

Map of P'ong Tük.

The excavations at P'ong Tük and their importance for the ancient history of Siam (1)

BY G. CŒDÈS.

P'ong Tük is the name of a small village in the province of Ratburi, which has been frequently mentioned in the local press, especially in the Siamese papers, as a place where sensational discoveries have been made since the month of July 1927.

My intention is to give here a kind of report on the work done at P'ong Tük by the Archaeological Section of the Royal Institute. In the first part of this paper, I shall relate the story of the discoveries and show the progress of the excavations. In the second part, I shall discuss the age and the particularities of the building and objects discovered at P'ong Tük and explain their importance. But, it must be kept in mind that the excavations are still in progress, and that it would be premature to draw definite conclusions from what has been found up to date.

The first news of strange discoveries being made in the province of Ratburi was broadcasted by the *Daily Mail* in its issue of the 28th July. Under the heading "Ratburi farmer digs up giant skeleton among gold and silver Buddha statues," the paper stated that a peasant, tilling the soil in his farm on July 15, unearthed a small cave in the ground where ancient gold, silver and brass statues of the Buddha were discovered. According to the report, by the side of these statues was the skeleton of a body alleged to be nearly twice the size of an ordinary man. The skull measured nearly a foot in diameter. The paper added that the natives heard of the find and flocked to the place to dig for other treasures, the skeleton being broken to pieces to be distributed among them.

(1) This paper was read at a Meeting of the study-section of History, Archaeology, Philology and Literature, held at the National Museum on December 2, 1927.

It was not long before the story reached the ears of the Royal Institute. It was received with some scepticism: however, H. R. H. Prince Damrong decided to take a chance, and asked me to go and make enquiries on the spot.

My first visit took place on August 12. I found that the district concerned was within easy reach from Ban Pong. From the railway station, you drive 15 kilom. along the road towards Kanburi, and you reach a place called T'a Wa. P'ong Tük, the actual site where digging was reported, is just opposite T'a Wa, on the right bank of the Meklong river.

Before crossing the river, I halted for a while in the house of the P'u Yai Ban, a well-to-do Chinese, who gave me interesting information. He confirmed the statement that excavations had recently taken place, and had attracted a big crowd. But he said, this was not the first time that antiquities had come to the light at P'ong Tük. Some thirty years ago, at a place now called the San Chao, a Chinese had accidentally dug up two bronze images of the Buddha. In the course of time, the man saw his business steadily prosper, and finally went back to China, with the two images, which were evidently the cause of his sudden fortune. My informant added that he had himself found some antiquities on the other side of the river, at a place where the bank has been eaten up by the current. He showed me a small bronze Buddha of pre-khmer style and a votive tablet, identical with one, which he presented some years ago to Prince Damrong⁽¹⁾. His share in the recent discoveries was a kind of cup made of terra-cotta (Pl. 15, above, right), and he gave me the names of the owners of some bronze images.

Provided with this useful information, I crossed over to the other side of the river, and after a few minutes' walk through the orchards, I reached the San Chao. Around the small Chinese

(1) Now in the National Museum and reproduced in G. Coëdès, *Siamese votive Tablets*, J. Siam Soc., XX, Pl. I. (The place of discovery of this tablet is Dong Sak, near P'ong Tük, and not *Jaiya*, as mentioned on p. 17).

temple erected by the grateful Chinese on the spot where he had found the Buddhas which had made him rich, I noticed a number of big blocks of laterite lying on the ground, some shaped like round columns, and I earmarked the place as a promising field for eventual excavations.

At a short distance to the South-West of the San Chao, in the middle of a plantation of bananas owned by a Chinese, I visited the site of the recent excavations. At first sight, I was rather disappointed: there was no trace of building or structure of any kind, nothing but bricks and small blocks of laterite scattered on the ground in the greatest confusion; there was absolutely no clue as to the probable age and nature of that mound of earth which could not even be called a ruin, except the presence of a big and flat piece of limestone with a hole pierced in one of its sides (Pl. 8, above). Knowing that such stones, whose significance is still a mystery to be solved, are generally found associated with monuments of the same age as the original building at P'ra Pat'om, I entertained hopes that the objects dug up from that mound might also be of the pre-khmer period.

I was then taken back to a group of houses on the bank of the river, in order to meet the owners of the images mentioned to me by the P'u Yai Ban of T'a Wa. I was shown several bronze Buddhas (Pl. 15, below; 16, right; 17): and I was informed that other objects found at the same time in the banana-plantation and including something resembling an old lamp had been taken away to T'a Wa, where I might have a look at them.

I crossed the river back to T'a Wa where the owners of the antiquities were invited to come forward with their finds. A man came with some fragments of votive tablets, another with a vase (Pl. 15, above, left), a third one brought me a piece of bronze, whose original design struck me at first sight, and which I put aside for a further examination. Then I told the assembly that I had heard something about a lamp and that I should be glad to see it. Few minutes elapsed and an old man came forward with a vessel, in

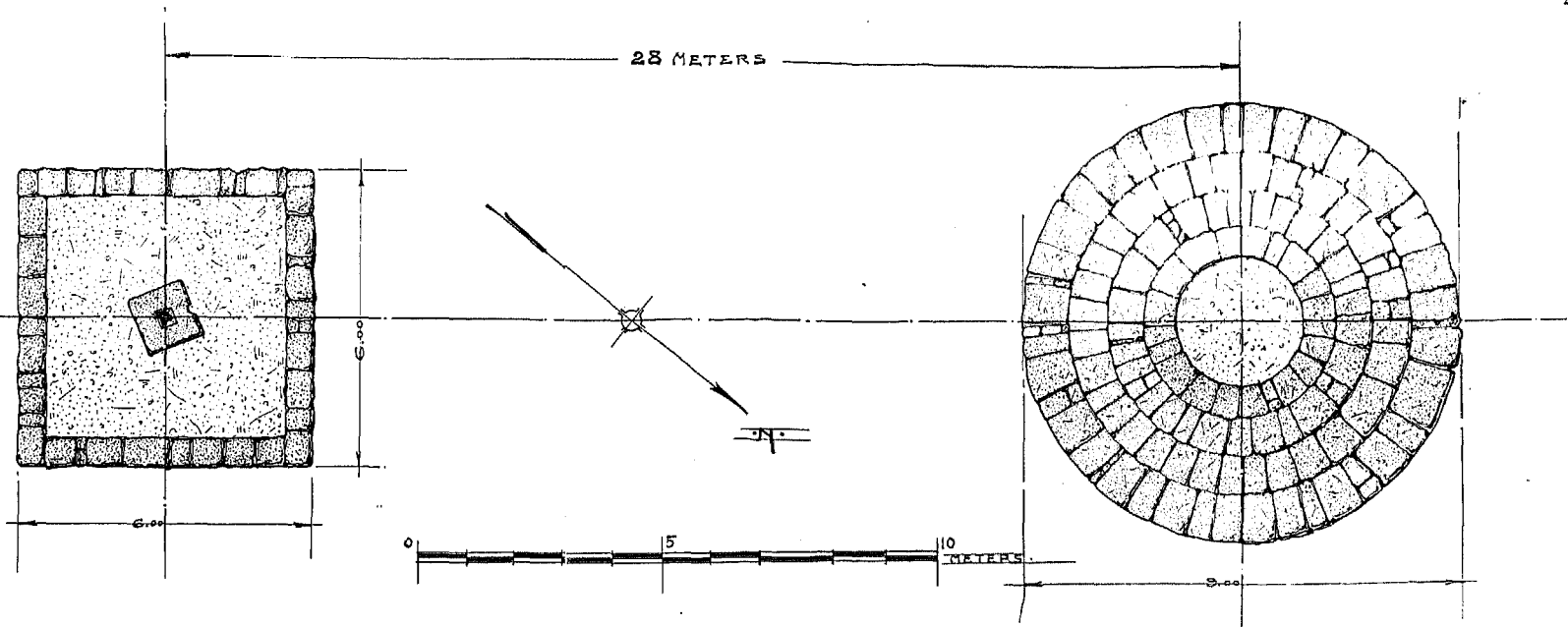
which I had no difficulty to recognise an oil-lamp of Greco-roman style. But the handle was missing! I tried the piece of bronze which I had kept aside, which, to the surprise of the owners, fitted exactly (Pl. 19).

A Roman lamp is a thing which you don't come across every day in Siam, and I decided to bring it back to Bangkok, to prevent it from being divided again between two different owners, or from vanishing into some private collection. After a long discussion and with the help of a few ticals, I entered into possession of the lamp, and brought it back to Bangkok, where it aroused an unusual interest. With the sanction of His Majesty the King, the Royal Institute decided to make a survey of the P'ong Tük district, and to start systematic excavations.

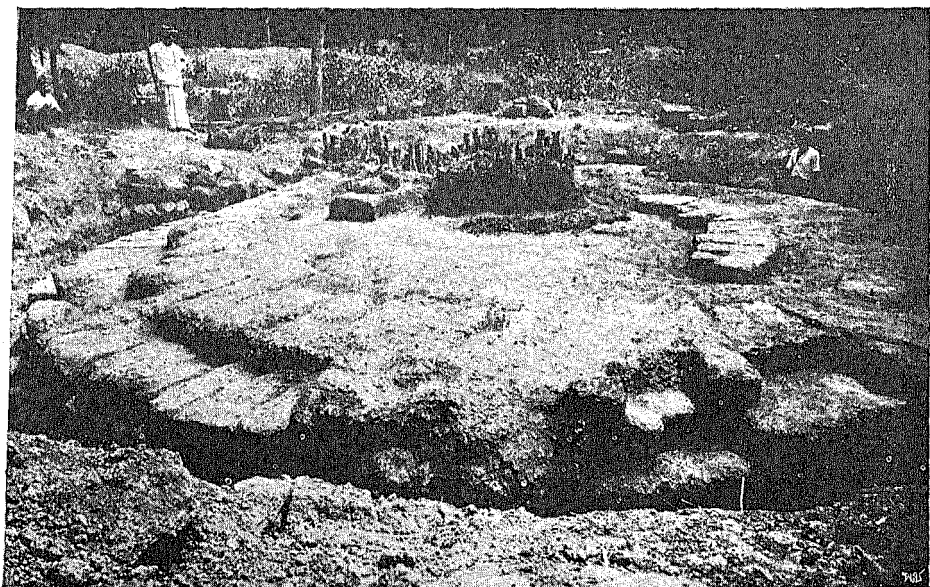
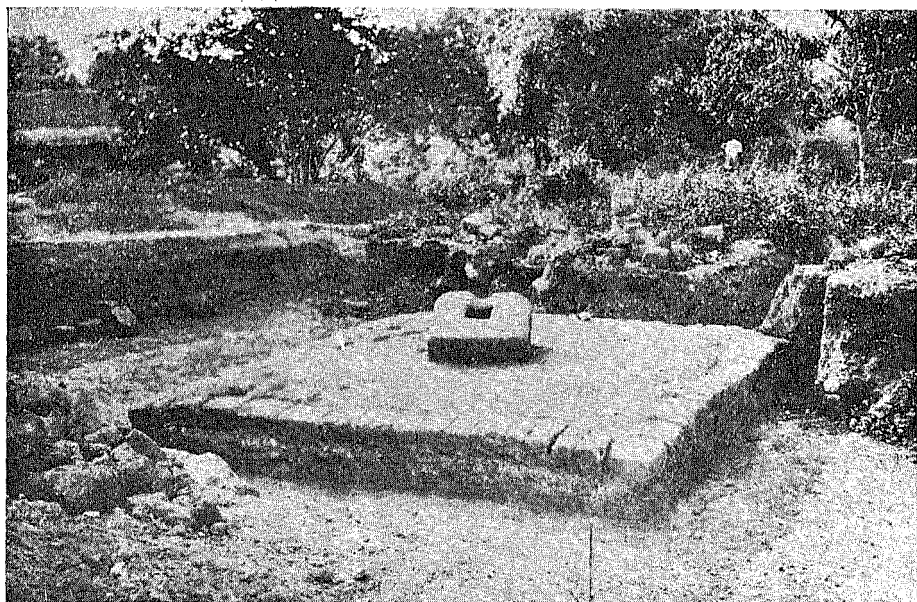
On August 16, I went once more to P'ong Tük in order to delimit the area in which digging should be carried out, and to enter into negotiations with the owners of the land. With this survey (Pl. 1), my task ended, and Signor Manfredi, architect of the Archaeological Service, took over the direction of the excavations. He began his work on August 27, five days before the visit of H. R. H. Prince Damrong, which took place on September 2, and which resulted in the acquisition by the National Museum of most of the antiquities which I had traced at the time of my first tour.

