

# Tracing Thought through Things:

The Oldest Pali Texts and  
the Early Buddhist Archaeology  
of India and Burma

BY JANICE STARGARDT

2000 GONDA LECTURE



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*This monograph is dedicated  
to the memory of my late husband,  
Professor A.W. Stargardt,  
vividly present at the 7th Gonda Lecture  
but tragically absent by the time  
of its publication.*



*The Great Silver Reliquary of Sri Ksetra, Central Burma (glass plate negative, courtesy of the Archaeological Survey Department, Burma).*

‘The order of ideas must proceed according to the order of things...’  
Giambattista Vico, *The New Science*. Naples, Stamperia Muziana, 1744

#### ARCHAEOLOGY IN INDOLOGY

I had the honour to know Professor Gonda from 1977 until his death in 1991, visiting him almost every year for intensive discussions of his and my research, and broader issues in Indology. In the presence of many of his former pupils, it would be inappropriate for me to attempt to evaluate his achievements as a Sanskritist: they are preserved in the public domain in his own prolific record of publications, in the many books that he edited and the dissertations he supervised (see also Bodewitz 1992). I would like, however, to note here a particular aspect of Professor Gonda’s achievement: the innovative methodology and conceptual basis of his work. For a Sanskritist and textual Indologist, who reached maturity in the first part of the twentieth century, to reach out to and absorb the theories and methods of cultural anthropology and archaeology was not only innovative but, in the academic context of the time, even risky. He was also deeply interested in the additional modes of access to information on ancient societies opened up by the science-based archaeology developed in the 1940s and 1950s at Cambridge and which has subsequently become, not only an influential norm in archaeological research, but has become particularly respected by the archaeologists of India and parts of South East Asia. To name among these methods only the few with which I have been directly involved over the past thirty years in Cambridge, South and South East Asia: improved survey and mapping techniques through the use of aerial photographs and satellite imagery, leading in turn to the discovery of additional archaeological sites and a better understanding of their shape and size, location and relation to their environment; studies of the ancient soils at archaeological sites, traces of ancient irrigation systems, and the ancient food resources of a society through research on fossilized pollens and carbonized plant remains; and improved dating techniques of archaeological remains based on C14, AMS, TL and other techniques.

Throughout his long life, Professor Gonda remained highly interested in the latest developments in theory and method, and integrated much from the anthropological and archaeological disciplines into his particular concepts of



Vedic studies and of Indology more generally. He believed it to be fundamentally important to try to understand the societies which had created the texts and the landscapes which shaped their thought. That tradition continues in the work of many Indologists today in the Netherlands, and perhaps especially in France, Britain and in the United States. It is appropriate, as the last Gonda Lecturer of this century, and the first archaeologist to speak in the series, to make explicit this intellectual lineage to which Professor Gonda contributed so significantly. That lineage may be called tracing thought through things and texts. The first part of my lecture will be concerned with some examples where thought can be traced only through things; the second part will look at an example where the earliest surviving expression of Buddhist thought in the Pali language can only be understood by integrating the evidence of both things and texts. This is not to be understood as an approach that assumes that the evidence provided by things and texts will be congruent, but rather assumes that they provide different kinds of insight that together will complement each other and provide an enlarged view.

It is my responsibility today to convey something of the role of archaeology in the past as a part of Indology, and provide some brief insights into current research on India and Burma, which is helping to shape the agenda of Indology in the coming decade. This is the place to mention that archaeological research in India is over 200 years old, and in Burma over 100 years old. The former is thus older than in many countries of Europe and is itself currently the subject of much research as a case-study of the history of changing concepts and methods in archaeology. Archaeology in Burma is also a respectable age. It suffers from the well-known political and economic difficulties of the present time but, as I hope to demonstrate in the second part of this lecture, has serious claims to international attention through the inherent importance of its archaeological remains. Notably, I shall look at the oldest Pali inscriptions in the world, which have survived in Burma in a well-defined archaeological context. There, both objects and texts provide rare insights into a major set of early Buddhist rituals, associated with the foundation of a stupa. These rituals took place outside India but under the inspiration of profound Indian cultural influences, adopted and to varying degrees adapted by a prosperous society of non-Indian people, with

a pre-existing non-Indic culture of their own, which included monumental architecture and elaborate group burials in urns (Stargardt 1990, 1992a and b).

If we turn to the maps of India and Burma (Pls. 1 and 2), we can distinguish the regions of central importance to the history of early Buddhism. The heartland of Buddhism is the middle Ganges Valley in India in the middle of the first millennium BC. It is well-known that, during the centuries following the Buddha's death, the influence of Buddhism was not equally strong in time or in space. Especially important for the first part of this lecture, are the spread of Buddhism out of the middle Ganges Valley in the 3rd–2nd century BC into North India and into the North-West Deccan, and its descent into the South-East coastal plain of Andhra very soon after. This last area was central to the later spread of Buddhism to South East Asia and, in the first instance, into Burma. In Burma, the earliest dated Buddhist sites are in the Pyu kingdoms centred, respectively, on the ancient city of Beikthano (where they belong to the late 3rd/4th century AD), Śrī Kṣetra (where they belong to the 5th century) and Halingyi (where they belong to the 5th/6th century). But the processes of conversion themselves in each place must, axiomatically, be older than the earliest datable monumental remains. Each of these large Pyu cities had pre-Buddhist origins. They are all inland sites, accessible via the Irrawadi and Mu Rivers, but not located directly on them. The conversion of the Pyu to Buddhism was a process that seems to have begun in the 2nd century AD and continued in the following centuries. The coastal Mon and Arakanese kingdoms of Burma – the intermediaries through whom contacts by river and sea between the Pyu and the Buddhist societies of India would have passed – may also have adopted Buddhism in the 2nd–4th century period (for epigraphical evidence from Arakan, see Johnston 1944, 357–85; U San Tha Aung n.d., 4–8; Gutman 1976; for numismatic evidence on the Mon, see Mahlo's Appendix in Stargardt n.d.)

The actual dates of the life and death of the Buddha, long considered the earliest reliable dates of an historical person in Indian history, are currently being reappraised. For our purposes, however, it is still sufficient that all the possible dates lie around the middle of the first millennium BC. The reconstruction just outlined of the places and dates of the spread of Buddhism in India and into Burma after the Buddha's lifetime would have been impossible without archaeological evidence. Archaeological evidence is also of central importance in the construction of reliable dates for the life of the Buddha (Härtel 1991). There is



good reason to believe that Buddhist monks preserved their sacred texts with tenacity and accuracy over long periods of time in spite of the vicissitudes endured by the *sangha* in these centuries. I shall return to this point later. This, too, is the place to pay tribute to the many outstanding scholars of Buddhist texts, whose studies have provided fine details on Buddhist thought and its development that are sometimes inaccessible to archaeological research. Equally, however, it has to be remembered that archaeological evidence has provided some concrete certainties about the precise character, locations and dates of major Buddhist activities that eluded textual studies alone. Archaeological research has also recovered data that are nowhere recorded, but are highly significant to our understanding of Buddhism – and increasingly of Hinduism as well. It is impossible for anyone to work in the field of Buddhist archaeology without an adequate knowledge of textual research; one notes with regret that the converse is not always true.

All scientific research is a process defined by the questions it addresses and the methods it adopts. Archaeology in India has seldom been content to confine itself to the architectural history of monuments, iconography and style of sculpture. Partly because the earliest archaeological research was carried out by professional army or irrigation engineers or mathematicians turned surveyors, a tradition was established that recorded something, and sometimes a great deal, about the significant environments in which the ancient monuments, inscriptions and statues were situated. Their methods were basic: to record what they found by the most adequate means available in the days before photography – namely by maps, notes and drawings. Their degree of success may be judged by the fact that their records of fieldwork carried out between 200 and 150 years ago remain indispensable to archaeological research today, and some of them will be used later in this lecture. The contemporary flowering of science-based archaeology in India thus has deep roots. I shall now explore briefly some of the ways in which archaeological data – old and recent – illuminate Indian society in the early to mid-1st millennium BC, when Buddhist and Jain religious thought developed and Hinduism entered a new phase. These archaeological data provide insights that could not have been gained from any other source.

