

SIAMESE VOTIVE TABLETS

BY

G. CŒDÈS.

Translated by W. A. GRAHAM.

The Siamese give the name Braḥ Bimb or "Sacred Imprints" to certain small Buddhist effigies aptly described by Mr. A. Foucher, as "simple lumps of clay moulded or stamped with the stroke of a die, serving equally as mementos and as ex-votos" (1). At the present day in Siam they are seldom used except as charms supposed to render the wearer invulnerable or rather, to prevent a gun from going off (ปืนไม่ระเบิด) or a sword from cutting (ฟันไม่เข้า), a prostitution of the image of the Buddha, the Sage, the Perfected Saint, to uses of witchcraft due to the corrupting and distorting effects of ignorance.

On account of their extremely ancient origin, going back to the very earliest times of Buddhism, Braḥ Bimb may justly be regarded as entirely venerable objects of piety, of which it is of considerable interest to retrace the history.

The custom of making small holy images by means of a mould or a die appears to be exclusively Buddhist. I cannot recollect that Brahmin images made by such processes have ever been recorded, whilst, on the contrary, such imprints have been found on practically every Buddhist site from the North-West Provinces of

(1) *Les débuts de l'art bouddhique* (*Journal Asiatique*, Jan. 1911, p. 65.)

India and the Chinese province of Ho-Nan, to the caves of the Malay Peninsula and the shores of Annam (1).

According to an attractive theory emanating from Mr. Foucher, we may connect the origin of these votive tablets with the four great objectives of Buddhist pilgrimages in India, namely, Kapilavastu, where S'ākya-muni was born; Buddhagāyā, where he achieved Omniscience; the Deer Park near Benares where he preached the Law for the first time, and finally Kusinagara where he attained Nirvāṇa.

"Nothing is easier," Mr. Foucher tells us, "than to imagine what must have been the nature of the mementos brought away by pilgrims from these four principal holy places. To take the modern parallel best known to the French reader, What is represented by the images and medals offered for sale and purchased at Lourdes. First and foremost it is the *Miraculous Grotto*! What then would be the first objects of piety, on cloth, of clay, of wood, of ivory or of metal, to be produced at Kapilavastu, Buddhagāyā, Benares or Kusinagara? Clearly the chief characteristic of each of these four cities respectively, towards which popular worship was directed!

(1) V. A. SMITH, *The Buddhist Monastery at Sohnāg* (J. R. A. S., 1900, p. 438) claims to recognise on a certain tablet the form of Lakshmi, but as the Buddhist 'profession of faith' (vide infra) is inscribed upon that same tablet, it is more probably a Buddhist Divinity, doubtless a Tārā, that is here indicated.—Mr. O. Duroiselle exaggerates when he says (*Rep. of the Arch. Survey of Burma*, 1921-1922, p. 12): "References to such tablets are found scattered in a variety of works but unfortunately without any reproduction of them." On the contrary the articles mentioned in the following short bibliography are nearly all abundantly illustrated:—INDIA: CUNNINGHAM, *Mahābodhi*, Pl. XXIV; *Archaeological Reports*, III, p. 158, Pl. XLVI; XI, pp. 35-38, Pl. XII and p. 89, Pl. XXVIII.—*Annual report of the Archaeological Survey of India*, 1907-08, p. 170; 1909-10, Pl. XXXIX.—BURMA: R. C. TEMPLE, *Note on Antiquities in Rāmaññadesa* (*Indian Antiquary*, 1894, Pl. XV and XVI).—*Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India*, 1905-06, Pl. LIII.—*Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of Burma*, 1913-13, p. 17; 1914-15, pp. 15-16; 1921-22, pp. 11-12.—CHINA and TIBET: A. GETTY, *The Gods of Northern Buddhism*, Pl. III, XIII, LXIII.—ANNAM: L. FINOT, *La religion des Chams d'après leurs monuments*, (B. E. F. E.-O., I, p. 25).—SIAM: L. FOURNEREAU *Le Siam ancien*, p. 105, Pl. XXIII.—L. DE LAJONQUIERE, *Essai d'inventaire archéologique du Siam* (*Bull. de la Comm. arch. de l'Indochine*, 1912 pp. 138, 139).—E. A. VORETZSCH, *Über altbuddhistische Kunst in Siam* (*Ostasiatische Zeitschrift*, V. 1916, p. 23).

Now we know already from various descriptive writings what these chief characteristics were. The object that was visited primarily at Kusinagara was the spot where the Master died, marked at an early date and in an appropriate manner by a Stūpa. Similarly, the essential miracle of Benares being described as "Revolving the Wheel of the Law", it was inevitable that this should find concrete expression in a "Wheel" usually supported by two deers. That which was chiefly revered at Buddhagāyā was the evergreen fig tree at the foot of which the Blessed One sat when he obtained Omniscience. As to what was especially revered at Kapilavastu, it is more uncertain (1), but though here amongst so many objects, the choice may be doubtful, there can be no hesitation with regard to the other three places. A Tree, A Wheel, A Stūpa, were that was required to remind the returned pilgrim of those sacred places; possibly even to evoke by the constant association of ideas and images a repetition of the miracles of which those places had been the scenes. Such objects might even be mere indications of the utmost crudity, for whilst human frailty must have some material and tangible sign, human imagination can surmount any poverty of artistic method" (2).

This theory, which enables us to accept Braḥ Bimb as souvenirs of pilgrimages, at the same time explains the peculiar characteristics presented by so many of them. Many of these images convey the impression that they represent, not merely the Buddha generally, but a particular Buddha, a certain definite statue in a particular temple or place. Such is clearly the case in respect of certain imprints representing the Buddha as seated under a pyramidal tower (*s'īlchara*), one of which, an excellent specimen and practically identical with those found in the neighbourhood of Buddhagāyā, has been discovered in Siam (at ๗๓๓๓ near Jaiya) (3). This storied

(1) May not this have been the impression of the feet of the Bodhisattva (when he took seven steps towards each of the cardinal points), and may not the origin of the Braḥ Pāda, or "Foot of the Buddha," be connected with this? (G. C.).

(2) *Loc. cit.*, pp. 85-86.

(3) Compare CUNNINGHAM, *Mahābodhi* Pl. XXIV; GRÜNWEDEL, *Buddh. Art in India* p. 130, fig. 128, and the impressions found by Cunningham at Kiyul, not far from Buddhagāyā, *Archaeological Report*, III, p. 158, Pl. XLVI.

tower under which the Master is shown seated in the attitude of teaching, is evidently the tower of Buddhagāyā, and it is practically certain that this Braḥ Bimb of Jaiya, which, moreover, is distinctly of Indian manufacture, came from that celebrated shrine (1) (Pl. I).

