

With the same aim they are given the air of rising towards him; this is expressed by the inclination of the shoulders and the graceful upward curve of the wings, which with their long feathers separated at the extremities distinctly suggest fluttering.

But where did the conception of these youthful winged figures originally take shape, and how did they come to be depicted here on the walls of a Buddhist temple? The first of these questions is more difficult to answer with precision than might appear at first thought. If we take into account the general classical basis of all this art and the winged forms occasionally met with in Graeco-Buddhist relievos as representations of certain divine attendants, we can scarcely resist the conclusion that it is the young winged Eros of Greek mythology to whom these figures of the Miran dado must be traced back as their ultimate ancestor. But there is plenty to warn us that this descent cannot have been without intermediate stages in which an infiltration of Oriental conceptions has left its mark. To put it quite plainly, the figures before us, with their youthful but not childlike looks, their low-cut garments and quasi-sexless features, suggest far more closely the angels of some early Christian Church than the love-gods which originally served as their models.

If the possibility of influence exercised by early Christian iconography should seem too startling, it will be well to remember that the idea of angels as winged celestial messengers was familiar to more than one religious system of Western Asia long before the rise of Christianity, and was in particular firmly established within the region of ancient Iran through which all elements of classical art and culture must have passed before being transplanted to Central Asia. Nowhere in the Hellenized East, not even in Egypt, have graphic representations of angels survived from a sufficiently early period to throw light on the question as to where and when the Cupids of classical mythology underwent transformation into that type of winged figures which the painter of the Miran fresco dado made use of for the decoration of a Buddhist shrine. Yet there is so distinct a suggestion of Semitic traits in most