IRON TOOLS AND FOOD RESOURCES IN PRE- AND  
EARLY BUDDHIST INDIA

Archaeological research since the 1960s has demonstrated that India was one of the countries in the world with an early and highly expert production of iron from around the beginning of the first millennium BC (Banerjee 1965). By the 7th century BC, iron tools and weapons were abundant in archaeological sites of the middle Ganges Valley, North-East India and all down the East coast plain from Orissa to Tamil Nadu. Probably as a direct result of the availability of such superior tools, harvests of food crops and general wealth increased in these areas. We are also now in a position to document with some precision from a still earlier date the appearance in the archaeological record of the Deccan of an increased number of food crops (Pl. 3, Fuller 2000). The most important new crop was rice which, along with bananas and coconuts, may have been introduced into India from South East Asia. The data assembled in Pl. 4 show a significant cluster of finds of ancient rice in the middle Ganges Valley, the hearth of the new religious thought just mentioned, from 1200–500 BC (Fuller in press).

The development of rice cultivation in this area and time was to provide the indispensable conditions for the rise of early Buddhism, Jainism and new forms of Hinduism. That is a strong statement which is not meant to carry a message of environmental determinism. On the contrary, it points to a frequently overlooked but highly significant social as well as environmental relationship between the food resources of an ancient society and great new developments in its cultural life. The rice plant had an inherent capacity to produce more abundant yields than any other crop plant under cultivation in India at that time. That capacity was further augmented whenever irrigation water was available. It is well-known that Buddhism, Jainism and some sects of Hinduism – the intellectually important movements of c. 5th century BC – shared a common tradition in their practice of asceticism. One should not underestimate what an extraordinary phenomenon this was in its time and place. Significant numbers of the most intelligent young men at the height of their physical strength withdrew from the economic life of their time and devoted themselves completely to contemplation, discussion and teaching – but did not starve, unless deliberately. Unlike the Christian monastic communities of Europe, Mediterranean Africa and Asia, who worked to support themselves and sometimes became great experts in hor-



ticulture, viticulture and animal breeding, Indian ascetics took no part in providing for their physical needs. Such a religious and economic phenomenon would have been impossible in the context of the slender crop resources available in pre- and post-Roman Europe, and barely possible during the Roman Empire (Stargardt 1990, 353–4). In India it was only possible because this society was reliably able to produce surplus supplies of food, with the rice plant holding the key to those surpluses, and because the links of social solidarity between householders and ascetics already existed and were institutionalized through the sacred merit-making of the gift.

Archaeological data thus provide unique insights into the socio-economic background of Indian iron production, new agricultural development in general, and rice cultivation in particular. These factors provided the necessary preconditions for the extraordinary flowering of new religious and philosophical thought in the 1st millennium BC, that shaped the intellectual and religious history, first, of India and then exerted a profound influence on the wider world.

#### CONTINUITY OF SETTLEMENT

As a direct result of the great increases in field surveys and excavations all over India, research since the 1970s has revealed a striking degree of continuity of settlement, from the late prehistoric period into the early Buddhist and later historic periods, down the whole of the East coast of India, from the middle Ganges Valley, Bihar, West Bengal and Orissa to northern Tamil Nadu. This took the form of settlement either of the identical site, or sites close by (Chakrabarti 1999). Interesting use is currently being made of some older data by Gregory Schopen to point to the frequency with which early Buddhist monastic occupation of a site is associated with a pre-existing late Iron Age use of the same site for burials (Schopen 1995). He has attempted a new evaluation of the meaning of this juxtaposition.

Though Buddhist texts are not silent on the subject of death and burials, they certainly do not prepare us for the fact that archaeological evidence repeatedly shows early monastic communities possibly in the northern Deccan and certainly in both Āndhra and northern Tamil Nadu developing in the midst of pre-Buddhist Iron Age burial grounds (Banerjee 1956; Sarkar 1966; Subramanyam

1975). If one consults the older archaeological reports, this phenomenon was already recorded there (see Mackenzie's *Amarāvati* map of 1816, published in Burgess 1887; Cunningham 1871; Rea 1912). Schopen draws the following conclusion: 'The significance of what we have seen here is simply put: the association of Buddhist monastic sites with the presence of the proto-historical dead occurs too often to be coincidental, and suggests that Buddhist monastic communities in 'India'... intentionally chose to build their residences and sacred structures on sites which already housed the dead of former occupants. Although this pattern is very common in the history of religions it has almost never been noted in specific regard to Buddhist monastic sites.' (Schopen 1995, 225).

Archaeological evidence from the earliest Pyu site, Beikthano, has in fact recently been studied in some detail to show, not only just such a juxtaposition between Iron Age-type burials and early Buddhist monuments, but also to distinguish a protracted process of reciprocal influences passing between the pre-Buddhist and early Buddhist systems of thought as reflected in both continuity and change in the burials (Stargardt 1990, 171–90, 200–28, 307–13; Stargardt 1992a, 89–106). The same complex relationships between pre- or non-Buddhist burials and burials of the Buddhist period are revealed by archaeological research at the other main Pyu cities, Śrī Kṣetra and Halin (Stargardt n.d.).

Continuities in the settlement pattern of ancient India have to be assessed very cautiously when trying to understand the thought behind the phenomenon. As Schopen himself points out, quoting Subrahmanyam (1975, 166), prevailing concepts of appropriate land-use meant that late prehistoric Iron Age burials in South India were consistently located on high ground; so were early Buddhist establishments. Habitations were on the slopes, while the best land – the flatlands – was reserved for agriculture. Pl. 5, from van Kooij's fieldwork, illustrates precisely this type of land-use around the famous early Buddhist site, Salihundam, in the border area between Orissa and Āndhra Pradesh, while Cunningham's mid-19th century map (here Pl. 6, Cunningham 1856) of the Sañchi area shows the same practice being consistently adopted. I mention in passing here that current research is attempting to reconstruct the historic landscape around Sañchi and to establish the sight-lines between these Buddhist establishments. In that new research, the data on elevations and locations so faithfully recorded in maps almost 150 years ago provide precious information (Shaw, in progress).

In a later report (Cunningham 1871, 76 n.3, 79), Cunningham recorded an at-



tempt to excavate one of a number of the Iron Age tumuli that he had noted in proximity to the Sañchi stupas and, though his efforts were not rewarded with any finds, the prehistoric delineation of the site with great stones was certainly similar to those sites in Āndhra and Tamil Nadu where Iron Age burials have been found in great number. Cunningham was probably right to conclude that he had not dug deeply enough (*ibid.*, 76 n. 3). His conclusion is supported by the numerous and well-documented findings of a dedicated amateur archaeologist in the South-East Deccan who is not mentioned by Schopen (Taylor 1851–62, Pls. X & XI, reproduced Leshnik 1974, 122–33). In the early to mid-19th century, Taylor excavated many megalithic circles and found that most were burial sites. In some his findings were even more dramatic because, *under* a deep in-fill layer (about as deep as Cunningham dug to), multiple human burials were found, which were decapitated and seem to have been sacrifices to the powerful dead installed inside well-made stone tombs at the bottom of the pit.

The ‘Schopen problem’ is going to figure prominently on the agenda of Indology in the coming decade. It deserves most careful exploration. Archaeological research will be indispensable to an increased understanding of how – if at all – early Buddhist thought in the monasteries set up in locations of this kind interacted with the surrounding funerary monuments of late prehistoric religions. Indeed, megalithic burials of this type – for instance at Yeleśwaram – may have still been carried out up to the 3rd century AD, and have therefore overlapped in time and space with the flourishing Buddhist culture of nearby Nāgārjunakoṇḍa and Jaggayapeta.