But Braḥ Bimb must have ceased at an early date to be regarded merely as souvenirs. With the development of a profound veneration for images, the act of making a statue of the Buddha or other figure symbolic of the religion had long been established as a source of merit. But to cast a bronze image or carve a statue of wood or stone was not within the reach of most people, and poor persons desirous of acquiring merit to assure their rebirth under more prosperous conditions, found in the impression of an effigy upon a lump of potter's clay, the means of accumulating such merit without the assistance of superior intelligence or wealth. Those having the desire and the leisure to do so, might make a very large number of such impressions (2), and it seems possible that the great deposits of tablets bearing the effigy of the Buddha, that have been found in caves of the Malay Peninsula, may represent the labour of hermits who passed many years of their lives in thus acquiring merit.

With the exercise of a little imagination it is easy to reconstruct a picture of the approaches to a Shrine or an ancient Buddhist Temple on a day of Worship. And there in the midst of the vendors of incense, candles and flowers would be found the owner of Braḥ Bimb moulds, selling to the pilgrims, for a trifling sum, the privilege of using his implements for the making of an image, which they

(1) An almost identical impression but in which the Buddha, seated crosswise, makes the gesture of touching the Earth, has been found at Pegu (R. C. TEMPLE, *loc. cit.*, Pl. XV, fig. 2). At the Stūpa of Mirpurkhas Sind (*Ann. Rep. of the Arch. Surv. of India*, 1909-10, Pl. XXXIX, d) a votive tablet has been found which represents the Buddha seated in European manner and making the gesture of teaching, similar in construction with the Braḥ Bimb found at Jaiya. Details such as the Wheel and the two Gazelles are identical but the s'ikhara is absent, possibly because this particular tablet may not have been intended to commemorate the Buddhagāyā pilgrimage. M. H. Cousens attributes this specimen to the eighth or ninth century A.D.

(2) Perhaps 84,000, the number of stūpas said to have been made by Aśoka and corresponding to the number of *dharmakkaṇḍha*, or sections, of the Tripitaka.

might either take away as a souvenir or deposit in the Temple as a votive offering.

What then was the appearance of these moulds? (1) They were plates of copper deeply engraved and manipulated by means of a handle. And this minor business was apparently so flourishing and the demand for its products so great, that in some instances the mould seem to have been turned out, not singly but in mass, by means of another mould or stamp made in relief (Pl. I).

Most ancient Braḥ Bimb bear an inscription in small characters either above, beside or below the effigy, or at the back of it, which is always the same in meaning whether, in accordance with the place of origin or the date of the article, it be in Sanskrit or in Pāli, written with the Nāgarī characters of Northern India, the characters of Southern India or with those of Indo-China. It is, in fact, the well know formula :

*Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā tesam hetum Tathāgato āha
Tesam ca yo nirodho evaṃvādī Mahāsamano ti*

which is commonly called the Buddhist " Creed ", and which may be translated as follows :

The conditions which arise from a cause,
Of these the Tathāgata has stated the cause,
Also the way of suppressing these same :
This is the teaching of the Great Ascetic.

The extraordinary conciseness of this stanza, that gives in four verses the quintessence of the teaching of the Master, might alone be considered sufficient justification for its choice and explanation of its popularity. But there is more in it than that. According to the tradition preserved in the most ancient writings, it was by means of this stanza that the Buddha secured the adherence of the two disciples Sāriputta and Moggallāna (2), afterwards revered in the circles of the Brotherhood as second only to the Master himself. A formula which had so speedily convinced the two most

(1) On the finding of moulds in Burma, cf. *Ann. Rep. Arch. Surv. of Burma*, 1914-15, p. 16.

(2) *Mahāvagga*, I, 23.

notable followers of the Master, must rapidly have acquired in the eyes of the ancient Buddhists a sort of magic virtue, and may well have seemed to them a quite irresistible charm for the conversion to the Faith of any who had not yet heard it. Hence it could not be better placed than upon these Braḥ Bimb which are, as their size indicates, eminently portable objects calculated to find their way everywhere and thus to spread the Good Word far and wide. We shall presently see, when considering the most ancient Braḥ Bimb found in Siam, that the subject most frequently represented thereon is the Great Miracle of S'rāvastī when the Buddha defeated his sectarian opponents and made an immense number of converts: Here is the same anxiety for Proselytism and the same insistence upon conversion; and thus these humble effigies gradually assume in our eyes the aspect of serious implements of religious propaganda. One might almost imagine that the people who from time to time deposited in caves and stūpas so many thousands of effigies, had in mind a propaganda for the remote future, the effect of which would be felt many thousands of years hence. It almost seems to have been the aspiration of these pious people that when, in the fullness of time (1), the Religion had passed into oblivion, the discovery and dissemination of these holy tablets bearing the image of the Master and the brief formula enunciating his doctrine, might arouse an interest in the minds of the discoverers and thus lead to rebirth of the Faith.

To sum up generally the foregoing considerations which constitute the first part of this Study, Braḥ Bimb, originally mere souvenirs representing some holy object or statue, the objective of an accomplished pilgrimage, became by degrees a sort of holy Icon, the cheap fabrication of which enabled even the poorest people to acquire a modest share of merit. And further, their subject or their inscribed formula imparted to them a proselytising virtue, which in time became indistinguishable from magic, this last the sole attribute that has survived in the amulets familiar to us to-day.

(1) It is known that Buddhists have never considered the religion founded by S'akyamuni as being eternal. The Master himself at the time when He admitted women to the community, declared that on account of this tolerance the religion would last only 500 years! Later on it came to be thought that 5000 years was more likely to be the period He meant.

The Braḥ Bimb that have hitherto been discovered in Siamese territory are divisible into several groups, each of which corresponds with one of the main divisions of Siamese history.

I. The Braḥ Pathom type (Pl. II to VII), which I name thus because most of the specimens in this category come from the neighbourhood of Braḥ Pathom and also because their character recalls that of statues and sculpture found there; the subject most often represented being the Great Miracle of S'rāvastī. The oldest specimens of this type apparently date back to about the seventh and eighth centuries A.D. The Buddhist profession of Faith inscribed upon them is in Pāli, in Southern Indian characters or in those of ancient Cambodia.

II. The type of the caves of the Malay Peninsula (Pl. VII to IX). Nearly all these Braḥ Bimb are of unbaked clay and appear to date from about the tenth century A.D. They usually represent the Bodhisattvas of the Northern Pantheon. The 'Profession' is in Northern Indian Nāgari character and in Sanskrit.

III. The Khmer type (Pl. X and XI), contemporaneous with Type II or perhaps slightly later. To be recognised by the physical characteristics and by the costume of the personages represented, who also belong to the Northern Buddhist cult.

IV. The Sukhodaya type (Pl. XII and XIII), belonging to the 13th and fourteenth centuries, A.D., and marked by the frequency of representations of the Buddha walking.

V. The Ayudhyā type (Pl. XIV and XV), of frankly modern aspect and usually representing the Buddha in one of the traditional attitudes, sheltered beneath one of those little erections called in Siamese 'Rūen Kēo.'

VI. Amulets.

TYPE I. The Braḥ Bimb of Braḥ Pathom represent two very different styles corresponding with two successive periods.

