

tradition of Buddhism had reached the empire, before Indian imagery had become familiar and before the Mahāyāna had been developed. In the first preaching of the religion in China the person of Śākyamuni must have held a much more important position than in later doctrine. Perhaps, therefore, in these same scenes we may recognize the survival of a very ancient pictorial tradition, fixed by its first practitioners.¹³

The present state of our knowledge in general concerning the early iconography of Chinese Buddhism and the special limitations of my own would not justify my expressing a definite opinion on this important question. But there are certain observations of an archaeological nature which appear to me to have a direct bearing on the problem. In the first place, it is necessary to call special attention to the evidence furnished by a remarkable series of bas-reliefs representing scenes of Gautama Buddha's Life to be found in one of the Buddhist rock-cut shrines at Yün-kang, a site of northern Shan-hsi, the abundant sculptural remains of which have been first rendered accessible to research by a magnificent publication of M. Chavannes.¹⁴ Executed about the middle of the fifth century A.D., these sculptures represent the earliest monuments so far known of Buddhist art in China. That numerous features in them attest the influence exercised by Gandhāra sculpture has been duly pointed out by MM. Chavannes and Petrucci, and may be considered as certain.¹⁵ Traces of this Graeco-Buddhist influence are unmistakable in the eleven relievo panels, just referred to, of the second Yün-kang grotto which illustrate episodes of the legendary Life of Gautama Buddha.¹⁶ Yet by the side of them we meet there also with clear signs of a transformation which figures and costumes had undergone in what appears to me a distinctly Chinese sense.¹⁷ In illustration of this I may refer in particular to the presentation of Prince Siddhārtha and some less sacred personages in the scenes of the 'Four Encounters'.¹⁸

Life scenes
in Yün-kang
relievos.

These very scenes indicate another important point of contact between our pictorial representa-

¹³ See *Exhibition of Stein Collection*, pp. 9 sq.

¹⁴ See Chavannes, *Mission archéologique dans la Chine septentrionale*, 1909, Planches, I, Pl. CVII-CXII.

¹⁵ Cf. Chavannes, *Mission archéologique*, i. pp. 294 sqq.; also *T'oung-pao*, 1908, p. 642, quoted by Petrucci, *Revue de l'Université de Bruxelles*, 1910, pp. 497 sq.

¹⁶ See Chavannes, *Mission archéologique*, Planches, I, Nos. 204-14; i. pp. 300 sqq. For iconographic features which the Yün-kang sculptures in general undoubtedly derived from corresponding representations among Gandhāra relievos, cf. Petrucci, *Revue de l'Université de Bruxelles*, 1910, pp. 499 sqq. To these might be added such architectural details as the roof of the royal palace (Nos. 205, 207, 208-10), which recalls the cut pediment surmounted by a trefoil arch so frequent in Gandhāra relievos (cf. Foucher, *L'art du Gandhāra*, i. p. 138), the domed portion in the Yün-kang representation being dwarfed and the side volutes disproportionately developed; the acanthus frieze shown below the roof, a very common motif in Gandhāra (cf. Foucher, *ib.* i. p. 240, Figs. 96, 99, 115, 211, etc.); the shape of the ceiling shown over interiors, with half-bust figures rising on either side (Nos. 206, 211; cf. Foucher, *ib.*, Figs. 76, 77); the classical rosettes used for filling spaces (Chavannes, Nos. 207, 214) just as in the frescoes of Mirān (see above, p. 524).

Perhaps it may not be too bold to recognize a western motif also in the fine vine-leaf tracery which decorates the upper frieze framing the Yün-kang relievos (see Chavannes, Nos. 204, 205, 208-12; cf. Foucher, *L'art du Gandhāra*, i.

p. 222, Figs. 127, 174).

¹⁷ The evidence of this transformation has been touched upon in its main outlines by M. Petrucci, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 1911, vi. pp. 207 sq.

¹⁸ Thus the high conical head-dress worn by the Prince as well as by some attendant figures in the panels Nos. 207-10 looks just as typically Chinese as the black cap which he shares in some of our banners with a number of other actors in the scenes (see e.g. Ch. 0030, Pl. LXXVI). It is noteworthy that the same conical head-dress appears also in our banners on the heads of ministers or courtiers (see e.g. lv. 0011, *Desert Cathay*, Pl. VI; Ch. xlix. 006; lv. 0016, *Thousand B.*, Pl. XII) as well as of Chandaka, Ch. xlvi. 007, Pl. LXXV.

Its very close resemblance to the high caps worn by the donor figures in certain Lung-mên sculptures of the seventh century (see Chavannes, *loc. cit.*, Nos. 292-6) and seen already in the British Museum painting of Ku K'ai-chih (fourth century) is significant, leaving no doubt as to its Chinese character.

In the same way the saddle-cloth on the Prince's horse in the Yün-kang relievos (Chavannes, *ib.*, Nos. 207-10, 212) is as distinctly Chinese as that seen wherever horses appear in our banners (see e.g. Ch. xlvi. 007 and lv. 0012 in Pl. LXXV; lxi. 002, Pl. LXXVI; lv. 0016, *Thousand B.*, Pl. XII). The difference from the Gandhāra fashion is made quite clear by comparing, e.g., Foucher, *loc. cit.*, i. Fig. 182, or above, Fig. 134, for an example from the Mirān frescoes.