Indeed insights such as those described above are also now being provided by archaeological research at Hindu sites as well. To take only one striking example, excavations currently being carried out at a 4th–6th century complex of Hindu monuments at Mansar, South-East India, have uncovered a more than life-size figure of human shape made from sun-dried [?] clay installed inside a small tomb or chamber in the foundation layer of a ruined temple. This appears to be an effigy of a human sacrifice! (Bakker 1999). Thus in Indological research at the present, one can confidently say that archaeology is providing new insights which could not have been obtained from any other source, and which raise major issues about the character and variety of Buddhist and Hindu thought as they were actually practised from the mid-1st millennium BC to the mid-1st millennium

AD. In due course this archaeological research will also prompt new discussions, readings and interpretations of the relevant Buddhist and Hindu texts.

#### URBANIZATION, TRADE AND BUDDHISM

Buddhist texts concerning the life of the Buddha name the patrons from whom he accepted the use of gardens and dwellings seasonally for himself and his followers. These accounts provide a sketchy background of early urban societies, c. 500–400 BC in the middle Ganges Valley, where kings, princes, merchants and courtesans possessed such wealth that they could make these gifts. Archaeological researches endow these shadowy pictures of mid-1st millennium society with concrete dimensions. I have already mentioned iron and agriculture. Other significant sources of wealth came from trade within India itself from c. the mid-first millennium BC to the Mauryan period – traceable archaeologically through the distribution of NBP [Northern Black Polished ware ceramics] and Aśokan inscriptions into southern sites – which was then followed by trade between India and South East Asia from c. 2nd century BC onwards. Trade may well have been a factor attracting the Śātavāhana dynasty to move from the Karle-Nasik area of the North-West Deccan down to the South-East plain of Āndhra in c. 2nd century (Fergusson and Burgess 1880; *Lalit Kala* 1956–7; Dehejia 1970), a shift that immediately had profound consequences for the development of Buddhism in South India and later for its spread into South East Asia.

The strength of this sector of India's internal trade from a much earlier pre-Śātavāhana date, has been demonstrated by recent archaeological excavations at the devastated site of the Great Stūpa at Amarāvati. These excavations have revealed an exceptional concentration of NBP of c. 3rd century BC date under the foundations of the stūpa and nearby. This is the largest concentration of these trade ceramics found so far outside North-East India (*Indian Archaeology, A Review* 1958–9, 1973–4, 1974–5). A fragment of an Aśokan pillar edict inscribed on local stone in Brahmi letters was a surface find in this area (Sarma 1985, Pl. 12), confirming Marshall's view that the occupation of this site dated back to the Mauryan period (Marshall 1909, 40).

Recent excavations close by have also uncovered the structures of a river port adjacent to the ancient royal citadel of Dharaṇikoṭa (*Indian Archaeology, A Review*



1962-3, 1963-4, 1964-5). This port was first built of rammed earth in c. the 5th century BC, then in timber and extended and rebuilt in brick in c. the 1st century BC. These archaeological finds provide material evidence over many centuries of the great royal revenues derived from maritime and riverine trade, and they support the tentative identification of this area with the Masalia/Masolia emporium mentioned in *Periplus* 7.1.15 (*Periplus*, Casson trans. 1989). Inscriptions at many Āndhra sites demonstrate the close connection between traders (including Mediterranean – *yāvana* – traders) and gifts to Buddhist monastic and monumental development (Meile 1940, 90-2).

Though the association between Buddhism and the merchant class is often invoked, it is worth noting in passing how that association may have worked. The established practice – epigraphically attested in India only from a 7th century date) of investing large gifts and using only the interest on them for current projects is likely to have exerted an economic and financial influence which reified the relations between trade and Buddhism (Gernet 1956; Ray 1986; for donations and irrigation works, Stargardt 1990. 133-8. 326-7). This self-strengthening process seems to have worked as follows: the laity of all social ranks made gifts to the Buddhist monastic communities. The latter accumulated the donations but did not handle them themselves. Donations were invested on behalf of the monks by committees of the laity, on which royal officials, merchants and craftsmen probably served in the past as they do at present in Thailand and Cambodia. In this way, well-endowed monasteries became centres of credit and investment, whose best avenues of investment were merchants and craftsmen. By such means, the relations between Buddhism and the merchant and artisan class operated on several levels and were extremely strong. The donations of Bodhisiri are an example. She was a member of a high-ranking family in Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, with court as well as mercantile activities, and a notable benefactress of monastic communities at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa and many other sites in Āndhra (Vogel 1929-30, 1-37 inscriptions listing Bodhisiri's donations at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa).

Construction of the Great Stūpa at Amarāvati began in the 2nd century BC. Repairs were carried out in the 1st century AD and substantial reconstruction and redecorations were made under the Śātavāhanas in the 2nd century AD (Knox 1992, 9-16). Superb levels of art in the stone slab carvings that covered the lower part of the stupa and the stone railing surrounding it were achieved in the 2nd-3rd century AD. Religious activity there continued on a smaller scale

as late as the 7th–8th century AD (Barrett 1954, 41–54; Schastok 1994). I wish to conclude the first half of my lecture with a brief consideration of the Great Stūpa at Amarāvati, as an interesting test-case of tracing Buddhist thought through things.

When Colin Mackenzie, mathematician turned surveyor and archaeologist, first visited the site in 1798 with his Brahmin colleagues, so little was known about Buddhism in the land of its origin that these scholarly men thought the Amarāvati stupa was a ruined Jain monument. Nevertheless Mackenzie's Indian and English draughtsmen, between then and 1816, produced detailed drawings that faithfully reflected the iconographic and architectural expression of a system of religious thought about which they knew nothing (Franks 1881). Their work is particularly important because it recorded many sculptures that had been damaged or destroyed by the time Burgess's photographs were made in the 1880s, and thus constitute the only record of some significant aspects of religious thought as it was expressed in things. A small selection of Mackenzie's drawings was published by Fergusson in 1873 and another in Burgess 1887 (see Bibliography). The original Mackenzie drawings are in the British Library, Oriental and India Office Collections, Department of Prints and Drawings, where the list alone occupies over 60 pages in the Printed Catalogue (Archer 1969–94, vol. 2). In addition, Mackenzie recorded and copied over 8,000 [!] ancient inscriptions of South India between 1798 and 1816, and may be considered to have rendered a substantial service to Indian archaeology in addition to his official duties as Head of the Topographical Service (later the Survey Department).

Dissertations could be written on the significant changes in Buddhist thought in the period 1st–4th century AD on the basis of a rigorous analysis of the archaeological evidence of the Amarāvati Great Stūpa alone (cf. Dutt 1971, 60–104; Ho Dac Cu [Thich Thien Chau] 1977; Dube, S.N. 1980, Sections B and C). Mackenzie's drawings, the surviving sculptured slabs and railings preserved in the Madras Government Museum and the British Museum (both alas only part of the assemblage surviving at the end of the 18th century), together with the inscriptions on those things, provide the primary data on this subject. Most of what we know about the religious thought and practice of the monastic communities here, in particular the thought of the *Caityakas*, one of the *Andhaka* Buddhist sects that developed in the 1st–3rd century out of the *Mahāsanghikas* (Bareau 1955, 87–9; Lamotte 1977; Dutt 1971, 68–9, 72, 122–4).