The more ancient are directly influenced by the Indian art of the Gupta epoch (from the mid-fourth to mid-seventh centuries A.D.)(1)

(1) On the influence of the India of the Guptas upon the Indo-Chinese peninsula, see G. COEDÈS, *Recueil des Inscriptions du Siam*, vol. II, pp. 1 and foll. (in the press).

more particularly by that of the Buddhist Rock Temples.

One characteristic cannot fail to strike the student on examining the Braḥ Bimb depicted in Plate II; he will notice that the Buddha is seated in the European manner, that is, with his legs hanging down and not drawn up under him as is the oriental way. This attitude is seen in the sculptures of Ajantā (1), of Kanheri (2), of Kārli (3), of Ellora (4), and generally throughout all the Rock Temples (5). It is also found in certain archaic sculptures exhumed at Braḥ Pathom (6), and in the big statue in the Sanctuary there (7). Moreover in a cave called Tham Ru'si, "The Cave of the Rishi," excavated on the slope of Khao Ngu, a hill to the west of Rājapurī (8) there is a Buddha carved in the living rock seated in the same position, and in the attitude of teaching, as are all the statues enumerated above; and a short inscription in characters of the fifth-seventh centuries A.D. (9), proclaims that this image is the work of a hermit who lived in the cave at that remote period and who bore the characteristic appellation of Samādhigupta (10). We have here a collection of minor facts which together make an argument tending

(1) V. A. SMITH, *History of fine art in India and Ceylon*, p. 178.

(2) FERGUSSON and BURGESS, *Cave Temples of India*, Frontispiece II, and Pl. LVI.

(3) *Ibid.*, Pl. XIV.

(4) *Ibid.*, Pl. LXI.

(5) A. FOUCHER, *Journal Asiatique*, Jan. 1909, p. 26.

(6) FOURNEREAU, *Le Siam ancien*, p. 120.—VORETZSCH, *Über altbuddhistische Kunst in Siam (Ostasiatische Zeitschrift, V, 1916, p. 17, fig. 8)*.

(7) VORETZSCH, *Ibid.*, p. 19 fig. 10. There are still at Braḥ Pathom many fragments of similar statues. One image in this style, originally belonging to Wat Mahādhātu of Ayudhyā, was set up in Wat Braḥ Meru of that same city in 1838, A. D. and is there now.

(8) L. DE LAJONQUIERE, *Rapport sommaire sur une mission archéologique (Bull. de la Comm. Arch. de l'Indochine, 1909)*, fig. 21.

(9) This inscription, engraved upon the rock beneath the image of the Buddha, is as follows:—*Puñ vrah rishi...S'rī Samādhigupta*, that is, "The pious work of the holy hermit...S'rī Samādhigupta."

(10) Cf. the name Buddhagupta in an inscription of Kedaḥ comprising the Buddhist Profession of Faith and dated by H. KERN as of the beginning of the fifth century A. D. (KERN, *Verspreide Geschriften*, III, p. 255; and *Miscellaneous papers relating to Indo-China*, I, p. 254 and Pl. IV).

on the one hand to establish a close connection between the Braḥ Bimb illustrated in Plate II and the Sanctuary of Braḥ Pathom, and on the other hand to fix the date of these same Braḥ Bimb at the fifth-seventh centuries A.D., all of them bearing on the reverse side the *Ye dhammā* formula in characters pertaining to that epoch, of which the inscription on the tablet reproduced in Plate III (right) is an example.

Now, what does this scene represent, where the Buddha is found sometimes seated upon the miraculous lotus flower, the stem supported by two individuals wearing head-dresses denoting Nāga, sometimes surrounded by many other Buddhas? It is, as I have stated above, the Great Miracle of S'rāvastī, a scene that has had a considerable influence upon the Buddhist iconography of all countries, for the details of which it will suffice to quote the excellent monograph of M. Foucher, published in the *Journal Asiatique* of January 1909. This, briefly is the description of the Miracle given there.

“After having” writes M. Foucher, “performed certain minor prodigies, mere introductory trifles so to speak, and refused to allow anyone either cleric or lay, man or woman, to take his place to confound the incredulous by the exhibition of supernatural powers, the Blessed One, at the direct and twice repeated invitation of the King Prasenajit, performed in succession two different kinds of Miracle. The first was that which is known technically as the *Yamakapratihārya* which consists of walking about in the air at various altitudes, causing at the same time flames or waves to burst forth from the upper or lower part of the body. The second consisted in causing to appear in all parts of the sky and everywhere around him, innumerable images of Himself, in the midst of which He enunciated His Law. Meanwhile a violent storm raised by a Prince of the Genii completed the defeat of the sceptics, a vast multitude of whom were thereupon converted to the Good Law”(1).

Such is, in brief, the account of this Miracle. The particular

(1) *Le Grand Miracle de S'rāvastī* (*Journal Asiatique*, 1909, pp. 9-10).

episode reproduced on our Brah Bimb is related at full length in a Sanskrit writing, the Divyāvadāna(1).

“At this moment Bhagavat conceived a mundane thought ! Now it is a rule that when any one of the Blessed Buddhas conceives a mundane thought, all sentient beings, even to the ants and other insects, are aware in their soul of the thought of the Blessed One. Now therefore S'akra, Brahmā and the other gods reflected thus, “With what intention has Bhagavat conceived this mundane thought ?” And immediately the following idea came into their minds. “It is that he desires to perform great miracles at S'rāvastī for the good of all living creatures.” Thereupon S'akra and Brahmā with several hundreds of thousands of other gods, knowing in their souls the thought of Bhagavat, vanished from the habitation of the gods.....and appeared before Bhagavat. There Brahmā and some of the other gods having walked three times round the Tathāgata, keeping him on their right, and having saluted His feet by touching them with their heads, moved to His right and seated themselves there. S'akra and the rest of the other gods, having paid to Him similar tokens of respect, seated themselves upon His left. The two Kings of the Nāgas, Nanda and Upananda, now created a thousand-petalled lotus flower as large as the wheel of a chariot, all of gold with a stem of diamonds, and this they presented to Bhagavat. And Bhagavat seated himself upon the pericarp of this lotus, his legs crossed and his body erect, and meditated upon His own recollection. And in this state He created another similar lotus and on this also Bhagavat appeared seated. And then there appeared, before, behind and around him, innumerable Blessed Buddhas, all created by Himself, who extending as far as the skies of the Akanishṭhas, formed an Assembly of Buddhas all issuing from the Blessed One ! Some of these miraculous Buddhas walked, others stood erect, some were seated, others reclined, and some, mounting to the uttermost regions of light, produced a miraculous effect of flames, of light, of rain and of lightnings. Many propounded questions to which others responded, enunciating the following two stanzas :

(1) BURNOUF, *Introduction à l'histoire du bouddhisme indien*, p. 163.

Begin ! Go out (from the house) ! Apply yourselves to the
Buddha !

Destroy the army of Death as an elephant destroys a hut of
reeds !

He who shall walk without distraction under the discipline
of this Law,

Escaping from birth and from the chain of existence, will
put an end to sorrow.