During the last three months, the work has made a steady progress, and Signor Manfredi, is to be congratulated on the results he has obtained.

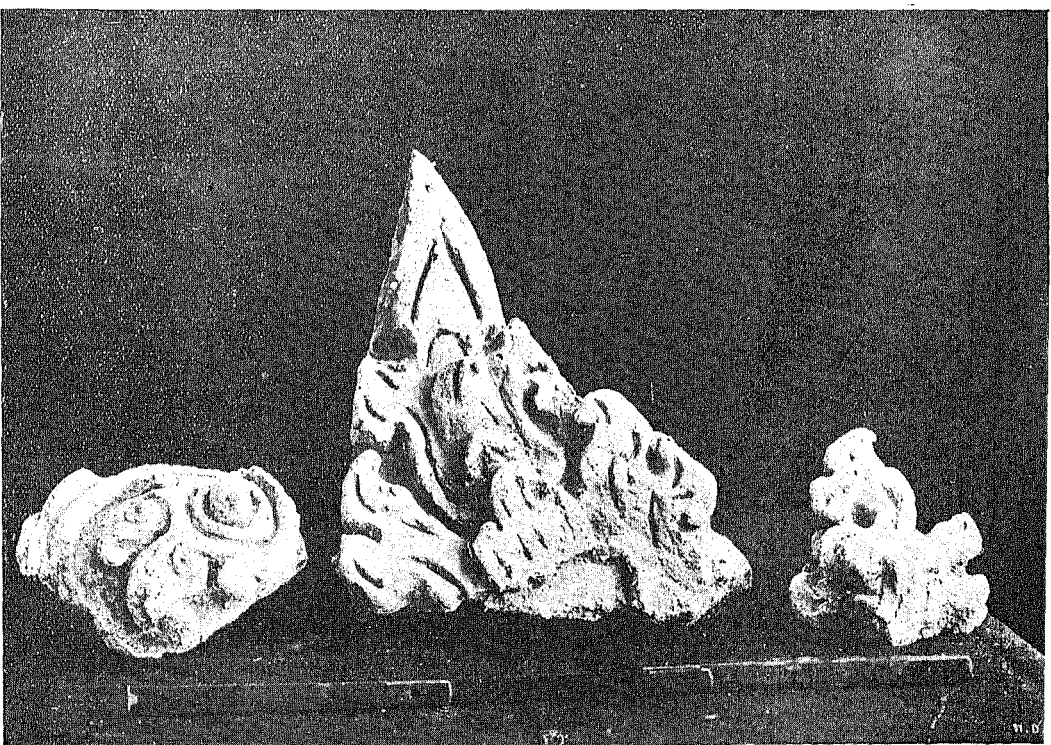
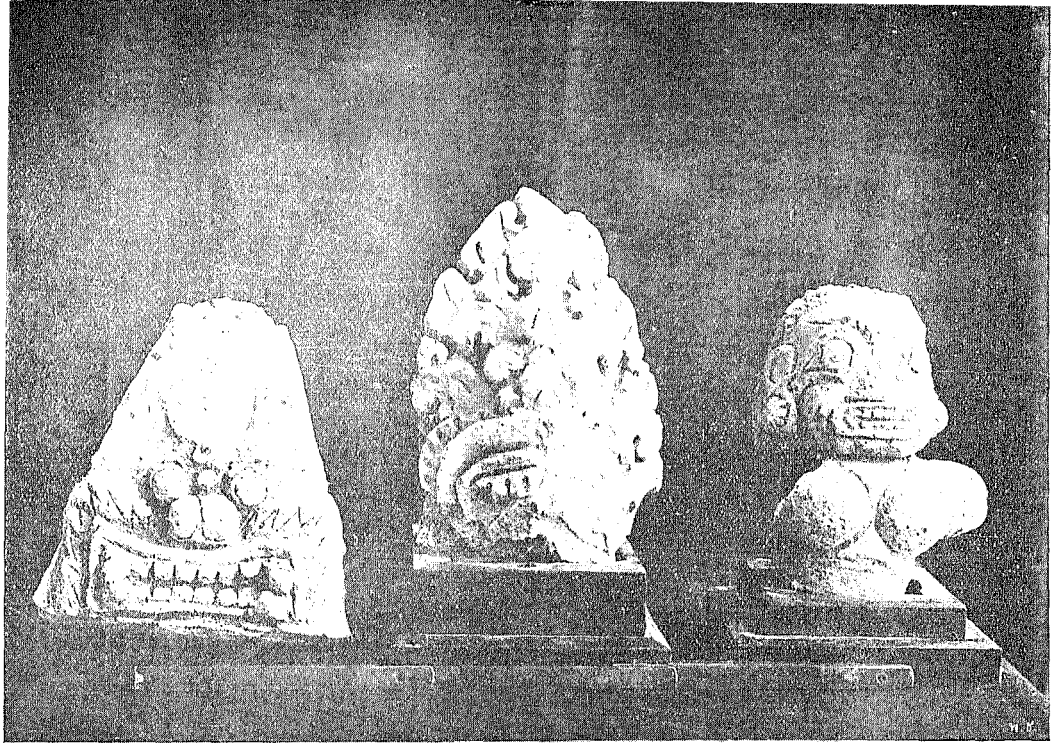
At the place called Nai Ma's house, the excavations brought to light the foundations of two small buildings (Pl. 2). One rested on a square basis measuring 6 metres on each side. In the middle, the pedestal of some big statue is still in place. Twenty-eight metres to the North-West, was another edifice erected on a round base measuring 9 metres in diameter. All this ground-work is made of blocks of laterite (Pl. 3). Of the buildings themselves, all we can say is that they were made of the same material. The superstructure has crumbled down, probably a long time ago,



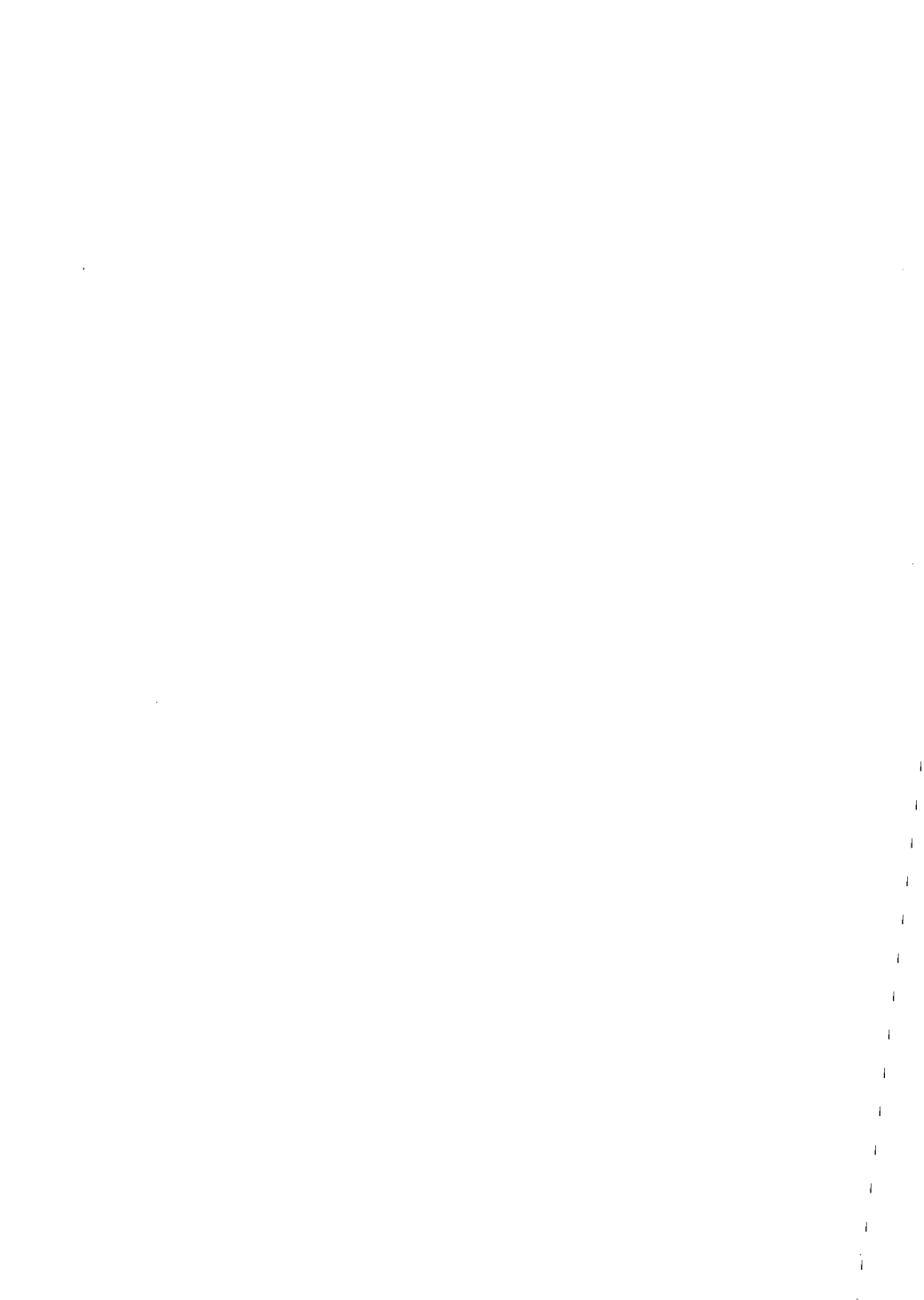
P'ong Tik
Plan of the buildings at Ban Nai Ma.

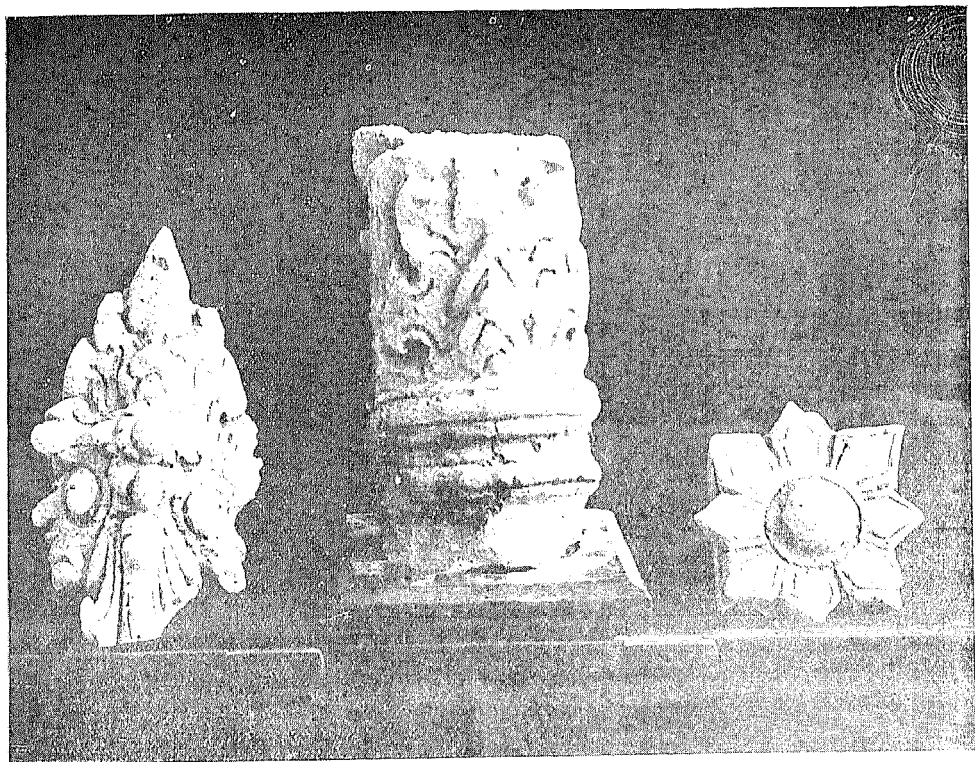


P'ong Tük
Foundations of two buildings at Ban Nai Ma.