The Pali tradition of Sri Lanka attributes sixteen doctrinal views to the *Mahā-saṅghikas* and forty-one to the *Andhakas*, but the exact positions adopted by the *Caityakas* within this spectrum are not textually preserved anywhere. Let us mention briefly here only a small selection of the aspects of *Caityaka* thought revealed by the art of the *Mahācaitya* – the Great Stūpa – at Amarāvati. They reflect the ferment in Buddhist thought, sectarian splits and the great and permanent divisions into the *Mahāyāna* and *Hinayāna* traditions of Buddhism in precisely this period (Vetter 1994). Firstly, the stone slabs at Amarāvati record the privileged place given, as their name implies, by the *Caityaka* sect to the stūpa as the central object of their religious thought and ritual. This symbol was dominant, not only in the form of the monument itself but also in the majority of the sculptured slabs that originally decorated the drum-shaped lower body of that stūpa.

Secondly, the focus on the stūpa was powerfully reinforced by the great railing and its gateways, which underwent several phases of construction, reconstruction and repair (summary in Knox 1992, 11–12), until railing and gateways were themselves also a major field for the expression of Buddhist thought through art. The specific function of all stūpa railings was to distinguish the sacred space of worship from all other space and concentrate the gaze and thoughts of the worshippers on a restricted, especially significant number of objects. At Amarāvati, it directed the movement of worship along the *pradakṣiṇa* pathway, on both sides of which the worshipper encountered at eye-level the most powerful ideas of *Caityaka* Buddhism in symbolic form (Pls. 7 and 8). Thirdly, from about the 2nd century AD this part of India saw the development of *āyaka* platforms (which were later occasionally constructed in North India, Sri Lanka and Burma as well). Conceptually, those platforms superimposed a square on the circle of the stūpa-base, thereby introducing a new element to the cosmology of the stūpa (cf. Dallapiccola et al. 1980; Snodgrass 1985). At the same time, the *āyaka* platforms created four fixed points which the worshipper, during circumambulation of the stūpa, encountered at the four cardinal directions. In Āndhra generally, the faces of the *āyaka* platforms were apparently decorated with the most magnificent relief sculptures of all. They also bore five *āyaka* pillars inscribed (and sometimes re-inscribed) with records of endowments to the stupa and the monks. All these features, stūpa, relief sculptures on drum-slabs, railings, gateways, *āyaka* platforms, *āyaka* pillars, and magnificent free-standing sculptures can be seen on Pls. 7 and 8, both of which convey the general characteristics of the Āndhra-style



stūpa. Pl. 9 presents some of *āyaka* pillar inscriptions from Amarāvati inscribed in the Śātavāhana period and then re-inscribed during the Ikṣvāku period (3rd century), when the court was centred on Nāgārjunakoṇḍa but Amarāvati continued to be a focus of veneration and endowments (Sircar 1939, 9–40; Hultzsch in Burgess 1887, 100–6, Pls. LVI-LXIII).

The last aspect of Buddhist thought as expressed in the art of Amarāvati which can be mentioned briefly within the constraints of this lecture is the record of the changing attitudes of the *Caityaka* sect to the long-standing, and deeply divisive debates between and within the early Buddhist sects on the crucial subject of the nature of the Buddha's body, his *kāyā*, and on whether it could be represented in human form (Dutt 1971, 77–81; Lamotte 1977; Coomaraswamy, A.K. 1928; Huntington 1990; Dehijia 1997; van Kooij 1998, 27–54). It will be noticed that this is the only significant difference between the two Amarāvati slabs recorded in the Mackenzie drawing and the Burgess photograph (Pls. 7 and 8, respectively). In the one, the teaching of the Buddha is venerated through the symbols of the *dharmacakka*, throne and footprints; in the other, the majestic standing figure of the Buddha occupies that place. The entire subsequent history of Buddhist thought, ritual and art in all surviving sects has been affected by the doctrinal changes that took place and were incorporated in the central motifs of these two sculptures. Since this is the area of India from which Buddhism spread to South East Asia, it forms the essential archaeological background to the second half of this lecture. A total of twelve names of Pali-based Buddhist sects are preserved in the Pali traditions of Sri Lanka. Seven out of those twelve sects were present among the monastic communities of Amarāvati and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa and are represented in their inscriptions (Hultzsch in Burgess 1887, 100–6, Pls. LVI-LXIII; Vogel 1929–30, 1–37).

Among the earliest South East Asian kingdoms to adopt Buddhism were the Pyu kingdoms of Central Burma as already mentioned. The small sample of Pyu palaeography from Beikthano (Aung Thaw 1968; Stargardt 1990, 93, Fig. 37) and the very large sample preserved in the Pyu Pali texts from Śrī Kṣetra (Pl. 19 below), show that the monks who inscribed them predominantly used writing styles of the Āndhra area, and not the Kadamba script. The Kadamba hypothesis was originally proposed by Finot (1912 and 1913), and has been repeated by many scholars since then. The closest affinities of the Pyu inscriptions in the

Pali language (see script samples in Pls. 21–4) were with the 5th century scripts employed in copper plates along the Krishna River during the Pallava period, and with those of the Śāṅkāyanas still further North up to the Godāvāri River. The Pyu scripts for their Pali inscriptions are very similar to these Indian prototypes, but already show some signs of improvisation and adaptation (for instance in the *akṣara* for ‘ba’). Incidentally, the longer Pyu Pali texts show that these monks were not only well-versed in Pali but also acquainted with the rules of Sanskrit orthography. In this respect too, they faithfully reflect the heterogeneity of Buddhist sects in Āndhra in the 3rd–5th century, some of whom adhered to the Canon written in Pali, others in Prakrit and still others in Sanskrit. Of these, early inscriptions in Sanskrit and Prakrit only have survived in India, while Burma has preserved the earliest examples of Pali, which predate by many centuries the few isolated paper leaves of the Kathmandu Pali manuscript (the latter were studied by v. Hinüber 1991).

#### ANDHRA AND THE SPREAD OF BUDDHISM TO SOUTH EAST ASIA

By the mid-3rd century AD, Śātavāhana power in the Krishna River Valley had declined and the southern Ikṣvākus, among other dynasties, enjoyed a brief period of independent power before the Pallavas conquered that area in the 4th century (Sircar 1939, 9–40). The capital of the Ikṣvākus was Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, but their power extended to the coast including the area around the Amarāvati stūpa, as shown by inscriptions added to the original *āyaka* pillars in the distinctive elongated Ikṣvāku script (Pl. 9, and Hultzsch in Burgess 1887, Pls. LVI–LXIII). In passing I note here that the Pyus also adopted and adapted the Ikṣvāku script for their numerous inscriptions in their own language (for an early example, see Luce 1985, vol. 2, Pl. 7).

Apart from the legendary accounts of visits by the Buddha and by Aśoka emissaries to Burma, the only secure knowledge about the introduction of Buddhism to Burma and other parts of South East Asia is provided by archaeological evidence: inscriptions, buildings and artefacts. Even the stories about Buddhaghōṣa’s activities in Burma may turn out to be mythical and derived rather from imported traditions of Singhalese Buddhism than from actual local events. The Zürcher map printed here as Pl. 10 shows the spread of Buddhism out of In-

dia in the 5th century AD (Zürcher 1962). I have been able to push this time threshold back by about a century by studying and dating specific resemblances between the Buddhist monastic architecture and script of the oldest Pyu site in Burma, Beikthano, and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, the Ikṣvāku capital in Āndhra. I now date the earliest durable traces of the introduction of Buddhism to Burma (which are obviously later than the process itself) to c. the late 3rd/early 4th century AD. This evidence further suggests that a combination of trade and court-to-court contacts were probably the agencies through which Buddhism came to be adopted by the Pyu kingdoms in Burma (Stargardt 1990, 326–30, 338–40).