The Braḥ Bimb of the second Braḥ Pathom style appear to be less ancient than those which have just been considered. Unfortunately they are without inscription, wherefore paleography affords no assistance in determining their approximate date. They invariably show, if not direct influence of Khmer art, at least a certain relationship with it. The seated Buddha of Plate IV is entirely analogous with statues of ancient Cambodia and the tower that figures on three of the pictured specimens (Plate VI, centre and Plate VII, right and left) is identical with the Khmer Prāsāt, which attained its most perfect expression in the tower of Angkor Wat, previous to degenerating into the Siamese *Prāng*.

The scenes including many figures, recorded on these tablets, represent either the Miracle of the multiplication of Buddhas, adopted and reduced to a mere mechanical repetition of the image of the Blessed One ; or more or less complete series of former Buddhas, this last theme closely connected, according to M. Foucher, with that of the Great Miracle itself (1).

TYPE II. The second group of Braḥ Bimb, comprising those which have been discovered in considerable numbers in the caves of the Malay Peninsula, has already been noticed and in part described by Commandant L. de Lajonquière(2) and Mr. W. A. Graham (3). These effigies which are all of unbaked, or merely sundried, clay,

(1) *Le Grand Miracle de S'rāvastī* (loc. cit, p. 19, note 2).

(2) *Bull. de la comm. arch. de l'Indochine*, 1912, p. 138.

(3) *Pottery in Siam* (*Journal of the Siam Society*, Vol. XVI, part I, pp. 7-8).

come from Wat Han and Khao Khao in the province of Trang ; from Tham Khao Khrom near Jaiya ; and from Khao Ok Dalu and Tham Guhā Svarga at Badalung. Next to the Buddha, the personage most frequently represented on the impressions is the Bodhisattva Avalokites'vara. As elsewhere, the 'Profession' appears upon them, but in Sanskrit and not in Pāli, from which circumstances it is permissible to conclude that the pilgrims who made and disseminated these tablets professed the doctrines of the Mahāyāna or Grand Vehicle.

Some of the Braḥ Bimb of the Malay Peninsula recall the style of Indo-Javanese sculpture, which once a matter for surprise, is now no longer so since it has been demonstrated how the influence of the Buddhist kingdom of S'rivijaya (Palembang in Sumatra) extended to the shores of the Peninsula, even to the north of Jaiya, between the seventh and twelfth centuries A. D (1). The beautiful statues of Bodhisattvas discovered at Jaiya (2) belong to the highly developed artistic feeling of that kingdom, and to it are also in all probability due many of the Braḥ Bimb now in question.

Another fact tending towards the establishment of the relationship between these Braḥ Bimb and the kingdom of S'rivijaya, and the placing of their date at about the tenth century A.D., is the employment of Nāgarī characters, originating from Northern India, for inscribing the 'Profession.' It is known that during the eighth and ninth centuries A.D., a migration of which successive stages may be distinguished on the shores of Madras, in Java and in Cambodia, carried the alphabet of Northern India to countries which formerly used, and afterwards continued to use, a writing of a very different kind (3). The kingdom of S'rivijaya was no stranger to the influence of this migratory wave, for the Sanskrit inscription of Kalasan in Java (778 A.D.) which is in Nāgarī, emanates from the

(1) G. COEDÈS, *Le Royaume de Śrīvijaya* (B.E.F.E.O., XVIII, vi.).

(2) G. COEDÈS, *Bronzes Khmèrs* (*Ars Asiatica*, V, Pl. XLVIII).

(3) BARTH and BERGAIGNE, *Inscriptions sanskrites de Champa et du Cambodge*, p. 348 and following.

S'ailendra Dynasty, in other words, from the Palembang kingdom(1).

This Nāgarī alphabet which we have just seen to have been used in Java late in the eighth century A.D., was also in use in Cambodia at the end of the ninth. Furthermore votive tablets with Sanskrit inscriptions in Nāgarī, that have been found in Burma, but of which unfortunately I have not seen reproductions, date, according to M. C. Duroiselle, from the tenth or eleventh century A.D.(2). Hence it appears reasonable to attribute the Braḥ Bimb of the Malay Peninsula to about the tenth century A.D.

TYPE III.—The costume and the general aspect of the individuals represented on the Braḥ Bimb of the third group leave no doubt as to their relationship with the sculptures of ancient Cambodia. In fact the theme most frequently employed in these (Plate X, right and the moulds in Plate I) is just that which is most common also in Khmer statuary and epigraphy. This theme is a Triad comprising an Individual seated in meditation upon a 'Nāga,' a four-armed God, and a Woman. I have attempted to show in my Study of Khmer Bronzes (3), that this Triad represents the Buddha in His metaphysical, not His human, manifestation; the Bodhisattva Avalokites'vara; and Prajñāpāramitā or 'The Perfection of Wisdom', this last a material presentation of the transcendent Wisdom of the Buddhas. This identification, for the details of which I venture to refer to the above mentioned study, is based upon the presence of certain indicative symbols in the hands of the two acolytes of the Buddha, and of a small image of the Buddha in meditation fixed upon their hair-knots. It is further supported by the fact that this Triad is invoked in the exordium of many Buddhist inscriptions of ancient Cambodia. The abundance of Braḥ Bimb on which this Triad figures is sufficient to prove to us that it was an object of popular reverence.

(1) N. J. KROM, *Sumatraansche periode der Javaansche Geschiedenis* (Transl. in B. E. F. E.-O., XIX, v, pp. 129 and 130).

(2) *Ann. Rep. of the Arch. Surv. of Burma*, 1912-13, p. 17.

(3) *Ars Asiatica*, vol. V, 1923.

TYPE IV—The group of Braḥ Bimb of the Sukhodaya epoch (from mid-twelfth to mid-fourteenth centuries A. D.) is remarkable for the extraordinary profusion of representations of the Buddha walking, an attitude that is by no means peculiar to votive tablets, but which seems to have enjoyed general favour amongst 'Thai' artists of the thirteenth century A. D. The sculptures at Wat Mahādhātu at Sukhodaya afford several examples of this(1), and it is probably from that spot, at any rate from Sukhodaya, that the two large bronze statues in the walking attitude now in the cloister of Wat Benchamapabitra in Bangkok, were brought.

The bias of early 'Thai' sculptors towards this form of presenting the Master was not, perhaps, a mere matter of chance. In the thirteenth century A. D., the 'Thai' were a young people in a state of active expansion. They themselves were marching to the conquest of Central Indo-China. While the 'Thai' of Sukhodaya were driving the Khmers from the valley of the Menam and were implanting there the Pāli form of Buddhism, their cousins from Jieng Sen and Jieng Rai were expelling the Môn from the valley of the upper Mēbing. And, even as at Sukhodaya, Rāma Gamhēng and his successors made innumerable images of the walking Buddha, so the great Mangrai, the conqueror of the last Môn Kings of Lambūn and the founder of Jieng Mai, caused great statues of the walking Buddha to be cast, of which a fine example is extant in the Bot of Wat Kalakot at Jieng Mai (2). And in truth, it is not possible to conceive a symbol more expressive of Siamese aspirations at this period than that of the walking, or 'marching' Buddha. In this connection of ideas I find an explanation of the great abundance of Braḥ Bimb of this period representing the Blessed One in this attitude, an attitude, be it said, that is far from ungraceful.