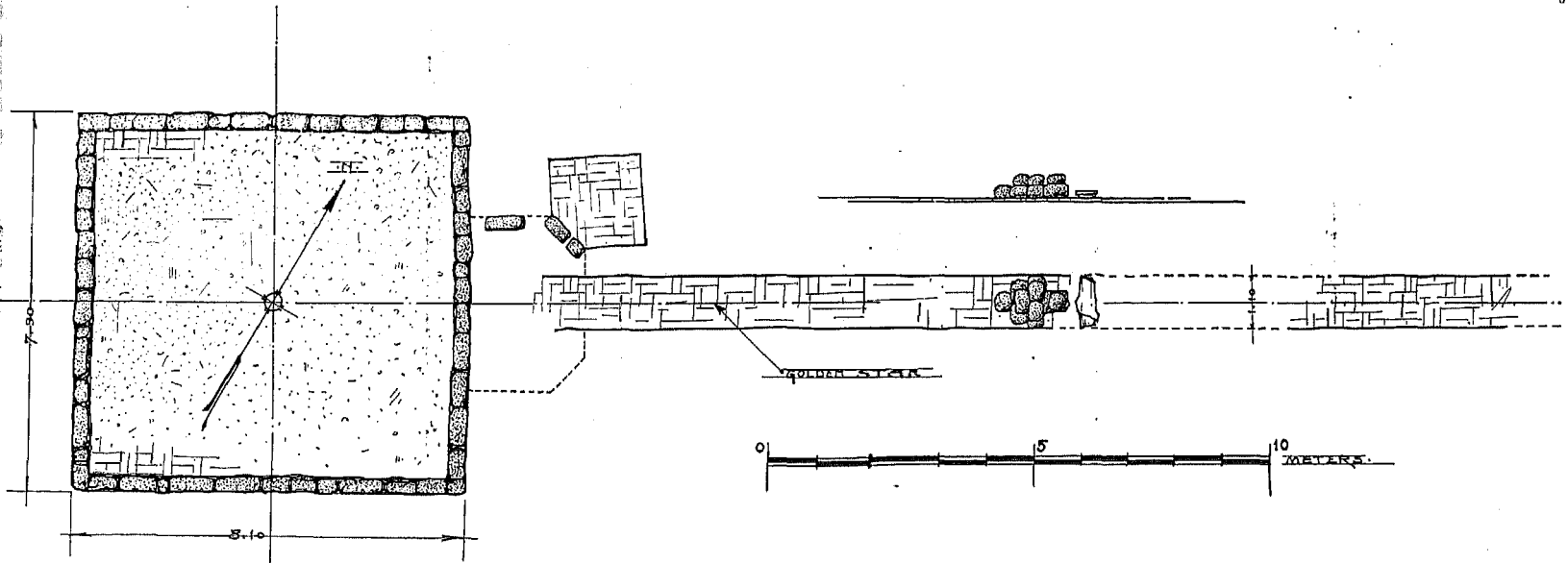


P'ong Tiik
Stucco reliefs from Ban Nai Ma.

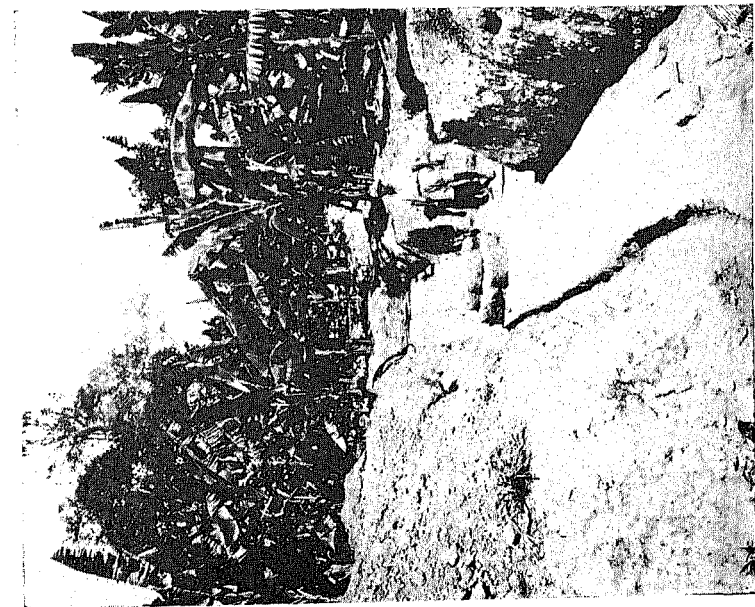




P'ong Tük
Stucco reliefs from Ban Nai Ma.

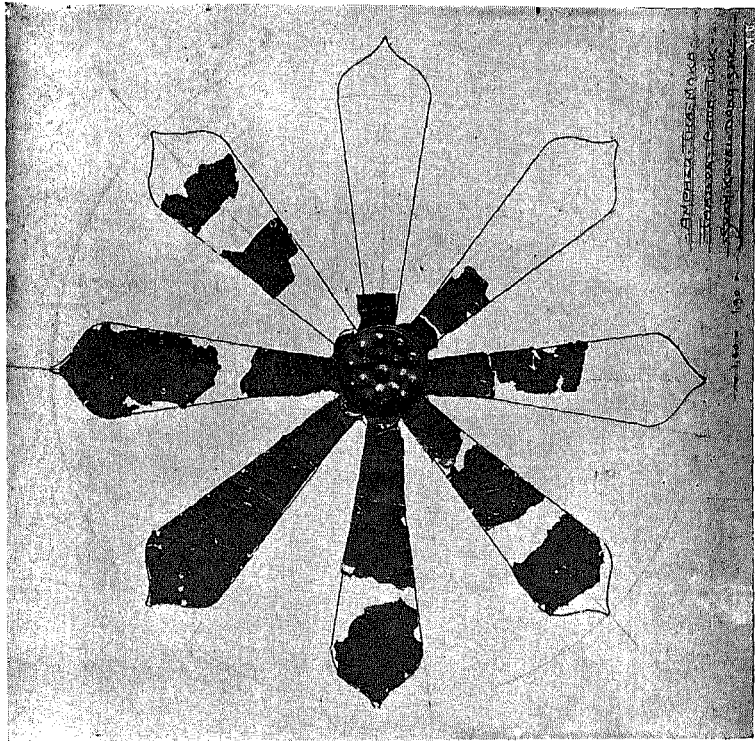


P'ong Tuk
 Plan of the building in the banana-plantation.



P'ong Tük

Road in the banana-plantation.



Golden flower found on the road.

and we shall never know what it looked like. However, I am inclined to consider the round structure as the basis of a stūpa, and the square one as that of a small temple.

As regards the square building, it was covered with an elaborate decoration of plaster or stucco. Most of the blocks of laterite are covered with a thick layer of that plastic substance, to which the modeller has applied all the resources of his artistic imagination. The best specimens of these stucco fragments are now in the National Museum (Pl. 4-5). The biggest pieces have been left *in situ*: most of them have a conical shape and were probably the pinnacles of the original building (Pl. 5, below).

We turn now to the site where the lamp and the bronze Buddhas were found in July last, and which I shall call the "banana-plantation". Here, the foundations of a square building, measuring roughly 8m. by 8m. has been dug out (Pl. 6.) It is made of laterite, but the superstructure which has fallen down, was made of bricks, some of which are still *in situ*. The entrance was probably on the North-eastern side, where remains of a small antechamber are still recognizable. From this entrance, a road, 1. m. 10 wide, runs into the direction of the San Chao (Pl. 7, left). It is paved with bricks and the digging and clearing along this road have resulted in two interesting discoveries.

At a distance of 5 m. from the building itself, a sort of flower made of thin gold-leaves has been found lying on the pavement (Pl. 7, right). At first sight, I thought it might be the halo or nimbus of some statue, but the recent discovery in Annam of golden flowers similar to this one, seems to favour another explanation. Recent excavations under the altars of old Cham sanctuaries have brought to light so-called "treasures," consisting in each case of a lotus-flower and a small tortoise made of gold and of a golden casket containing precious stones (1). The custom of burying riches under the foundations of temples or under pedestals is an old Indian custom and is still prac-

(1) L. Aurousseau, *Nouvelles fouilles de Dai-hu'u*;—*Une fouille au village de Trung-quan* (B. E. F. E.-O., XXVI, p. 359).

tised in this country when the *sīmās* or boundary-stones of a Wat are consecrated. There is a striking similarity between this golden flower and the lotuses found in Champa. Moreover, a kind of gem has been actually dug up in the banana-plantation and is now in the possession of the Chinese who owns the plantation. That man values it so much that on the day of Prince Damrong's visit, when one of our party proposed him to exchange that gem for a ring with a seven carats diamond, he flatly refused, and seemed relieved from a great anxiety when His Royal Highness told him that the Museum did not collect precious stones. It is quite possible that the stone in question, the golden flower and other riches were originally deposited under the foundations of the shrine.

Another discovery made on the road between the banana-plantation and the San Chao, is the basement of a small structure, made of round-shaped blocks of laterite. The significance of these stones is still a mystery to be solved (Pl. 8, below).

The ruin near the San Chao is much more interesting (Pl. 9-10).

All that, at present, remains of a building which was apparently the most important of the whole group, is an oblong platform, whose main axis runs N. W.—S. E., and a few of the round columns of the building itself.

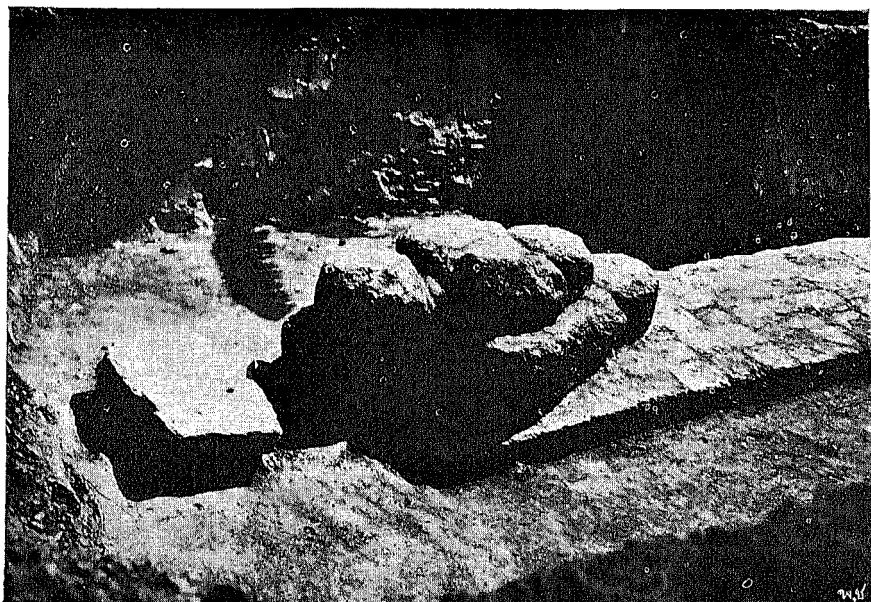
The platform is faced with blocks of laterite; it has steps on one face, and small projecting bays on the others. The facing of the whole is similar all the way round (Pl. 11). The flight of steps leads up on to the platform in the centre of the South-eastern face and seems to have been flanked by balustrades (Pl. 12-13).

