

ART. V.—*Note on Pl. xxviii. fig. 1, of Mr. Fergusson's "Tree and Serpent Worship," 2nd Edition.* By S. BEAL, Professor of Chinese, London University.

I BEG leave to call attention to a very curious result, drawn from a comparison of the two versions, viz. that the Vaggi or Vaggians of Vesâlî are the same as the Yue-chi of the Chinese.

If my version be referred to, it will be seen that I was at a loss how to restore the Chinese symbols used in the narrative, viz. Yue-chi; I put the word *Getæ* in form of a query, in the first instance, but afterwards used the expression as I found it, viz. Yue-chi.

But from Mr. Davids' translation it is made plain that the Chinese symbols are here equivalent to Vaggi or Vaggians. Seeing this, I was led to look further, and to my surprise I found that M. Léon Feer, in his edition of the "*Sûtra of 42 Articles*," p. 47, had already identified the Yue-chi of the Chinese with the Vriggis of India. He does so, indeed, by way of query, but, undoubtedly, his restoration is a right one. In my version of the *Sûtra* I had adopted the usual equivalent "*Getæ*" for *Ta-yue-chi*, and, although I do not think that the *Ta-yue-chi* must necessarily be the same as the Yue-chi, yet certainly the last combination is properly restorable to Vriggi or Vaggi.

This led me to seek further, and I found from various quarters that the Vaggi, or the Samvaggi, or combined Vaggians, must have been Scythians.

General Cunningham, in his "*Ancient Geography of India*," p. 447, observes that "in the time of Buddha the Vregis or Waggis were divided into several clans, as the Lichhavis, the Vardehis, and the Tirabhuktis. The exact

number of their clans would appear to have been eight, as criminals were arranged before the eight clans, or a jury composed of one member from each of the separate divisions of the tribe." They are called by the people of the North the Samvaggis or "united Vaggis."

But, regarding the Vaggi and the Lichhavi as the same people, we are told by Mr. Hodgson that the Litsavi, or in Tibetan Litsabyis, are the so-called Scyths ("Collected Essays," p. 17, Trübner's edition).

And M. Foucaux, "*Lalita Vistara*," p. 137, identifies the Litsabyis with the Vaggians of Vesâlî.

Now one of the chief incidents in the history of the Vaggians of Vesâlî, as it is narrated in the *Parinibbâna Sutta*, and in the *Life of Buddha* by Asvaghosha in Chinese, is the earnestness with which they contended for a portion of the relics of Buddha's body after its cremation, over which they desired to erect a Stûpa.

And we are also told how, when they had obtained their share of the relics, they raised a Tchaitya, and instituted a grand fête in honour of the occasion.

It occurred to me that the scene depicted, Pl. xxxviii. fig. 1, "Tree and Serpent Worship," referred to the feast of this dedication. It was necessary, however, to connect this scene with Vesâlî. I was agreeably surprised to find that the scene immediately underneath the Chaitya feast was one certainly connected with Vesâlî. It is the scene at the Monkey Tank in that place, where the two monkeys offered a pot of honey to Buddha. It is related in Julien ii. 387, "A little distance," he says, "to the west of the Monkey Tank is a Stûpa. Here the monkeys, taking Buddha's alms dish, climbed a tree and filled it with honey." The scene on the pillar must refer to this.

But, again, taking the scene below this, we see, first of all, that it relates to the place where Buddha *stopped* (denoted by the flat stone), followed by men and by *Kinnaras*. The figures in the scene before us point to this.

But, again, the connected scene of the Deva standing in a position of communication (*ekamantam*) with Buddha, in all

probability represents Māra advancing towards Buddha, and addressing to him this prayer, "Now is the time to enter on the bliss of Nirvāṇa." The story is well told, both in the Parinibbāṇa and by Asvaghosha. We recognize Māra in this scene by the presence of his three or four daughters, who are always associated with him, and especially in the temptation scene, of which this is but the complement. Now these identifications connect the entire group here depicted with Vesālī.

The dedication of the Tope, then, we argue, is the festival held by the Vaggi at Vesālī. If so, we have in this a satisfactory explanation of the dress and general appearance of the actors in the scene; they were Scyths. And their appearance fully bears this out. Mr. Fergusson was so impressed with it, that he describes this scene as the most interesting of all the Sanchi sculptures.

The fact of these Samvaggi, or combined Scythians, being settled at this early time in the Ganges valley, is an important ethnographical item in our knowledge. We see why the shape of this tope differs from the others, and approaches that of the Kâbul type, and we can also understand how the influence of these Northern tribes, after their conversion to Buddhism, would cause the spread of the doctrine they professed among their fellow-countrymen in the Kâbul valley, and thus account for the strong hold Buddhism took on the Northern tribes at a very early date.

I think it also goes to confirm the idea that the Sākya, to whom Buddha himself belonged, were a Turanian tribe, and in sympathy with these Vaggi, whom Buddha resembles in so many personal distinctions.