SRI KSETRA AND EARLY BUDDHISM IN BURMA –  
TRACING THOUGHT THROUGH THINGS AND TEXTS

The largest of the Pyu cities was Śrī Kṣetra, which covered over 18 sq km within the city walls with extensive extramural developments occupying a still larger space (Pls. 11 and 12). It had a brilliant material culture from the 4th–9th century AD, sufficient to impress the ambassadors of the Tang court in the 8th century. They were also impressed by the profoundly Buddhist character of this culture. Tang records mention that the city's outer walls were punctuated by four great stūpas. Those on the north-east, south-west and north-west still stand (e.g. Pls. 13 and 14), while the foundations of the fourth, on the south-east of the city, were discovered as recently as 1999 (personal information, U Win Maung, artist and archaeologist Mandalay).

It can be seen in the above plates that the final shape of the Śrī Kṣetra stūpas carried the cylindrical tradition of Āndhra stūpas (and especially of Āndhra stūpa-shaped reliquaries) to an extreme form. This may result from several phases of ancient rebuilding and enlargement. In addition, there were many smaller stūpas and also monuments where a stūpa was superimposed on a cube-shaped temple (Pl. 15). There must have been numerous relic chambers in this Buddhist city, but only one survived intact until it was excavated in 1926–7 (Duroiselle 1928). It was situated in Kalangangon village, near the south-east outer walls of the city.

The Khin Ba mound (so known because it was on land owned by a farmer, U Khin Ba), covered a ruined stūpa platform with a relic chamber that was probably only a little more than one cubic metre in size (Pl. 16), but it contained the



greatest concentration of sacred treasure found to date in any ancient Buddhist site of India or South East Asia: a total of more than 500 votive objects mainly made of silver and gold (see the Inventory attached as Appendix). The number of objects as well as the precious metals employed and the quality of the workmanship demonstrate that this was a royal foundation deposit. In fact, I believe it was two royal foundations: an original relic treasure of mid-5th or mid-6th century date was installed inside this relic chamber, consisting of the Great Silver Reliquary, the Golden Pali Text and a nucleus of highly significant gold and silver votive objects of the same date. They include the objects bearing the oldest Pali inscriptions, and the whole relic chamber was covered by a stone slab with a relief carving of that date. A reconstruction of the stūpa and a refoundation of the relic chamber took place in the 8th century. At this time an inscription in Pyu containing the Sanskrit titles of two royal donors was added to the lower rim of the Great Silver Reliquary, an offering of 45 silver Pyu coins was added to the original sacred assemblage along with additional votive statues, and decorative objects. A second massive stone cover, bearing a later copy of the original slab's relief carving, was laid over the original cover of the relic chamber. The stūpa platform and stūpa were probably enlarged at this time and embellished with large stone and terra cotta plaques set into the brickwork of the platform (all size indications are my reconstructions from site and museum studies, as they were not given in the excavation report: Stargardt 1995, Stargardt in press). The fact that there were two massive stone slab covers over the relic chamber probably saved it from the pillaging that befell many similar chambers at Śrī Kṣetra. The uppermost slab was lifted and broken at some time but the lower one and the relic chamber below it remained intact.

I shall concentrate now on just two of the things originally placed in this relic chamber: the Great Silver Reliquary (Frontispiece) occupied the centre of the relic chamber, while the Golden Pali Text (Pl. 17) was found in its south-east corner. The Golden Pali Text is a small replica in solid gold of a palm leaf manuscript, with gold cover 'boards' and golden wires holding it together. The Great Silver Reliquary is unusually large in relation to all other known ancient reliquaries of India, Sri Lanka and Burma. It is a hollow cylindrical container with a movable lid but no bottom. It is made of very thin, brittle, silver sheet fashioned by repoussé methods and was originally partly gilded. The lid is still surmounted by part of the trunk of a Bodhi tree whose broken branches and

leaves were found inside the relic chamber. The original height of this reliquary when intact must have been c. 1 m. Even the surviving body of the drum-shaped base measures almost 40 cm in height. It was decorated in very high relief with four large gilded figures of Buddhas seated in *bhūmisparśamudrā* (Pl. 18). They divide the cylinder into four equal segments. Between them in lower relief are four smaller standing figures of disciples (Pl. 19) each slightly turned towards the Buddha on his right, making eight segments in total (all the details and some enigmatic aspects of the iconography of this reliquary are discussed in Stargardt in press).

Although it seems that this was originally a thin silver sheath covering a stronger container with a proper base, no trace either of such a container or of the relic itself were reported. Possibly they were both of organic matter – e.g. the container of wood and the relic one or more hairs – and have rotted away. It has to be said that the excavation and reporting of this relic chamber leave something to be desired. Neither the size of the relic chamber nor its depth in the mound were recorded, nor the size of the bricks, the cover slabs or the stūpa platform. However, since the Śrī Kṣetra excavations were a race against treasure-hunters which the latter won in every other case, one is grateful for what was recorded and the treasure that was preserved. Sadly, at my latest sighting in 1997, the lid bearing one of the two earliest Pali inscriptions in the world had disintegrated into three fragments and one of the Buddha figures was in the process of breaking away from the body of the reliquary. My photographic record of the complete inscription is thus irreplaceable. Many empty relic chambers and scattered fragments of inscribed silver and gold leaves have been found at Śrī Kṣetra. Taken together with what survived in the Khin Ba mound, they provide eloquent testimony on what has been lost to Burmese, Buddhist and world cultural heritage in that city alone.

Here our main concern is with the lid inscription of the Great Silver Reliquary and the fifth excerpt in the Golden Pali Text. The Great Silver Reliquary was inscribed in three places: around the rim of the lid, at the feet of the disciples and around the foot rim. The second group of inscriptions provide the names of the disciples, while the third is a later addition in Pyu language with the Sanskrit names of the two royal donors at the time of the refoundation. The lid rim inscription is a single, regularly inscribed line of writing running right around the lid (Pls. 20 and 21). It was mentioned in Duroiselle's excavation re-

port that this inscription contained the names of the four Buddhas of the present *kalpa*, written as *gonagamina*, *gagusaḍḍha*, *kaṣyapa* and *godama* (note the hard, Burmese-style consonants) and a mixture of Pyu and Pali words, but the rest of this line had never been read until the Cambridge Symposium of April 1995 (Stargardt 1995a–c).

The Golden Pali Text contained twenty leaves of gold. Eighteen of them were inscribed with three lines, one contained four lines and one only two lines making a total of sixty lines of pure canonical Pali (Pls. 22 and 23; whole text depicted in Luce 1985, Pls. 33 and 34). The Golden Pali Text thus contains a very extensive sample of what are now seen as the earliest surviving Pali texts in the world. In the Golden Pali Text, there are eight excerpts from the Canon, most being from early core texts based on the *Vinaya*. None is later than c. the 2nd century AD e.g., the *Visuddhimagga* and *Abhidhammatthasaṅghaha* (all Pali texts mentioned hereafter, unless otherwise identified, are the versions edited by the Pali Text Society).

The excerpts of the Golden Pali Text varied strikingly both in length and also in character as between direct extensive citation of texts and summarized texts. The longest excerpt is the fourth, covering over eight of the twenty leaves and consisting of twenty-five lines (out of the total of sixty) of direct citation from the *Angutta Nikaya*. As this excerpt makes up almost a half of the entire text, it must have had an exceptional importance in relation to the whole, but this aspect has not yet been explored further. By contrast, the second excerpt is only 0.6 of a line in length and contains only the keywords of the nine *vipassanañāṇas* (in a form similar to that of the *Pratītyasamutpāda*). This is the only excerpt not written in a South-East Indian palaeographic style (Falk 1997, 60–3). In several cases, including the latter, a new excerpt continues on the same leaf as the previous one.