Lying on the platform were the fragments of three or four columns and the bases of five, two of which flanked the steps, and the excavations in progress will probably reveal the place where the others originally stood.

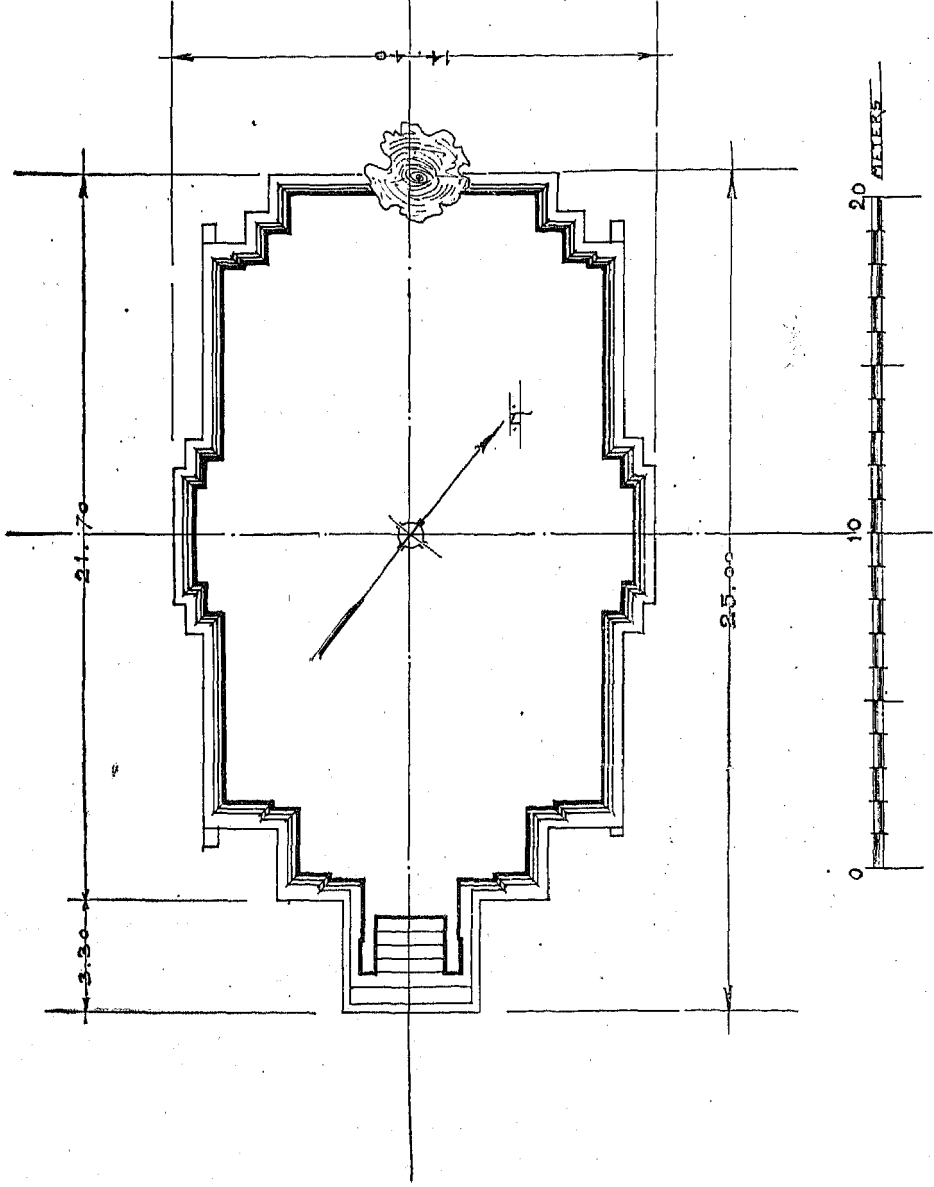
The general appearance of this platform reminds one of the similar platforms at Anurādhapura in Ceylon. If it was, as in Ceylon, a Buddhist vihāra or assembly-hall, the ruined building in the banana-plantation, which seems to have some sort of



P'ong Tük
The banana-plantation before the excavations.

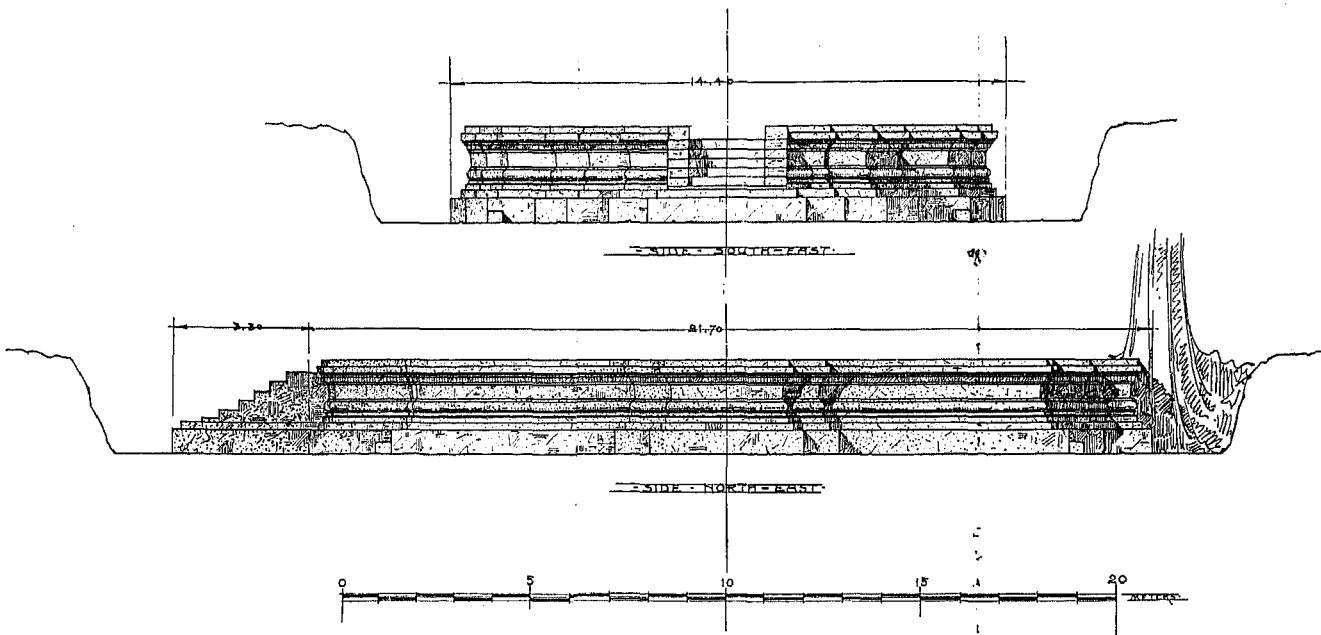


P'ong Tük
The road in the banana-plantation.

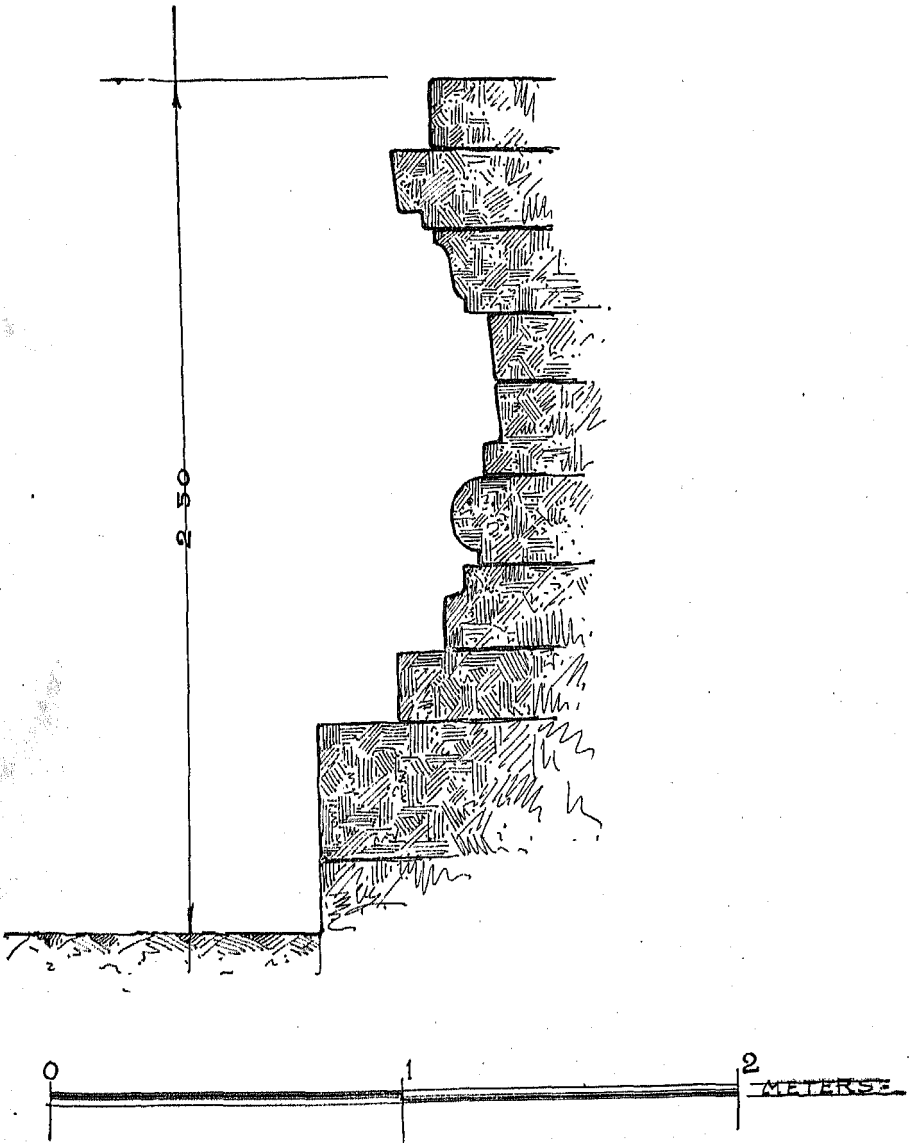


P'ong Tük

Plan of the platform near the San Chao.

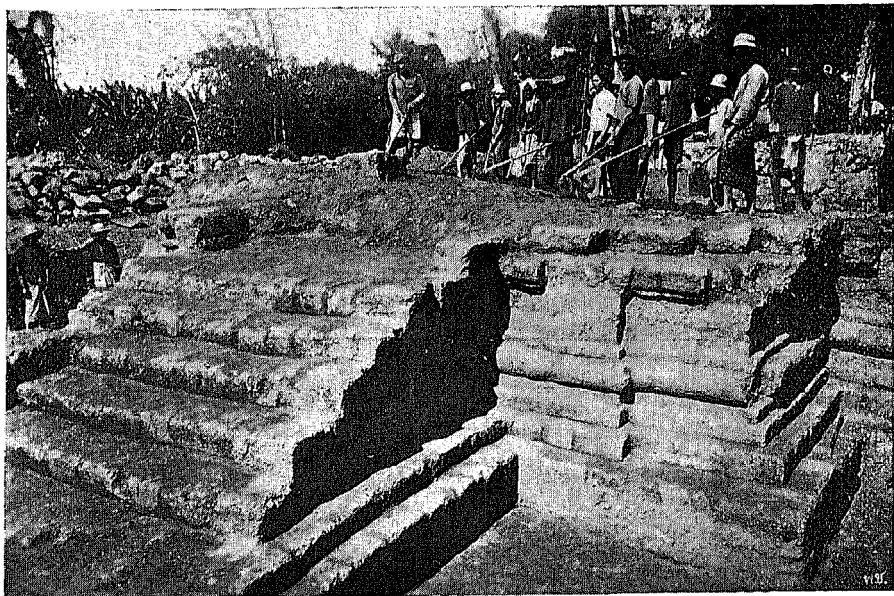


P'ong Tak
Side view of the platform near the San Chao.

