

China. For, from a record of Marinus of Tyre, preserved in Ptolemy's *Geography*, we know that men of much the same origin, Roman Eurasians, as it were, were accustomed to visit the 'land of the Seres', *i.e.* China proper, in connexion with the silk trade, and that long before the probable date of the Miran shrines.

It was easy to make sure by repeated tracings of exact copies of this and another short Kharoshthi inscription on the frieze which refers to Prince Vessantara shown below it. But climatic and other difficulties rendered it practically impossible for me at the time to secure such a photographic record of the frescoes as would do full justice to their artistic importance. I soon convinced myself that, owing to the peculiar brittleness of the plaster on which they were painted, any attempt to remove larger pieces of the frescoed surface would result in mere destruction, unless the wall behind were first systematically cut away to permit of safe detachment. Such a laborious task would have required at least a month, if not more. It was impossible then to spare this time without grave risk that the long journey on which I was bent through the Lop desert to Tun-huang would be rendered impracticable by the melting, as the season advanced, of the ice of the salt springs on which, at a number of stages, we should have to depend for water. So, reluctantly enough, I had to leave this difficult task for later.

My regret at this necessity proved only too well justified. When in March 1908 I was able to let Naik Ram Singh return for that task from the neighbourhood of Khotan, my skilful and ever-plucky 'handy man' reached the site only to fall there a victim to that fell disease of glaucoma before