TYPE V—The Braḥ Bimb dating from the Ayudhyā period, that is, later than the fourteenth century A. D., are of considerably less interest than are those that have just been under consideration.

(1) FOURNEREAU, *Le Siam Ancien*, Pl. LXXVI.—เมืองเพ็ญเมืองพรวน.

(2) For these statues, see พงศาวตวโยนก, p. 155.

But they are not without a certain artistic value. They are usually of one uniform style. Beneath a *Rüen Këo*, a sort of pointed arch, highly ornamented, the Buddha is shown in one or other of the traditional attitudes, seated, standing, walking or reclining. The terra cotta material of the article is often lacquered and gilded.

TYPE VI. There remain those Braḥ Bimb of quite small dimensions which may be separately classed as 'Amulets'. Their age is very difficult of determination, but there is one group that is almost certainly antique; namely that of the Braḥ Gong (𑄓𑄢 or Gong means 'invulnerable'), originating from a Wat in Lambūn the name of which shows the connection. Outside the Northern Gate of the city of Lambūn, some three or four hundred Metres distant, is situated Wat Braḥ Gong, the existing buildings of which are modern, but stand upon the site of an ancient edifice dating back probably to the Môn occupation, prior to the taking of Lambun by Mangrai at the end of the thirteenth century. This temple would seem to have been a much frequented shrine in ancient times. At least there is evidence that a very great number of little Braḥ Bimb representing the Buddha seated under the sacred Fig tree, were made there at some remote time, for the soil of this Wat has yielded hundreds, nay, thousands of these minutes anaglyphs. Even today, though this Braḥ Bimb mine has been exploited for a long time, it suffices, so it is said, merely to scratch the ground there to find them still; always provided, of course, that the searcher has a certain amount of merit to his credit!

Of other amulets, many of which are reproduced in Fourneau's book (page 105 and Plate XXIII, at the foot), it is practically impossible to determine the date.

We are now arrived at the close of this investigation, a Study which has led us into many, and the widest of digressions because, in point of fact, these little images are most intimately linked with the fortunes of Buddhism in Siam and reflect the beliefs, the preoccupations and the artistic tendencies of all the varying epochs of its history.

Let us suppose for an instant the prophecy to have been ful-

filled, that limits the total duration of the Buddhist religion to 5000 years, or allows it only 2532 years longer to endure from this present time. Let us allow a cataclysm (which I for one am far from desiring) that shall have swept away all vestiges of this religion, temples, images, books, all,—with the sole exception of its Braḥ Bimb. What might very well happen? These humble residua would enable the archaeologist of the 45th century to attest the at-one-time existence of an all powerful religion holding sway over a great part of the regions that we now call the Far East. They would reveal to him the representation of its founder (naturally the supreme object of the adoration of the faithful), interpreted according to the artistic perceptions of the different countries in which, and epochs at which, this cult was followed. They would show to him the principal deities that by degrees invaded, and contributed a pantheon to a doctrine originally atheist. And, provided our imaginary archaeologist were capable of interpreting the brief inscription on most of these effigies, they would make known to him, embalmed in a single sentence of striking laconism, the whole quintessence of the very religion itself!

Thus it may be seen how precious are these little Braḥ Bimb and how important is their pious preservation. Thanks to the efforts of His Royal Highness Prince Damrong, Braḥ Bimb found in Siam and hitherto dispersed amongst private collections, in the Museum of the Ministry of the Interior and elsewhere, have now been gathered together and are displayed in one of the rooms of the Museum of the Royal Institute. And it is from this collection that the specimens used to illustrate this Study have been drawn.

List of Plates.

Plate I. *Above:* The Buddha seated in the European manner in the attitude of teaching, beneath the tower of Buddha-gāyā. On either side of the throne appear nine stūpas of varying dimensions. Beneath the full-blown lotus that forms a stool for the feet of the Ever Blessed, there is shown a wheel supported by two gazelles. The Buddhist 'Creed' which appears somewhat indistinctly below the layer of gilding that covers the terra cotta, is probably in Sanskrit, certainly in Nāgarī character.

Discovered in the neighbourhood of Jaiya.—H : 0 m. 125.

Below: Braḥ Bimb moulds in Khmer style. That to the left, which is in relief, was doubtless intended for the making of incised matrices (for the subject represented, see above, the paragraph dealing with Braḥ Bimb of TYPE III. The theme of the mould of which the back is shown is identical with that produced in Pl. X, to the left).

Origin unknown.—H : 0 m. 087 ; 0m. 115 ; 0m. 09.

Plate II. DIFFERENT REPRESENTATIONS OF THE GREAT MIRACLE.

Left, Above: From Glong Braḥ Pradon at Braḥ Pathom.—
H : 0 m. 06.

Left, Below: From Wat Braḥ Ngam at Braḥ Pathom(1).—
H : 0 m. 066.

Centre: From Khao Ok Dalu, Badalung(2).—H : 0 m. 125.

Right, Above: From Khao Ok Dalu, Badalung(3).—H : 0 m. 065. (An identical tablet was found in a cave in the Amherst District of Burma and was pictured by R. C. Temple, *loc. cit.* Pl. XVI, top, right).

Right, Below: Found at Wat Rang, Badalung.—H : 0 m. 09

(1) Already published by Voretzsch, Pl. XIII, a (below). Falsely ascribed to Korat.

(2) *Ibid.*, f (above) falsely ascribed to Rājapurī.

(3) *Ibid.*, f (below).

Plate III. THE GREAT MIRACLE OF S'RĀVASTĪ.

Left: Origin unknown⁽¹⁾. At the back of the tablet appears the *Ye dhammā* inscription in Southern Indian or Indo-Chinese letters roughly scratched in the clay before baking.—H: 0 m. 143.

Right: From Rājapurī. Below is the *Ye dhammā* inscription in letters similar to those on the preceding specimen but in relief and carefully executed⁽²⁾.—H: 0 m. 13.

(Other fragments of a similar tablet also from Rājapurī have the inscription *Namo Buddhāya* engraved on the back, evidently done in the wet clay before baking).

Plate IV. The Buddha seated beneath the Figtree in the attitude of Meditation⁽³⁾. From Braḥ Pathom.—H: 0 m. 145.

Plate V. *Left:* Three Buddhas wearing over their monastic habit the regalia of a Prince. Seated on lotus thrones in the attitude of touching the Earth.

Origin: Tablets of this type are fairly common. That figured here is of unknown origin, but some have been found in the Tham Rūsi Khao Ngu at Rājapurī, and Voretzsch reproduces one that, according to him, came from Korat⁽⁴⁾.—H: 0 m. 10.