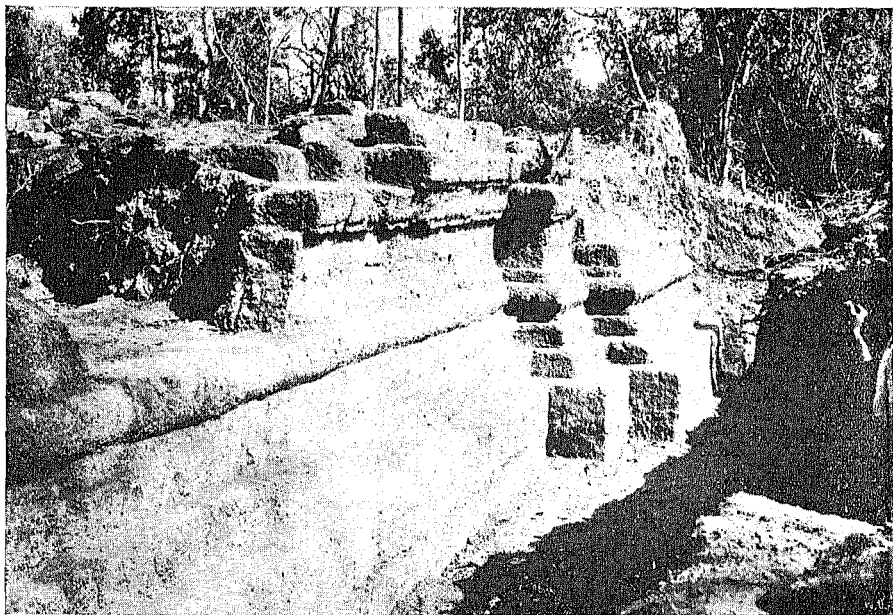
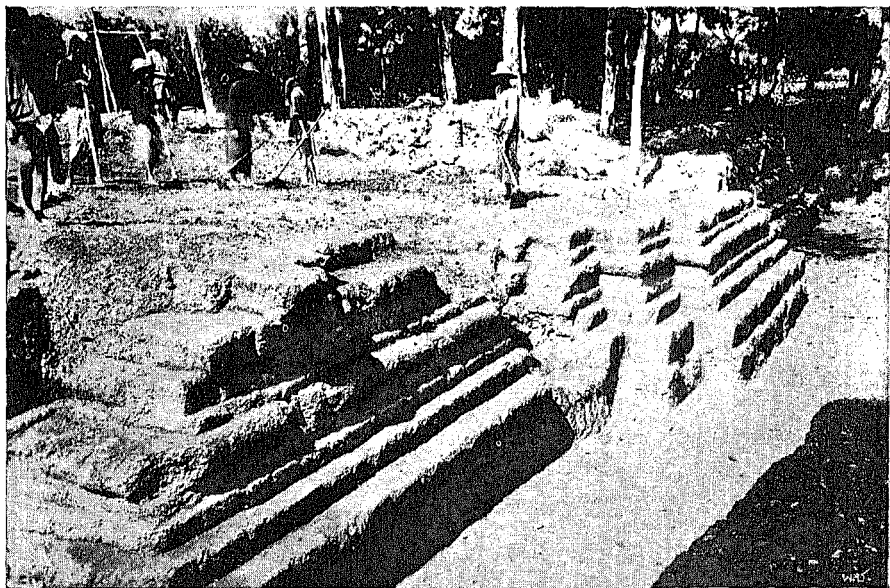


P'ong Tük
Facing of the platform near the San Chao.

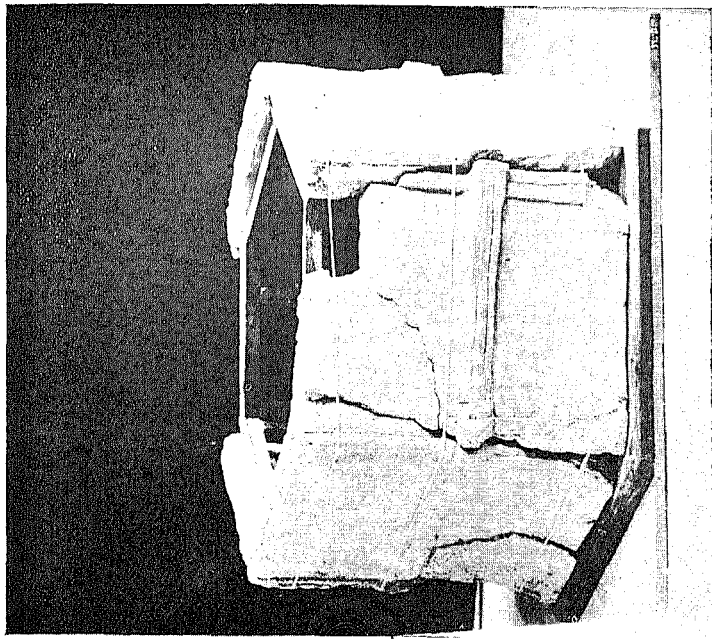
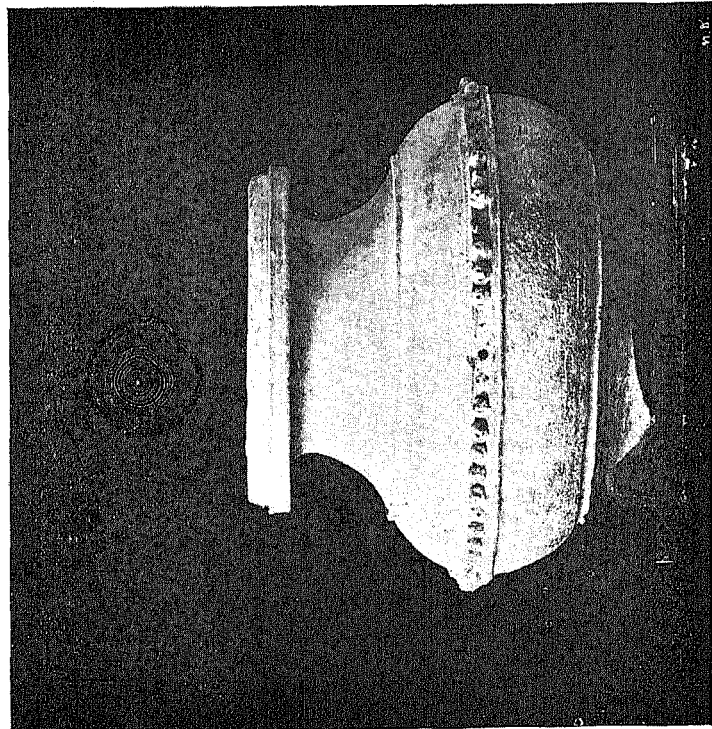




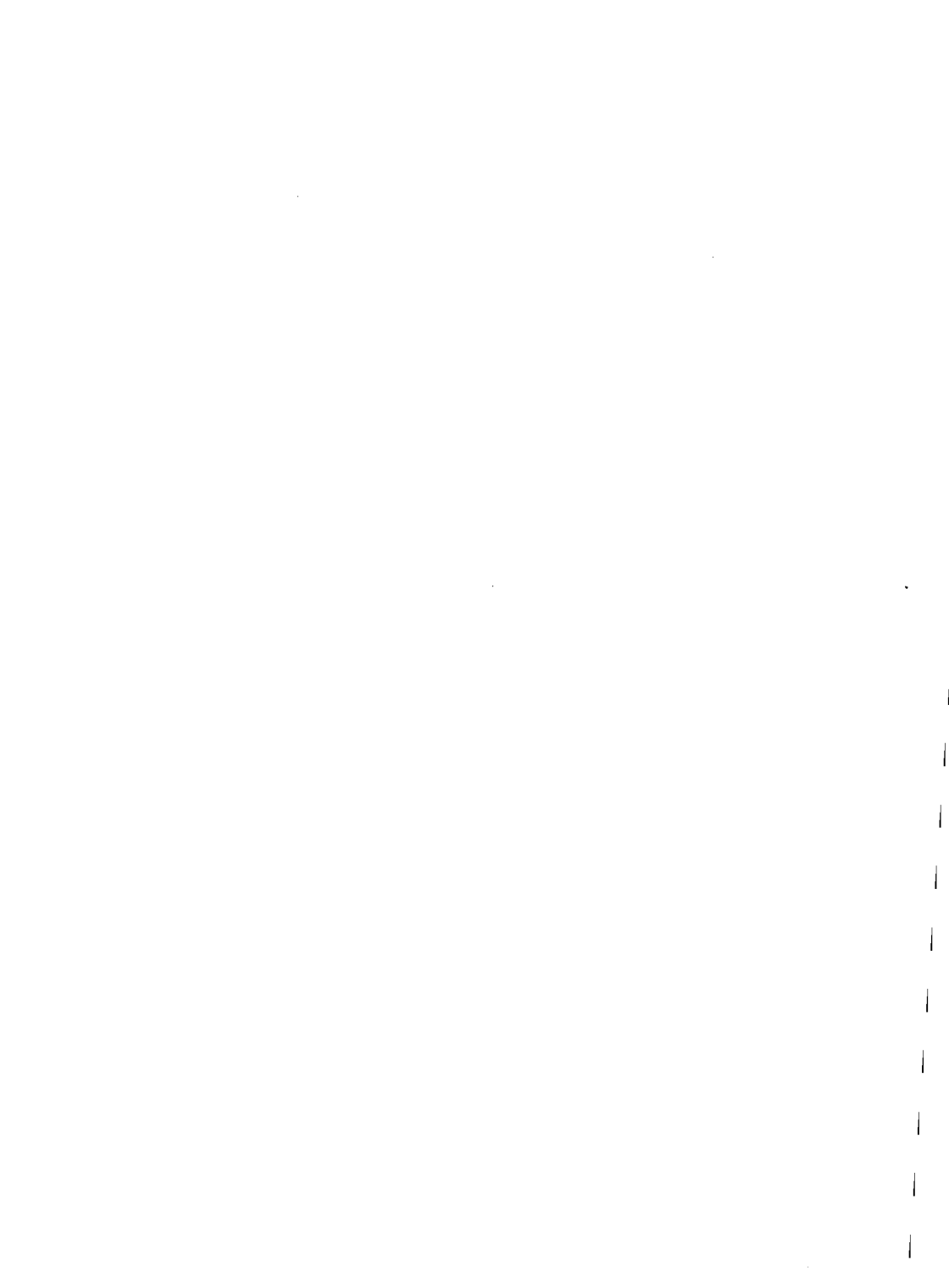
P'ong Tük
Platform near the San Chao.



P'ong Tük
Platform near the San Chao.



P'ong Tük
Pieces of pottery from Plak Saké.



relation with the platform, was probably a stūpa erected on a square basis, or a chapel, or some other kind of shrine.

I have still some words to say about the place called Plak Sakè, the Southernmost site of the P'ong Tūk group. There, no trace of building has been found, except some triangular bricks. The excavations have yielded only a small golden casket, a small sitting Buddha (Pl. 15, below, left), and a considerable number of fragments of pottery including a well-preserved jar (Pl. 14, left), a pinnacle and a curious hexagonal vessel (Pl. 14, right).

