, the horse reappeared bearing on his back a great drum of sandalwood within which was a letter to the king asking that the drum might be hung to the south-east of the city where it would sound an alarm at the approach of an enemy. Neither Stein nor I could find the drum in the picture but it may have become obscured in the general deterioration of the surface. If the picture is a record of the legend the little man beside the Nāginī would represent the minister of noble birth, his size being appropriate to his relative importance.