The whole text has been read and translated several times: (Lu Pe Win 1940; Tha Myat 1963; Than Shwe 1992). These scholars had not, however, noticed some important features of the Golden Pali Text which were recognized and discussed at length at the Cambridge Symposium on the Golden Pali Text in 1995 by Oskar von Hinüber (Freiburg), Harry Falk (Berlin), Richard Gombrich (Oxford) – and myself. They are, firstly, that the real affinities of the palaeography of both the Golden Pali Text and the lid rim inscription of the Great Silver Reliquary lie with Āndhra scripts of the 5th century and that Finot's much-quoted Kadamba hypothesis is erroneous (demonstrated persuasively in Falk 1997, 79:



comparative palaeographic table and 81–2); secondly that more than one hand was involved in inscribing the Golden Pali Text (Falk sees c. twenty; Lore Sander sees c. four); thirdly, that a passage had been omitted from the fifth excerpt; fourthly, that some of the text's orthographic peculiarities dismissed previously as 'scribal errors' in fact revealed a knowledge of Sanskrit orthographic rules or represented acceptable variants; and lastly the photographs I laid before the symposium yielded the first reading of the lid rim inscription of the Great Silver Reliquary and simultaneously revealed a hitherto unsuspected relationship between the Great Silver Reliquary and the Golden Pali Text (Stargardt 1995c; Falk 1997; Stargardt in press and Stargardt n.d.).

During the Cambridge Symposium, it was the opinion of the above scholars and myself that both the Golden Pali Text and the Great Silver Reliquary contained the earliest surviving texts in pure canonical Pali, that they were both inscribed in closely related but not identical South-East Indian script-types of similar age and geographical affinities, and should be dated on palaeographical grounds to the early or mid-5th century AD. Falk (1997) gives a detailed analysis of the palaeography, organization and content of the Golden Pali Text; he there gives a later date for the palaeography of the Great Silver Reliquary lid inscription but does not depict it. That dating is not supported by the character of the script as shown in Pls. 20 and 21). Dr Lore Sander, the palaeographer with whom I have continued working on these inscriptions since 1995, is of the opinion that allowance should be made for the conservative influence of textual copying and therefore proposes a dating of mid-5th to not later than mid-6th century for both the Golden Pali Text and the Great Silver Reliquary lid inscriptions. I find her arguments persuasive.

It deserves to be emphasized here that a 5th or 6th century date makes the Golden Pali Text and the Great Silver Reliquary between two and four centuries older than the few isolated paper leaves of the 8th or 9th century Pali Ms. found in the National Archives in Kathmandu, and hitherto considered the oldest surviving examples of Pali (cf. v. Hinüber 1991). Above all, unlike those isolated leaves, the Pyu inscriptions come from an identifiable archaeological context, where the things that they are inscribed on and surrounded by permit rare and privileged insights into the thought involved in the early phase of Buddhist culture outside India in the 5th–6th century, into the circumstances of the composition of these inscriptions and their deposition, and even into the modalities of

the early transmission of the Pali tradition of Buddhism from India to other countries.

Time obliges me to narrow our focus to just a few aspects of this exceptionally important Buddhist treasure. Firstly, the occasion of the composition of the Golden Pali Text can be compared with the 2nd century ritual recorded in the Gold Leaf inscription of King Kaniṭṭha tissa at Anurādhapura in Sri Lanka (Sirisoma 1991, 2, cited Falk 1997, 55). It can be inferred that the monastery at Śrī Kṣetra whose monks were chosen to inscribe the twenty leaves of the Golden Pali Text was famous for its Buddhist learning and stood under royal patronage. Each learned monk would first have composed his chosen excerpt on a palm leaf of the same size as his part of the future Golden Pali Text. At this point it was probably decided in what order the leaves would be collated into the manuscript and eighteen leaves were numbered. It can be further inferred that the venerable author of the fourth excerpt was exceptional in some way, inasmuch as his excerpt was allowed to occupy such a dominant space in the text as a whole. Thereafter, each monk or his scribe (Falk does not consider the possibility that scribes were used), was issued by a royal official with the exact amount of pure gold needed to inscribe his excerpt. No doubt the amount of gold was carefully controlled. In Burma some centuries later during the Pagan period, gold was a royal monopoly. It may have been among the Pyu as well and was certainly a precious substance. The actual numbering and inscription of those golden leaves with sacred texts was a rare and highly ceremonial, as well as costly act of merit-making. The shared merit-making would certainly have included the royal donor. It is likely that the Golden Pali Text was originally intended to be a text-relic encased in the stūpa where it was found (i.e., a *dharmadhatu* relic, cf. Silva 1999). Human error, however, was to cause some modification to that design.

The monk responsible for the fifth excerpt of the Pali Canon in the Golden Pali Text set out to list the fourteen *buddhañānas* in a form close to that of the *Patisambhidāmagga* (c. 2nd century AD). He began by numbering each *ñāna* from the second onwards, but later realised that he had omitted the ninth and tenth *ñānas*. He then stopped giving numbers to the remainder – clear proof that he noticed his defect at the time of composition. The passage omitted can be reconstructed as follows:

*buddhañānas* 9 and 10 as given in the *Patisambhidāmagga*:

‘...*indriyaparopariyatte ñāṇam buddhañāṇam sattāṇaṃ āsayaṇusaye ñāṇam buddha-ñāṇam...*’  
[cf. Falk 1997, 70]

There was no possibility for the author of the fifth excerpt to erase and correct his faulty lettering on a gold leaf – indeed his error remains fresh and clear some 1400–1500 years later (Pl. 23). Apparently it was also impossible for some reason for him to obtain a replacement leaf of gold. Judging by its weight, each leaf in this manuscript represented a very high value in the Pyu period, well beyond the reach of normal people, let alone a monk vowed to poverty. Perhaps, too, the other leaves in the text had already been inscribed and numbered before this error was confessed to the rest of the monastic community, and to its royal patron. If so, the correction of this leaf would have involved the rewriting of more than one leaf. For whatever reason or reasons, this omission in the Golden Pali Text was never rectified. Thus it remained a ritually imperfect object, and as such was unfit to become the central relic in the relic chamber of the stūpa. This place was taken by the Great Silver Reliquary to which I shall turn immediately below.

Before doing so, however, this is the place to note that, apart from this one major error, some orthographic peculiarities which are interesting in themselves in revealing a knowledge of Sanskrit rules and a sprinkling of rather minor orthographic or textual errors, the seven other excerpts of the Golden Pali Text *do not differ significantly* from the Pali Canon collected in Sri Lanka in the second half of the 19th century! This is striking proof of the general reliability with which Buddhist monks transmitted their texts over some 1,300 years – the omission of the short passage in the *buddhañāṇas* being the exception that proves the rule.

To turn now to the Great Silver Reliquary, as already mentioned the names of the four Buddhas of the present *kalpa* were inscribed on the rim of the lid and were originally intended to be placed directly above the head of each Buddha figure. Because of damage to the lid, this is no longer reliably the case (pls. 20 and 21). This naming procedure established four fixed points on the rim of the reliquary lid and limited the space available between each fixed point. The newly read Pyu/Pali texts occupying these spaces are as follows (I follow Falk’s reading 1997, 88–9, but not his line breaks as the texts are recorded in a single line without spaces):



1. || 'baṃḥ [Falk; Sander reads baṃḥ throughout] buddha gonagamina yaṃ iti pi so bhagava arahaṃ sammāsambuddho vijjacaransamḥpa[nn]o'
2. || 'baṃḥ buddha gagusadha yaṃ || avijjāpaccayā saṃkharā saṃkharapaccayā viññānaṃ viññāpaccayā || nāmarūpa'
3. || 'baṃḥ buddha kasyaba yaṃ namo dhammo svākhyāto bhagavata dhamm[o] sandiṭṭhiko akāliko ehipassiko [opanayiko] pacca...nuhi ti'
4. || 'ba[m]ḥ buddha godama yaṃ indriyaparopariyatte ñānaṃ buddhañānaṃ satta anusa[?]ya daṃ buddhañānaṃ | supatipanno bhagavato.'