It is now time to discuss the probable age of these ruins at P'ong Tūk, their nature, and what they have to tell us regarding the early history of this country.

Unfortunately, the combined action of time, vegetation and man has practically annihilated the various elements which might have helped us to fix the date and the nature of these old buildings. In the banana-plantation and at Nai Ma's house, the foundations only are extant, without any kind of superstructure. The San Chao has not been so utterly destroyed. Here we have a high basement of laterite which is certainly anterior to the advent of the Tai, and which does not show the characteristics of the Khmer style. But these purely negative considerations do not give any clue as to the actual age of the building.

We must turn to the statuettes and other objects found at P'ong Tūk, and ask them what they have to tell us about the history of the monuments in which they originally stood.

Until quite recently, i. e. up to the time of the P'ong Tūk finds, the sculptures considered as the oldest ever discovered in Siam were those Buddhist statues and bas-reliefs, found at P'ra Pat'om, U T'ong and Sup'an, Lopburi, Dong Sri Mahap'ot (Prachin), which are classed in the National Museum under the heading "School of Dvāravatī." Dvāravatī is the name of an hinduized kingdom which Chinese historians place in the VI-VIIIth centuries A. D. between

Burma and Cambodia, a date and a situation corresponding very well with the probable age of the sculptures in question and with their place of origin.

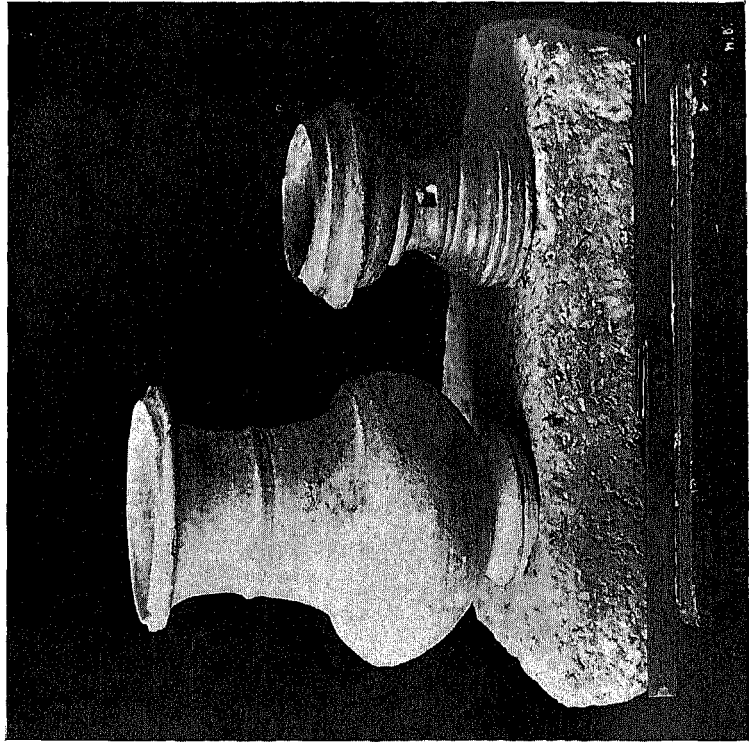
These sculptures show a strong influence of the Indian art of the Gupta period, which flourished from ca. 320 A. D. to the middle of the VIth century. Even the oldest fragments discovered at P'ra Pat'om, which, like the images of the wheel of the Law, belong to an older tradition, when the Buddha was not actually represented and his presence indicated by means of symbols, even these fragments show in their decoration the influence of the Gupta art and are not likely to be anterior to the VIth century.

To that Gupta period, which we call here the Dvāravati school, we can safely ascribe four of the images of the Buddha found at P'ong Tük (Pl. 15, below ; 16, right), which show a strong resemblance with statuettes discovered in various places ranging from P'ra Pat'om in the West to Ubon in the East. It is difficult to say whether all these statuettes have been cast in this country, or whether some have been imported from India. The images found near Ubon or in the Circle of Udorn, were most probably made on the spot (Pl. 16, left). But if we compare some of the Buddhas discovered at P'ra Pat'om or at P'ong Tük with similar images found in India, and ascribed by experts to the Gupta school (1), we do not see much difference. In any case, the date, circa VIth century, is pretty certain.

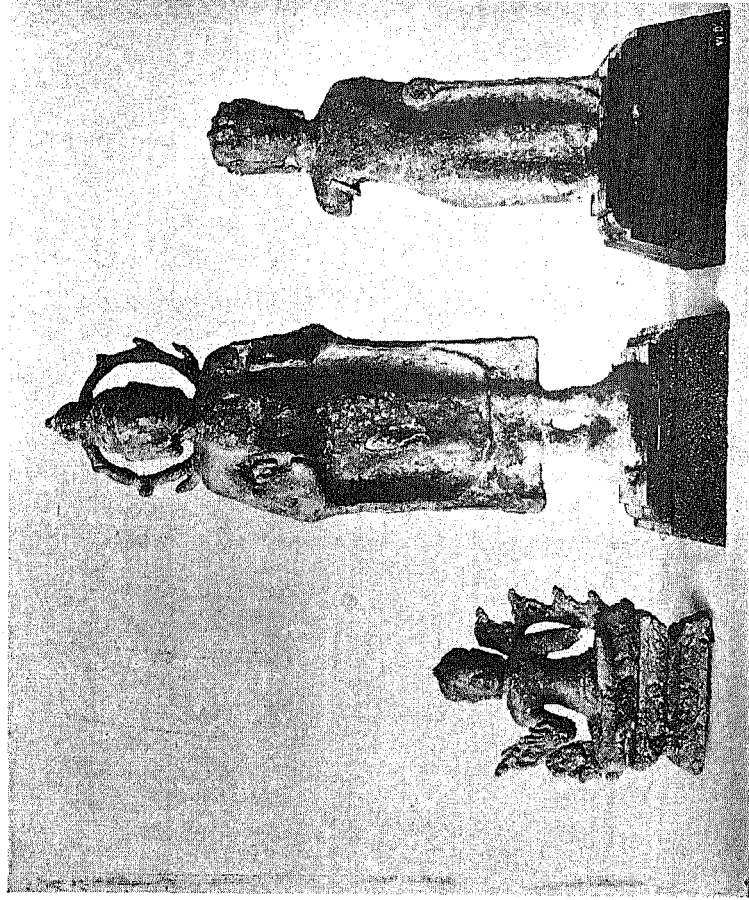
The votive tablet found at P'ong Tük some years ago in the bank of the river is probably of a somewhat later date, but I can be quite affirmative as regards its origin. If it was not actually brought from India, it was certainly impressed on a mould made in India, probably at Bodhgāyā, the famous shrine erected on the spot where the Buddha attained enlightenment.

In a previous paper on "Siamese votive tablets" which I read before the Siam Society some years ago, I emphasised the fact that votive tablets, at least the old ones, represent not merely the

(1) See Vincent A. Smith, *History of Fine Art in India*, p. 180, — and J. R. A. S., 1895, p. 617, Pl. I—V.

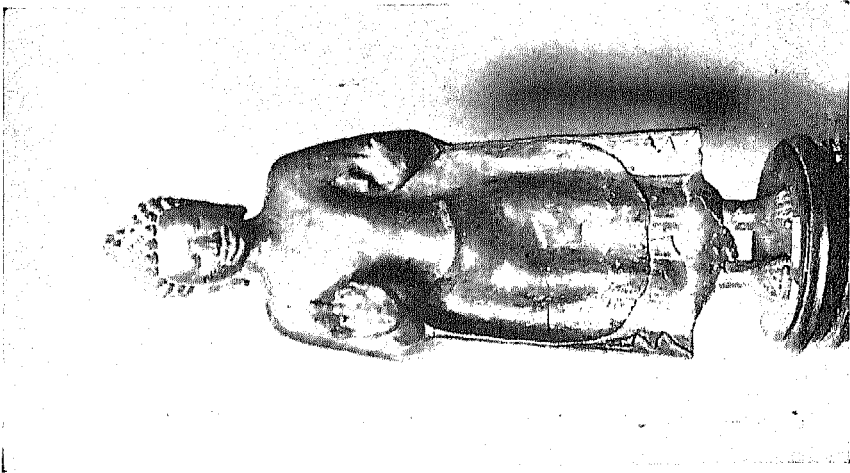


Vases and triangular brick.

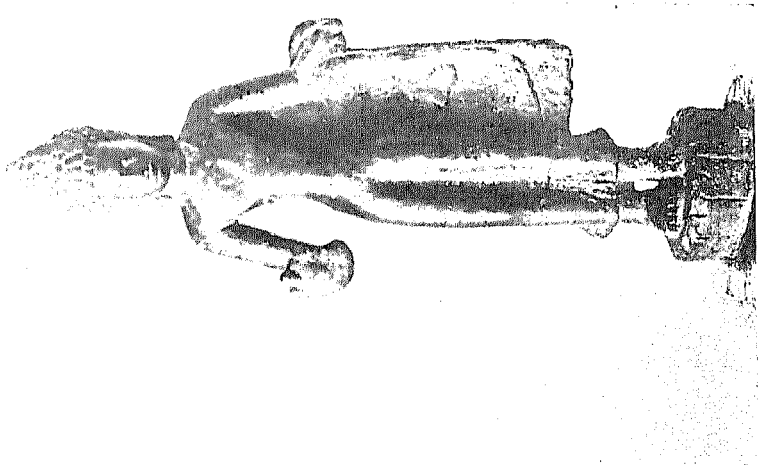


P'ong Tük

Bronze images of the Buddha.



Bronze Buddha from the
Circle of Udorn.



Bronze Buddha from
P'ong Tük (banana-plantation).

Buddha, but a particular Buddha, a certain definite statue in a particular temple or place. Such is clearly the case in respect to this imprint representing the Buddha as seated under a pyramidal tower, which is evidently the tower of Bodhgāyā. That type of votive tablet seems to have been as popular as the pilgrimage which they served to commemorate, and similar specimens have been discovered in various places (such as Kiyul, in the vicinity of Bodhgāyā; Pegu, in Lower Burma; Mirpur, in the Indus Delta).

I am more embarrassed with the fragments of decoration in stucco (Pl. 4-5), to which it is difficult to assign a date with some precision. Stucco is a highly plastic substance, which allows the artist to give free scope to his imagination and teaches us more about the latter's personality than about the school to which he belongs. Anyhow, there is a good deal of similarity between these fragments and those discovered at P'ra Pat'om. I do not think we shall be much mistaken, if we ascribe these stucco fragments to the same age as the other objects described above, i. e. to the Gupta period or "Dvāravati school" (circa VIth century A. D.).

With the small image of the Buddha reproduced on Pl. 17, we go one step further in the past and reach that period of Indian art which coincides with the zenith of the school of Amarāvati.

The sculptures and bas-reliefs at Amarāvati offer a striking example of the adoption of the Gandhārian or Hellenistic type by Indian artists during the IIInd century A. D. But they are important not only for the history of Buddhist art in India itself, but also outside India. The delta of the Krishna river, that is the region situated East of Amarāvati and bordering the sea, was one of the starting points for the Indian colonists and adventurers who sought their fortune in the East. And it is no wonder if the oldest images of Buddha found in Ceylon (1), in Champā (on the coast, of

(1) Vincent A. Smith, *loc. cit.*, fig 178-180.—W. Cohn, *Buddha in der Kunst des Ostens*, p. 23.

Annam) (1), and in the Netherlands-Indies (2) show the style of Amarāvati.