Centre: The Buddha, with regalia, seated on a lotus throne supported by three elephant's heads, and in the attitude of touching the Earth. He is surrounded by many other Buddhas, in the same attitude, those above Him being seated upon long-stemmed lotus flowers.

Origin: The tablet here represented is of unknown origin but in the Museum there is a similar, though slightly damaged, specimen found at Bejrapurī.—H: 0 m. 12.

Right: The Buddha seated on a lotus throne in the attitude of touching the Earth, between two smaller Buddhas in similar attitude seated on a long-stemmed lotus flowers.

Origin: Wat Dao Gotr, Nagara S'rī Dharmarāja.

(1) Ibid., c (below) pictures a fragment of the same tablet comprising only the three figures on the left. From Rājapurī; now in the Museum, Bangkok.

(2) Ibid., b (above). (3) Ibid., b (below). (4) Ibid., a (above).

Similar tablets have been found at Wat Mahādhātu and at Khao Jum Dong, also at Nagara S'rī Dharmarāja, at Subarnapuri and at Bejrapūrn.—H : 0 m. 085.

Plate VI *Left*: A series of nineteen Buddhas arranged in three rows; above, five erect Buddhas; below, two rows of seven Buddhas seated in the attitude of touching the Earth. All wear a tiara and other jewels⁽¹⁾.

Origin : The Menam Noi, Kanchanapuri.—H : 0 m. 125.

Centre: The Buddha seated on a lotus throne in the embrasure of the door of a tower; in the attitude of touching the Earth. The tower resembles Khmer buildings of this nature. The Buddha is surrounded by four smaller Buddhas in the attitude of meditation.

Origin : From Khao Jum Dong, Nagara S'rī Dharmarāja.—H : 0 m. 103.

Right: Thirty Buddhas arranged in four rows. The top row consists of five standing Buddhas. The second and third rows contain nine each, and the bottom row seven Buddhas seated in meditation.

Origin : From Khao Jum Dong, Nagara S'rī Dharmarāja.—H : 0 m. 13

Plate VII. *Left*: The Buddha in the attitude of touching the Earth, seated below a Khmer tower borne up by cariatid lions. On either side appears a smaller Buddha seated in meditation upon an altar⁽²⁾.

Origin : The specimen shown is from Nagara S'rī Dharmarāja but a good many identical tablets have been found at Braḥ Pathom.—H : 0 m. 11.

Centre: The Buddha in the attitude of touching the Earth, seated upon a lotus throne supported by three lions, and surrounded by a series of Buddhas in the same attitude. Those above Him are upon long-stemmed lotus flowers.

Origin : From Lambūn, North Western Circle.—H : 0 m. 145.

(1) Ibid., d (above). (2) Ibid., c (above);—Fournereau, Pl. XXIII; —Getty, Pl. III, b.

Right: A tablet similar to that on the left, but the two lesser figures on either side of the central Buddha are seated below a tower surmounted by a stūpa.

Origin: From Braḥ Pathom.—H: 0 m. 085.

Plate VIII. *Left*, Above: The four-armed Avalokites'vara. The Sanskrit *Ye dharmā* formula in Nāgarī letters, is seen to the left of the figure.

Origin: From Khao Khao (Trang) and Tham Guhā Svarga (Baladung).—H: 0 m. 085.

Below: A twelve-armed Avalokites'vara (for this type (cf. J. R. A. S., 1894, p. 79; Pl. II, 3; —Also Foucher, *Iconographie bouddhique*, I, p 106.). The Sanskrit 'Creed' in Nāgarī letters, has been struck on the back in three different places, by means of a die.

Origin: From Wat Hān (Trang) and the two caves above mentioned.—H: 0 m. 09.

Centre: The Buddha seated in the attitude of teaching, with twelve individuals round Him, all in different attitudes. The Nāgarī letters of the *Ye dharmā* formula are scattered over all the free space and appear also on the back struck with a die in five different places(1).

Origin: From Tham Guhā Svarga.—H: 0 m. 12.

Right, Above: A four-armed Avalokites'vara enclosed in a frame composed of the *Ye dharmā* Formula(2) in Nāgarī Letters.

Origin: The aforementioned caves.—H: 0 m. 10.

Below: Probably Jambhala (Foucher, *Iconographie bouddhique*, p. 123, or the Goddess Tārā (ibid, p. 134). The 'Buddhist Creed' in Sanskrit (Nāgarī character) appears struck on the back twice.

Origin: From the aforementioned caves.—H: 0 m. 10.

(1) Ibid., c (above). (2) Ibid., d (below).

Plate IX. *Left*, Above: Three rather indistinct figures (The Buddha between two Bodhisattvas ?) (1) placed in three pavilions, the roofs of which recall the style of certain Javanese monuments. Below there is shown a religious dance (?) in progress. The *Ye dharmā* inscription in Nāgarī lettering is inscribed on the basement of the three edifices.

Origin: From Badalung.—H: 0 m. 065.

Below: The Buddha standing upon an open lotus flower. The *Ye dharmā* Formula is found struck with a die on the reverse side.

Origin: From Khao Khrom, Jaiya.—H: 0 m. 07.

Centre: The Buddha seated on a lotus throne touching the Earth with His right hand. The figure is framed in the words of the "Creed" in the Nāgarī character.

Origin: From Khao Khrom, Jaiya.—H: 0 m. 095.

Right, Above: The Buddha in the same attitude as the foregoing.

Origin: From Khao Khrom, Jaiya.—H: 0 m. 05.

Below: The Buddha, identical with that on the right of this Plate. The 'Creed' struck on the back.

Origin: From Khao Khrom, Jaiya.—H: 0 m. 125.

Plate X. *Left*: Mahāyāna Pantheon.

In the centre, a many-armed and many-headed divinity of which the sex is doubtful; flanked on either side by two figures seated on lotus flowers. Above, the Buddha seated on a Nāga. Below, four Buddhas in the attitude of meditation.

Origin: From Svargalok. (A Braḥ Bimb recording the same subject but on a smaller scale, has been found at Wat Braḥ Kēo, Mtiang Sarga. In the Museum there is a mould representing this same subject, and another, damaged in its upper part, was dug up by M. Parmentier, head of the Archaeological Service of French Indo-China,

(1) An inscription of the King of S'rīvijaya at Wieng Sa records the founding of three sanctuaries consecrated to the Buddha, to Vajrapāṇi and to Padmapāṇi (Avalokites'vara) respectively.

in the course of a search amongst the ruins of Sambor Prei Kuk, Cambodia).—H: 0 m. 10.

Centre: A group of six figures. Below, the Buddhist Triad, *i.e.*, the Buddha, Avalokites'vara and Prajñāpāramitā. Above, three rather vague divinities the middle one, many-armed and many-headed.

Origin: From Wat Dao Gotr, Nagara S'ri Dharmarāja.—H: 0 m. 165.

Right: The Buddhist Triad.

Origin: Subarnapurī (Other specimens have been found at Bejrapurī and Bejrabūrn. Fournereau figures one of these, Pl. XXIII.)—H: 0 m. 10.

