

Fig. 4 Upper panel J: Māyā recounts her dream.



The double panel J on the north side of stair H has two scenes of the birth of Prince Siddhārtha. The upper panel (Fig. 4) shows king Śuddhodana on a throne listening to queen Māyā, who may be telling the king of her dream of an elephant entering her womb. The lower panel of J (Fig. 5) has Māyā in the garden of Lumbinī, Nepal, where she asked to rest on the way to her parents' house, as Guillon (2001) noted.¹⁰ Māyā stands holding a *śāla* tree, in which position, according to Buddhist tradition, she gave birth through her side.

The reliefs on three registers I (left on stairway H) show Māyā leaving for her father's kingdom; in the middle register king Śuddhodana sits on a horse seeing her off; and on the lowest register, the queen is depicted with two retainers holding parasols.¹¹ (Fig. 6) On the north side stairway M (with wings L, N) in the middle and two double panels K and O on the left and right of stairway

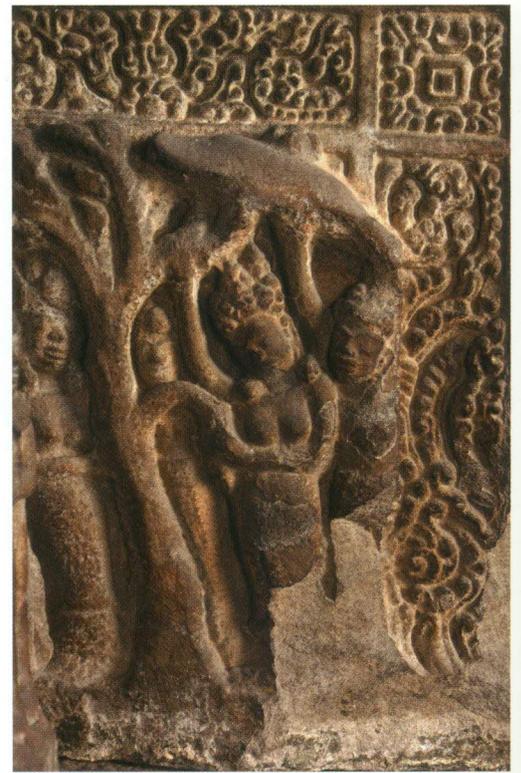


Fig. 5 Lower panel J: Lumbinī birth.

10 Guillon (2001) wrote 'the scene on the lower panel which takes place in a wood or a park, is that it shows queen Māyā in the Lumbini grove at the time of the Bodhisattva's birth.' Nandana Chutiwongs (2011: 22) however had a different reading: 'The three elegant ladies, shaded by a parasol of honour and coyly enjoying themselves among the flowering trees in the atmosphere, which suggests love and romance, can only be identified as the three lovely daughters of Māra, who came in response to the summons of their father and lord. In the panel above, they are shown to have arrived and are reporting themselves to the enthroned God of Desires.'

11 Nandana Chutiwongs (2011) interprets three scenes on wing I differently: 'Māra among followers (below); One of Māra's sons on their way to join the council of war (middle); Māra in council of war with sons and daughters (above).'

Fig. 6. Wing I of the stairway H.