It can be seen that the first three texts on the lid rim of the Great Silver Reliquary are core formulae of Buddhism: the first being the most central of all, the invocation of the Buddha. The second is the beginning of the *Pratītyasamutpāda* text; the third is the invocation of the *Dhamma*. The fourth concludes with the key words of the invocation of the *Saṅgha* (the third element of the *triratna*), *supatipanno bhagavato*. But an extraordinary interest attaches to the words in the fourth passage following the name of the Gotama-Buddha and preceding the invocation of the *Saṅgha*:. Unlike the three other short inscriptions they are not the beginning of a text. On the contrary, they are an excerpt from two-thirds of the way through the fourteen *Buddhañānas*. In fact they are, in compressed form, precisely the ninth and tenth *ñānas*, which were omitted from the Golden Pali Text: ||'...indriyaparopariyatte ñānaṃ buddhañānaṃ satta anusa(?)ya daṃ buddhañānaṃ...'

Thus the fourth inscription on the lid of the Great Silver Reliquary rectifies the defect in the Golden Pali Text by completing it!

Taking texts with things, we gain an extremely rare and privileged insight into the circumstances surrounding the original creation of this relic chamber. The defect in the fifth excerpt of the Golden Pali Text must have been made known to the royal donor. As a corrective, orders were given for the creation of the Great Silver Reliquary (its size, superb artistic quality and precious materials distinguish it too as a royal donation). It was made to contain a relic, to occupy the centre of the relic chamber, to bear the inscribed invocation of the three jewels of Buddhism, but in addition, to supply the text missing from the Golden Pali Text. Together Golden Pali Text and Great Silver Reliquary formed a ritually perfect deposit of exceptional meritorious and material value. Thus we have here something quite unique: not only the two most ancient surviving inscriptions

in the Pali language, but we also find that one of them was composed to rectify a defect in the other.

To understand the thoughts and events behind this relic deposit, one needs all the material evidence: the objects discussed here and the others listed in the Inventory, the precious materials they were made of, the sacred treasure they jointly composed and the positions they occupied in the relic chamber. Taking these facts together with the texts they incorporated, we gain rare insights into the character of the Buddhism flourishing in an early, very affluent non-Indic kingdom already profoundly influenced by Indian religion. This society was well versed in a range of ritual texts and ritual actions, even to the point of relegating a costly but imperfect text to an subordinate position inside the relic chamber.

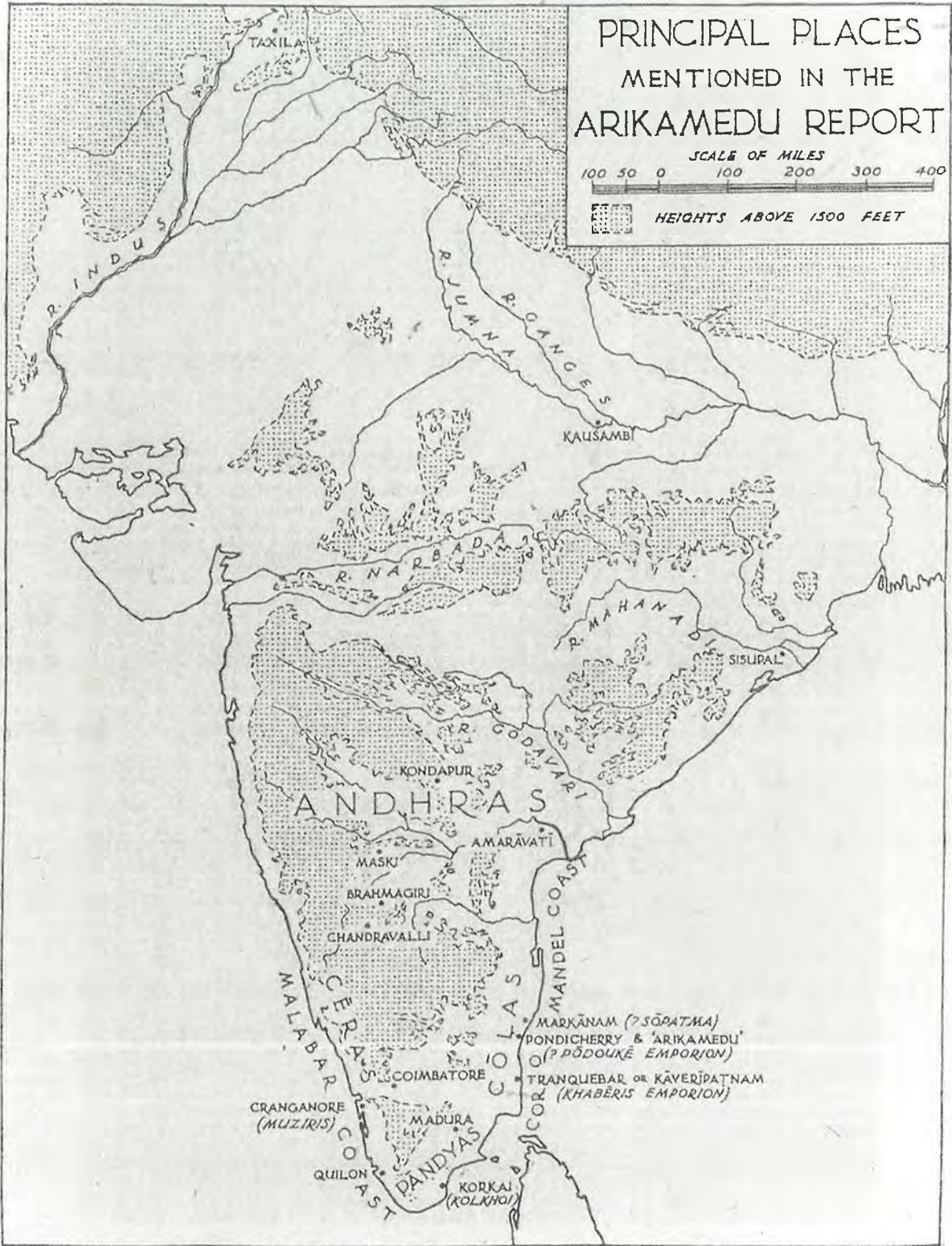
Then there is the rich archaeological documentation provided by the larger context of this treasure: going from the particular to the general, it was found inside the ruins of a stūpa platform, belonging originally to an early phase of Buddhism among the Pyu, but showing evidence of having been enlarged and re-founded in the early 8th century. Śrī Kṣetra was the largest and most brilliant of the Pyu cities. In it, a dynamic Buddhist culture was integrated into the pre-existing Pre-Buddhist tradition of the Pyu whereby great burial assemblages were created in urns inside and around monuments (Stargardt 1992b and n.d.).