Plate XI. Mahāyāna Pantheon, at the top of which the Buddha, seated upon a Nāga, is easily distinguishable. The figure dancing in the middle of a circle is possibly Hevajra, a divinity frequently represented in bronze in ancient Cambodia (*cf.* my "Bronzes Khmers", p. 44). There are here in all thirty-two figures represented, a number that plays an important part in the "Hevajratantra," the ritual worship of Hevajra preserved in a Chinese translation. (A beautiful specimen of the same type is kept in Musée Sarraut, Phom Penh).

Origin: From Subarnapurī.—H: 0 m. 16.

Plate XII. Various representations of the Buddha walking; found at Sukhodaya with the exception of that in the upper middle which is from Subarnapurī; of that on the left below, from Wat Brah Kēo, M̄tang Sarga; and that on the right below, found at Rājapurī. (A mould corresponding exactly with this last was found at Bisnulok).—

H, (right to left and from above to below) 0 m. 085; 0 m. 055; 0 m. 096; 0 m. 035; 0 m. 55; 0 m. 10; 0 m. 11 and 0 m. 105.

Plate XIII. The Buddha walking; found at Subarnapurī. Brah Bimb in this style, popularly supposed to safeguard buildings against fire, are to be found in most places.—H: 0 m. 30.

Plate XIV. *Left*, Above: The Buddha seated in the attitude of touching the Earth.—H: 0 m. 08.

Below : The Buddha walking. Found at Rājapurī.—
H : 0 m. 10.

Centre, Above : The Buddha entering Nirvāṇa. Found at
Bejrapūrṇ.—H : 0 m. 85.

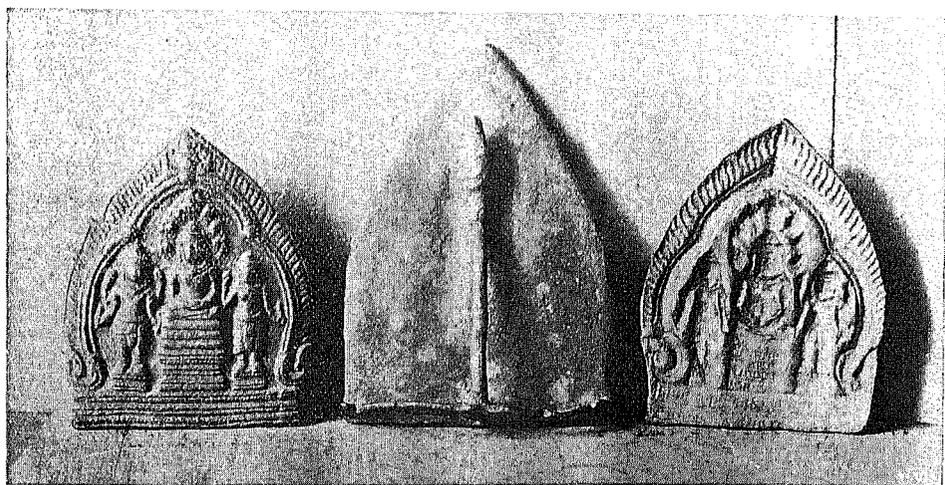
Below : The Buddha in the attitude of touching the
Earth. Found at Bejrapurī (A similar tablet is figured
by Fournereau, Pl. XXII. and XXIII).—H : 0 m. 105.

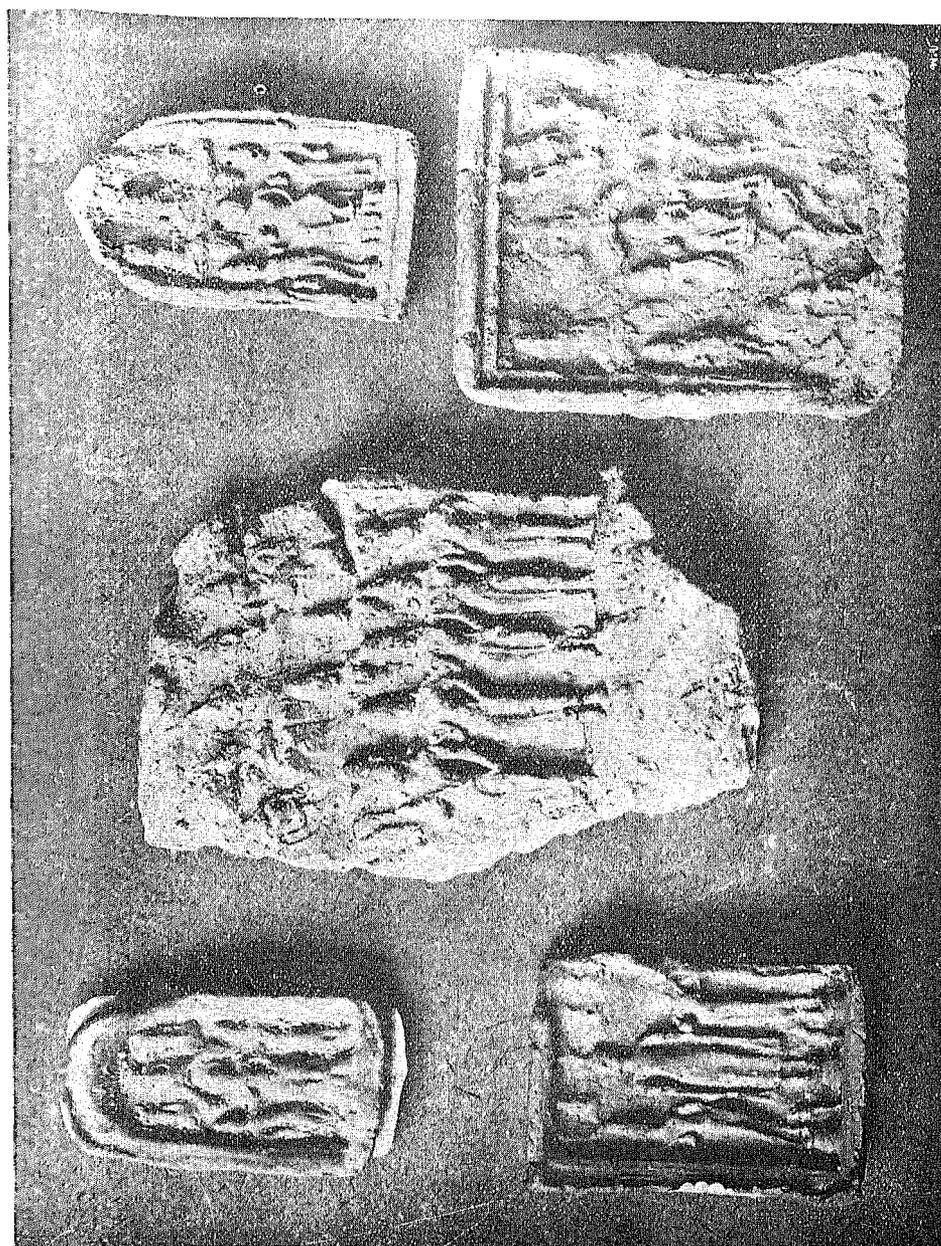
Right, Above : The Buddha seated in the European man-
ner, receiving offerings from a monkey and an elephant.
From Moṅkol Bórei, Cambodia.—H : 0 m. 055.