The fine statuette excavated in the banana-garden at P'ong Tūk presents all the principal characteristics of the Amarāvati school; you will recognise at once the graceful arrangement of the monastic robe with its wavelike folds,—so different from the straight and transparent robe of the Gupta period, under which the bust and limbs of the Buddha appear like a nude object; you will also notice the peculiar shape of the face with its sharp, I might almost say its Greek, nose. But if you consider the statues which have just been mentioned and compare their stiff posture, the conventional arrangement of the monastic robe, with the graceful movement and the bold rendering of the waving robe of the P'ong Tūk statuette, you will admit that the latter is much nearer the Hellenistic models and ought consequently to be ascribed to an epoch when Gandhārian influence was still very strong. In short, we seem to be justified in tracing the origin of this statuette to the Eastern coast of India, and in proposing the IIInd century A. D. as its probable date.

For the date and origin of the lamp (Pl. 19), we have possibly to go still farther back in the past, and certainly much farther West. It is an oil-lamp made of bronze, quite similar to those discovered in the ruins of Pompeii. It has the usual shape of the Greco-Roman lamps, with a spout or nozzle in which the wick burned, a round hole on the top to pour oil in, and a handle with which to carry it. These lamps were either used for suspension by means of a chain, or fixed either on a low tripod or a high candlestick. The lamp discovered at P'ong Tūk must have been originally used in the latter way, and one can still see the mortise underneath.

(1) Bull. Comm. arch. Indochine, 1912, p. 212, Pl IX; Foucher, *Art Gréco-Bouddhique*, p. 682, 761.—A small statue quite similar to that found in Ohampā has been discovered by H. R. H. Prince Damrong at K'orat and is now kept in the National Museum (Pl. 18).

(2) W. Cohn, *loc. cit.*, p. 29.



P'ong Tük
Bronze Buddha dug out in the banana-plantation.



Bronze Buddha found at K'orat.

The details of its ornamentation are very interesting. The handle is in the shape of a palmette between two dolphins. The palmette and the dolphin are well-known ornaments in Greco-roman decorative art. The dolphin is said to be an emblem of the maritime towns, and its presence is not surprising on an object which was probably brought to this part of the world by a seafaring trader. But in mythology, the dolphins are also supposed to convey to the Fortunate Islands or Isles of the Blest those mortals upon which the Gods have conferred immortality. So that the figuration of dolphins on the lamp discovered at P'ong T'uk might induce us to put it amongst the so-called funeral or sepulchral lamps: in Greece and Rome, oil-lamps were used in connexion with the cult of the dead, and were lighted at periodical intervals on the tombs of the deceased. A similar hint as to its original use is given by the figure engraved on the lid. It is the head of Silenus crowned with a wreath of ivy. Now, Silenus is considered by some mythologists as a son of the Earth, and this explains why he is associated with the cult of the dead and often represented on the sepulchral lamps.

As regards the workmanship, although it is not a first-class piece of work, I am almost certain that the lamp was actually made in the Mediterranean area, and that it is not an Indian copy, because Indian lamps are of quite a different shape and pattern, and because there is not the slightest Indian touch in the treatment of the decorative ornaments (1) and especially of the Silenus' head.

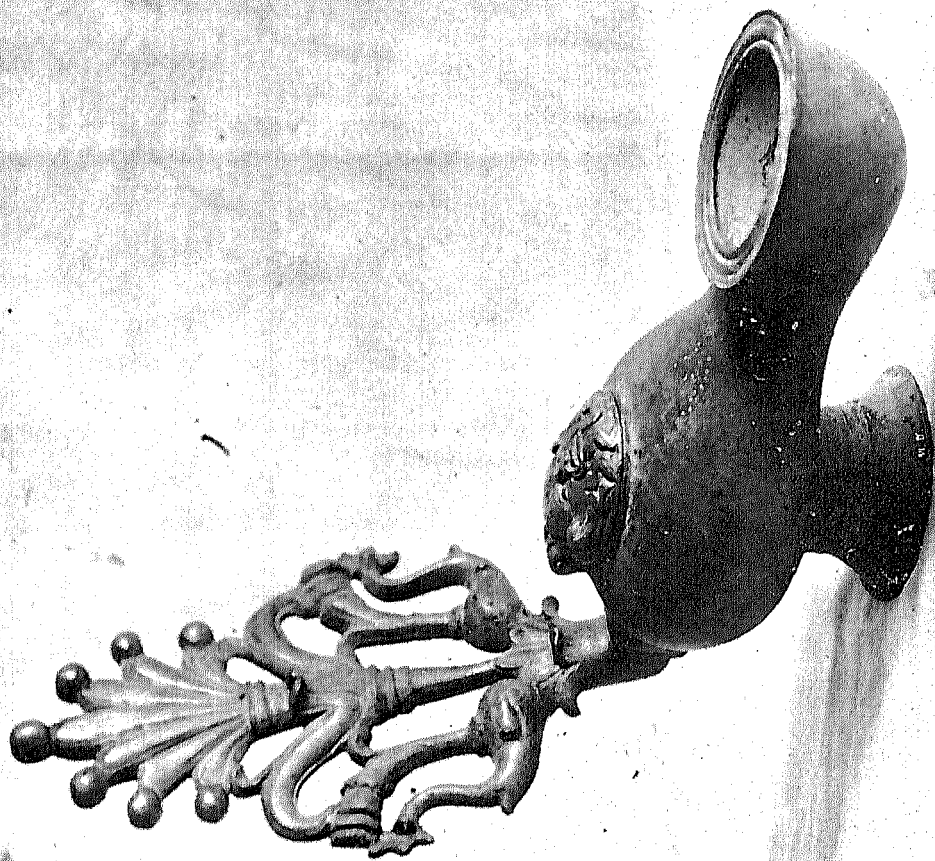
If it was not made in India, it must have been brought over from Italy, or from Greece or more probably from some place in what we call in Europe, the Near-East, and this raises the fascinating question of the relations between this country and the Roman Empire during the IInd (may be the Ist) century A. D.

(1) It has been pointed out to me that the pearls of the palmette might be considered as a proof that the lamp is *not* of European workmanship, because that element is unknown to the classical art. This remark is unfounded: the finds at Pompeii give at last one example of a palmette with pearls (See Herculaneum et Pompéi, Recueil par H. Roux, Paris, 1862, VII, Pl. 82).

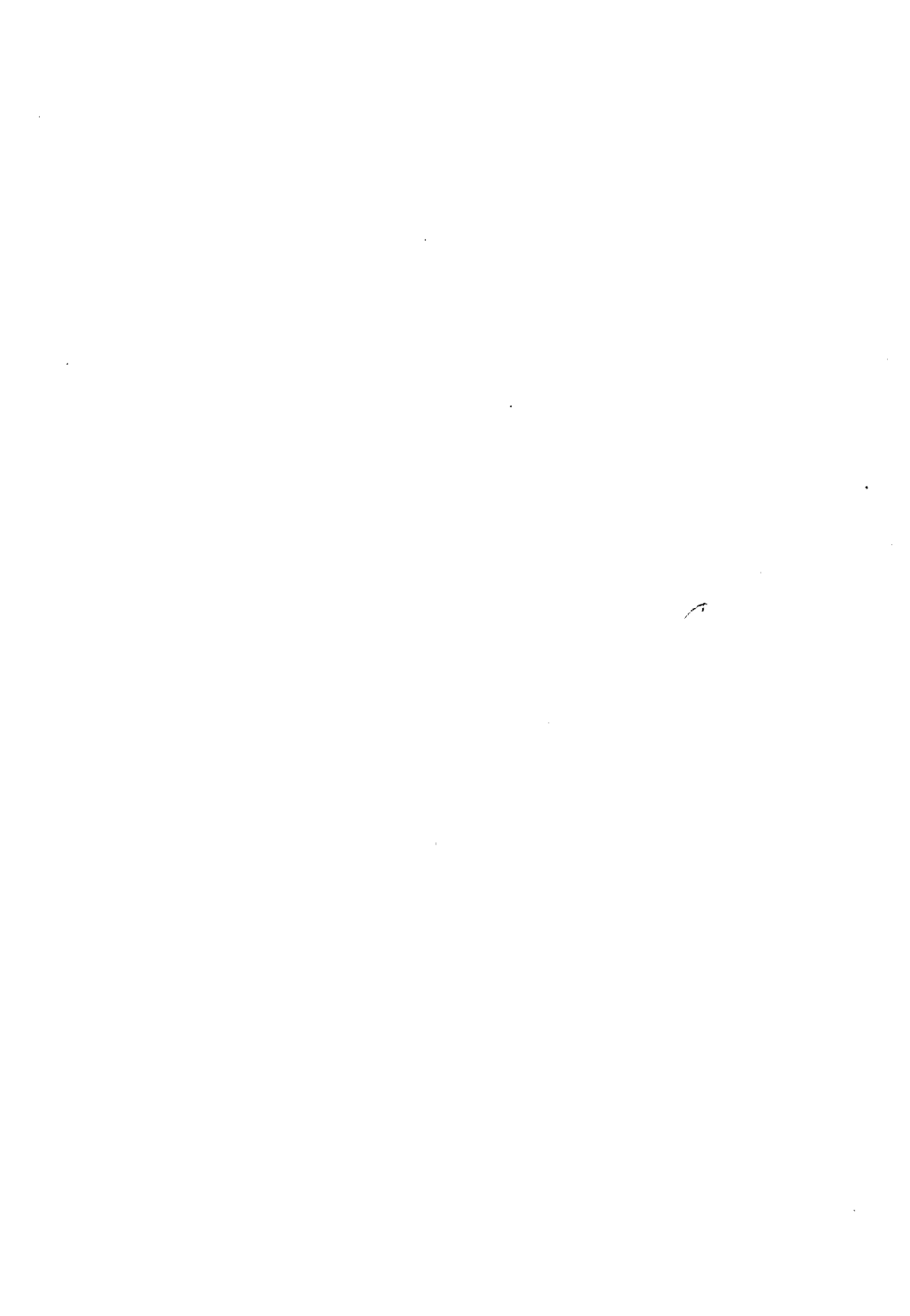
That such relations existed at that time between the Near and the Far East is no mere supposition. It was in the IInd century A. D. that Ptolemy composed his Geography, whose chapters on Further India and China are based on information derived from a certain trader, Alexander by name, who coasted along the shores of those countries during the Ist century A. D. It was also in that century that a Greek pilot from Alexandria, Hippalos, discovered and for the first time made use of the periodicity of the monsoon in the Indian Ocean, and that another Greek merchant made his Periplus of the Erythrean Sea. On the other hand, the advent of Western traders is mentioned in the Chinese Annals. I shall only recall here, as particularly relevant to our subject, the so-called Roman embassy to China in 166 A. D. Says the history of the Han dynasty: "During the reign of the Emperor Houan, the 9th year of yen-hi (166), An-tun, King of Ta-T' sin, sent an ambassador who presented ivory, rhinoceros horns and tortoise-shells. It was the first time that communication between both countries was established."⁽¹⁾ Ta-T' sin is the name given to the Roman empire by the Chinese historians of that period. In 166, the Emperor was Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, and it is his last name *Antoninus*, which the Chinese have transcribed by the two characters *An-tun*. It is very unlikely that the man who brought ivory and other Indian luxuries was a Roman ambassador on an official mission. He was more probably a Greek or Roman trader, who, coming from India with some cargo, made use of the Roman Emperor's name in order to secure a better reception by the Chinese authorities.

In view of the commercial intercourse which brought Mediterranean traders and adventurers in these regions since the dawn of the Christian era, the discovery of an object of Greco-roman or Hellenistic facture has nothing extraordinary in itself. What is surprising is that no such object has ever been discovered in India or in China, where we know for certain that those early traders had their ports of

(1) See Chavannes, *Les pays d'Occident d'après le Heou Han Chou*, T'oung-Pao, 1907, p. 185.



