

bodices, green on the left and flesh-coloured on the right, with cloaks coloured in the reverse order across the left shoulder; the scale-armour skirt over the hips and abdomen is also recognizable in the photograph. The left figure, wearing bangles on the right arm, seemed to point towards the animals, while the other raised the left hand in a gesture which apparently expressed abhorrence or pity. Above the shoulder of this figure three Kharoṣṭhī characters tentatively read by me as *tha mi tra* (?) were faintly traceable. On the extreme right, and quite close to the edge of the wall still retaining a wooden door-jamb, appeared a small youthful figure astride a galloping animal which seemed to have the body of a yellow, black-spotted beast, but the head and neck of a horse (Fig. 141). The rider, lightly clad as if in a vest and 'shorts', had his arms clasped round the animal's neck. By the side of his breast I could just make out two Kharoṣṭhī characters which seemed to read *eṣe*, like the first two visible on the inscribed lintel at the beginning of the frieze.

I could not reasonably hope that these sorry remnants of the frieze on the wall of the northern hemicycle would help towards the interpretation of the scenes presented. It was different with the animated procession which unrolled itself before me on the fascinating frieze of the remaining southern arc. Strangely reminiscent of the distant Hellenistic West as were the background with its fine Pompeian red and a good deal of the details in the drawing, there could be no possible doubt that the subject of the frieze was taken from some Buddhist sacred story. Yet my knowledge of Buddhist hagiology failed me at the time for the identification of it, nor could I subsequently find leisure for a systematic search even when the needful books might have been available. So it was a special gratification to me when, in the summer of 1910, the puzzle as to the subject of the frieze was solved by my friend, M. Foucher. From my photographs and description he very soon recognized scenes from the legend of King Viśvantara (Vessantara), well known among the hundreds of *Jātakas* or 'Stories of the Buddha's former births'.

Interpreta-
tion of
painted
frieze.

The legend, contained in the Pāli *Jātaka* and found also in various Sanskrit versions of the cycle, must have been particularly popular; for not only is it represented among the sculptures of the old Indian school decorating the Stūpas of Sānchi and Amarāvātī, but it also is one of the few *Jātakas* of which representations have so far come to light among the reliefs of the Gandhāra region. Considering that the legend was localized at one of the famous sacred sites of Gandhāra, near the present Shāhbāzgarhi, it is certainly curious that the illustration of it in Graeco-Buddhist sculpture is confined to three fragments from the relievo panels that once decorated the sides of the Jamālgarhi stairs and are now at the British Museum.³ The story is related at great length in the early Pāli version of the *Jātaka*, and, as it is conveniently accessible in the translation and otherwise well known, the briefest summary may suffice here.⁴

Story of
Vessantara-
jātaka.

It tells how Prince Vessantara, in whom the Buddha had incarnated himself in a previous birth, being heir of a royal family and imbued with excessive devotion to charity, made a pious gift of a wonderful white elephant which could produce rain, as well as of its priceless ornaments, to certain Brahmans. At the desire of the people, who felt alarmed at the loss thus suffered by their kingdom, Vessantara was banished by the king, his father, into the forest. As he left the royal city, taking his wife Maddī (Madri), who insisted on sharing his exile, and his two young children mounted on a chariot, he gave away loads of precious things. He had 'distributed to beggars all he had', and was moving away from the city, when he was approached by four Brahman mendicants who had come too late for the great giving of alms and now asked for the horses of his chariot. After he had

Prince
Vessantara's
exile.

³ See Foucher, *L'art du Gandhāra*, i. pp. 270 sq., 283 sqq. In the latter place references are also given to other sculptured representations of the legend and to its

mention in texts.

⁴ Cf. E. B. Cowell and W. H. D. Rouse, *The Jātaka*, vi. pp. 246-305.