

of these faces that one's thoughts are instinctively carried to regions like Syria, Mesopotamia, and Western Iran as likely ground for that original adaptation.

It would be tempting, and yet for the critical student useless, to carry such speculations further at present. But fortunately we are on safer ground when considering the question how those angels came to figure in the fresco decoration of a Buddhist shrine on the very confines of true China. The Graeco-Buddhist sculpture of Gandhara furnishes examples proving beyond all doubt that figures copied from the winged Eros were actually used on Indian soil to represent that class of celestial attendants which Buddhist mythology, borrowing from still older Hindu lore, knows by the name of Gandharvas.

So if ever a Central-Asian Herodotus had visited this temple of Miran and had cared to enquire from the priest in charge about the significance of the winged beings so strangely reminiscent of figures he might have seen before in regions where Buddhism had never effected a foothold, the local guardian would not have felt in the least embarrassed about labelling them Gandharvas. Admissible as this interpretation would be from the purely iconographic point of view, it yet seems to me very doubtful whether we need it at all; for on excavating a closely adjoining mound, as described in the next chapter, we discovered there a Buddhist shrine of exactly this type and displaying, below a frieze with pious scenes from orthodox Buddhist legend, a dado decorated with figures of an altogether secular and frankly Western character.