P'ong Tük
Greco-roman lamp found in the banana-plantation.



call, and that the first find of that kind has been dug up in a place which seems to lie far away from the great sea-route. I purposely say "seem", for I wish to call attention upon the fact that the old hinduized kingdoms of Lower Siam were perhaps not so far away from one of the routes followed by traders, who coming from Europe and India and bound for China, wished to escape the journey round the Malay Peninsula. It is a well-known fact, mentioned in the Chinese Annals and corroborated by a good deal of evidence, that in order to escape that journey and avoid the Straits, they used land-routes across the Peninsula in some of its narrow parts. P'ong Tük does not lie along any of these routes: it is much farther North. But it lies along a route of great historical importance, which coming from Lower Burma crosses the mountain range at P'ra Chedi Sam Ong, the famous Three Pagodas pass. Now the Chinese Annals of the Han dynasty tell us that in 120 A. D. a company of musicians and acrobats from Ta-T'sin, say Greek or Roman comedians, was sent over from Burma to China and reached China by sea. It is quite possible that instead of going round the Malay Peninsula, they crossed over to the Lower Menam valley, followed the route along the Meklong and embarked in some port of the Gulf of Siam.

I do not mean to say that our lamp was actually left at P'ong Tük by one of those comedians or by the Roman embassy, but the fact that it might have been is sufficient to explain its presence in an apparently remote region of Lower Siam.

To sum up, the finds at P'ong Tük consist of a Greco-roman lamp which may date from the Ist-IIrd centuries A.D., a statuette belonging to the school of Amarāvati and not later than the IId century, several images belonging to the school of Dvāravatī and not later than the VIth century, several votive tablets of about the same age, fragments of stucco similar to those at P'ra Pat'om, potteries which look older than anything of that kind which has been found in this country.

Whereas, on the other hand, not a single object of Khmer or Siamese workmanship has yet been discovered in the ruins at P'ong

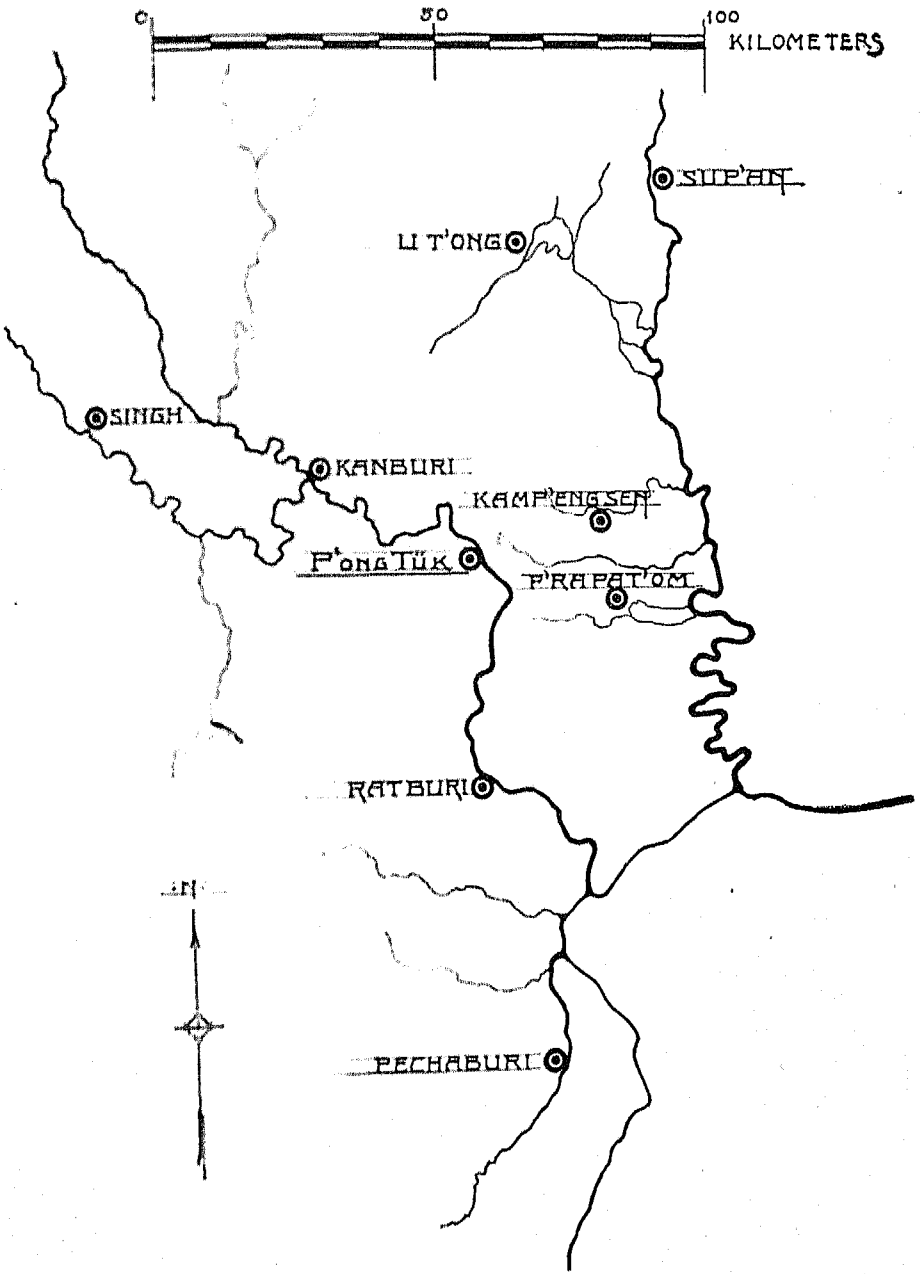
Tük, it seems reasonable to draw the conclusion, that these monuments were already in existence before the VIth century, and for some unknown reason were abandoned before the rise of the Khmer dominion in that region towards the beginning of the XIth century.

That is all we can say now about their date.

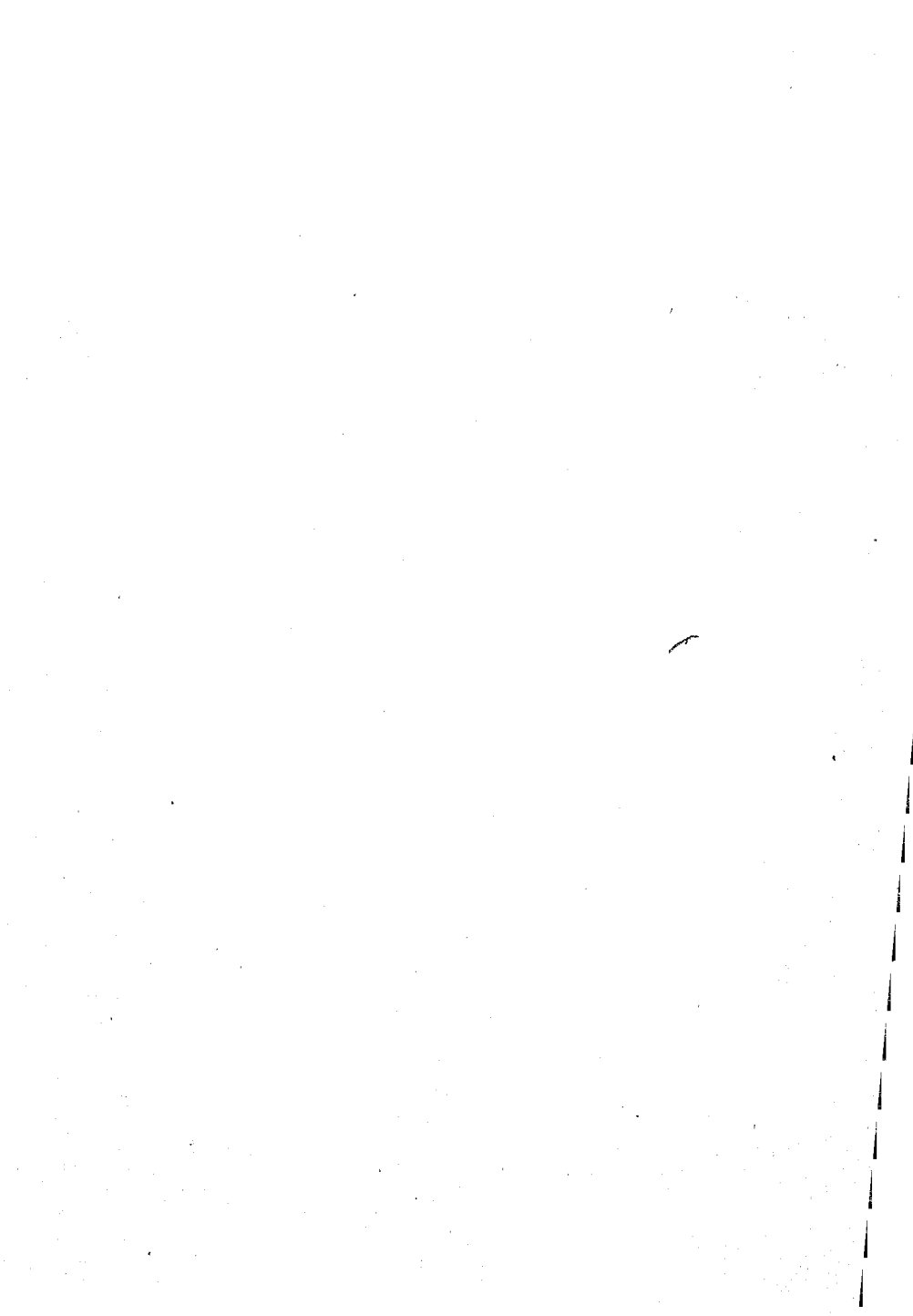
The nature of the finds confirm the impression left by the ruins, viz., that these monuments were religious buildings (as were all stone and brick buildings in those early days), and devoted to the Buddhist cult.

Let us examine now the plan of P'ong Tük (Pl. 1). We notice first, that the different buildings hitherto located, are scattered over too wide an area to be possibly considered as constituent elements of some big temple. There were at least two temples of some importance: one in the South at Nai Ma's house, and one in the North at the San Chao. These two temples and the other mounds which have not yet been excavated are disposed along a line running North-West—South-East and coinciding with the actual cart-road, and, what is more important, the main axis of the buildings is parallel to the road.

From these facts, we may infer that the actual village of P'ong Tük is the site of an old city, whose main street is now represented by the cart-road. Now, if we mark on a map the names of the towns which were certainly or probably in existence during the pre-khmer period (Pl. 20), we are at once struck by the fact that P'ong Tük lies half-way between Ratburi and P'ra Pat'om, half-way between Ratburi and Kanburi, half-way between Kanburi and P'ra Pat'om, the mean distance between P'ong Tük and each of these towns being about one day's march. P'ong Tük was thus a natural halting-place for travellers, conveniently situated at the cross-road between Ratburi and P'etchaburi in the South, Kanburi and Müang Singh in the West, U T'ong in the North, and P'ra Pat'om in the East, a role which the neighbouring market of Ban Pong is playing in our days. The general orientation of the old city at P'ong Tük was probably determined by the direction of the



Map showing the position of P'ong Tük.



road from Mtang Singh to P'ra Pat'om, which runs in a South-Eastern direction.

The reason why that city, so well situated at the cross-road, was abandoned at a date which we have every reason to suppose early, is probably some change in the course of the river which resulted in the partial destruction of the town and in a deviation of the road.

A last question remains to be answered. Who were the founders of the ancient city at P'ong Tük and the builders of its monuments? I have tried to show elsewhere that the inhabitants of the kingdom of Dvāravatī were Mon, or at least Mon-speaking people.(1) This assertion holds good at least for Lopburi, where Mon inscriptions have been found. Whether it holds good also for P'ong Tük is a question which cannot be answered with any amount of certainty, unless some inscription comes to light.

(1) G. Cœdès, *Documents sur l'histoire du Laos occidental*, B. E. F. E.-0., XXV.