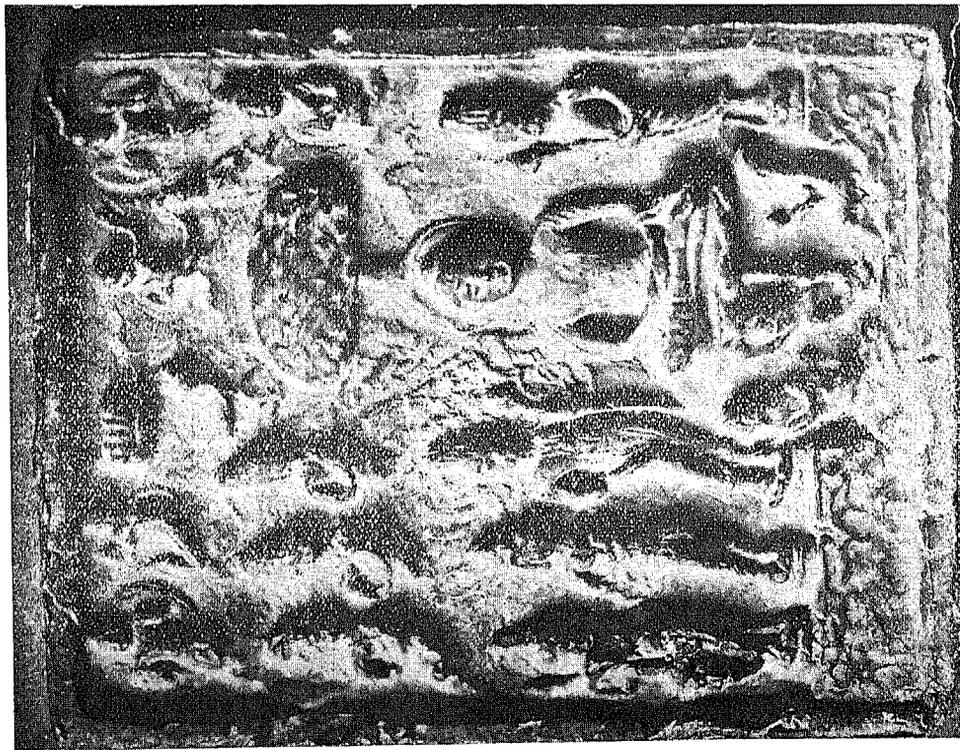
Below :—The Buddha standing erect after the attain-
ment of Omniscience. Found at Bejrapurī.—H : 0 m. 105.
(Indications as to origin given for this plate refer only
to the particular Braḥ Bimb illustrated. As a matter of
fact, specimens of these types and of others somewhat
similar, are to be found in all Wats, more or less.)

Plate XV. The Buddha as Rājādhirāja (Braḥ Sōng Grūang). Found
at Braḥ Pathom. Of common occurrence. Fournereau
illustrates a specimen, Pl. XXIII, centre.—H : 0 m. 22.

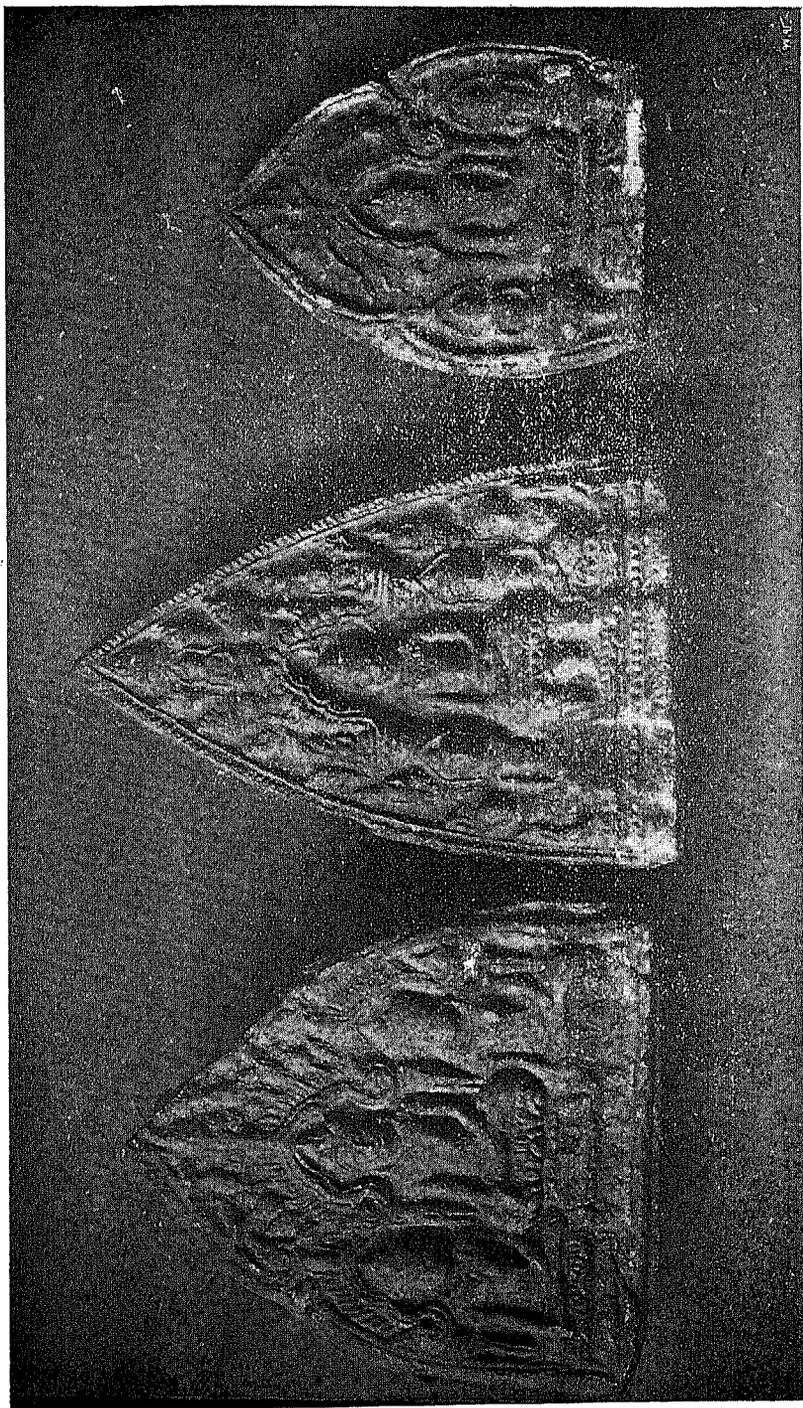












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