All aspects of Śrī Kṣetra's archaeological evidence have to be taken into consideration to obtain privileged glimpses of the historical moment when the cosmopolitan kingdoms of Āndhra – the Ikṣvāku, Śālankāyana, Vakātakā and Pallava – forged sufficiently strong links with the early Pyu kingdoms of central Burma to leave durable traces in the archaeological record. These testify more eloquently than does textual evidence to the long and complex processes involved in the Pyu adoption and adaptation of the Āndhran traditions of Buddhism into their pre-existing religious thought, to which only the archaeological evidence of their vast burial fields and monuments provide an introduction. We can only ever hope to recover a part of that body of early Buddhist thought and to do even that, we need to trace their thoughts through both things and text.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

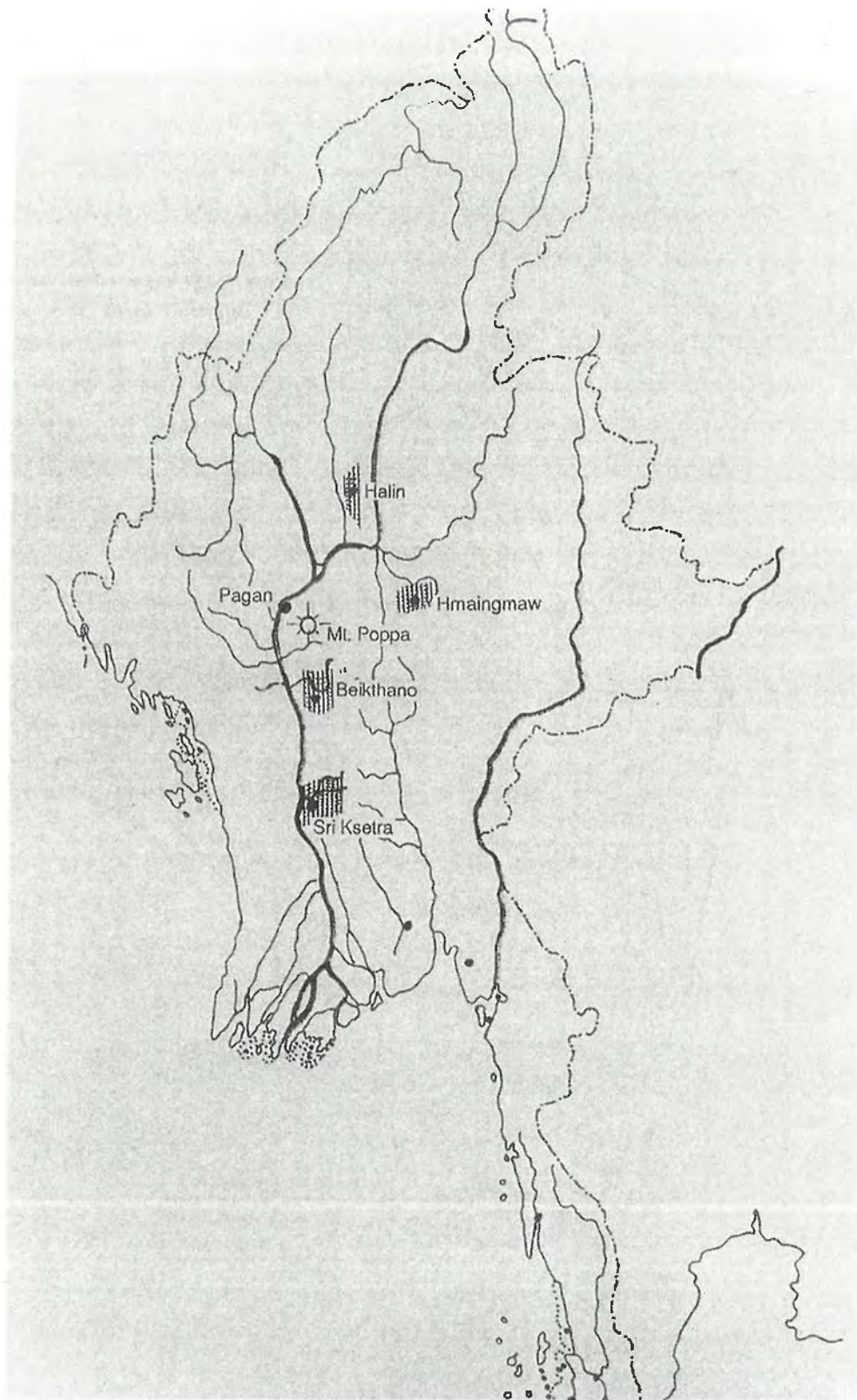
I thank the Gonda Foundation most sincerely for honouring me with the invitation to give this lecture and for undertaking its publication. The slight delay is due to the tragic death of my husband, who accompanied me to the lecture, but died during its revision for publication. It is dedicated to his memory. During this difficult year, I have benefitted from the unfailing personal support and professional collaboration of Professor Karel van Kooij in our joint research on 'Relics and Relic Worship in Early Buddhism in India and Burma,' some of whose results are incorporated in this paper. The Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research, the British Academy and the British Council have given their financial and scientific support to this work. The Kern Institute Library of the University of Leiden provided unlimited access to its magnificent collections during the revision of the lecture for publication, as did the Library of the Faculty of Oriental Studies of the University of Cambridge. The International Institute of Asian Studies afforded excellent facilities and generous supporting staff throughout my work in Leiden.



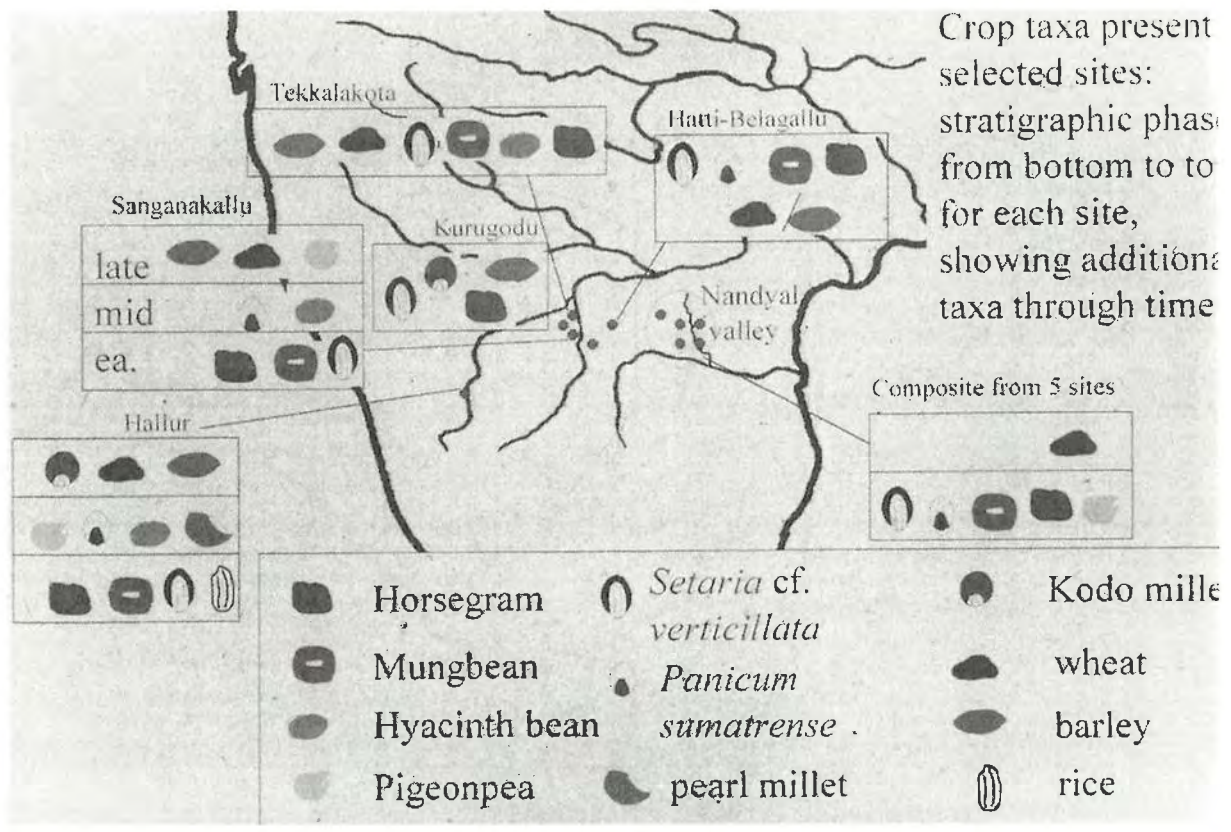


1. Map of India (from R.M. Wheeler, 'Arikamedu,' in *Ancient India* 2, 1948).



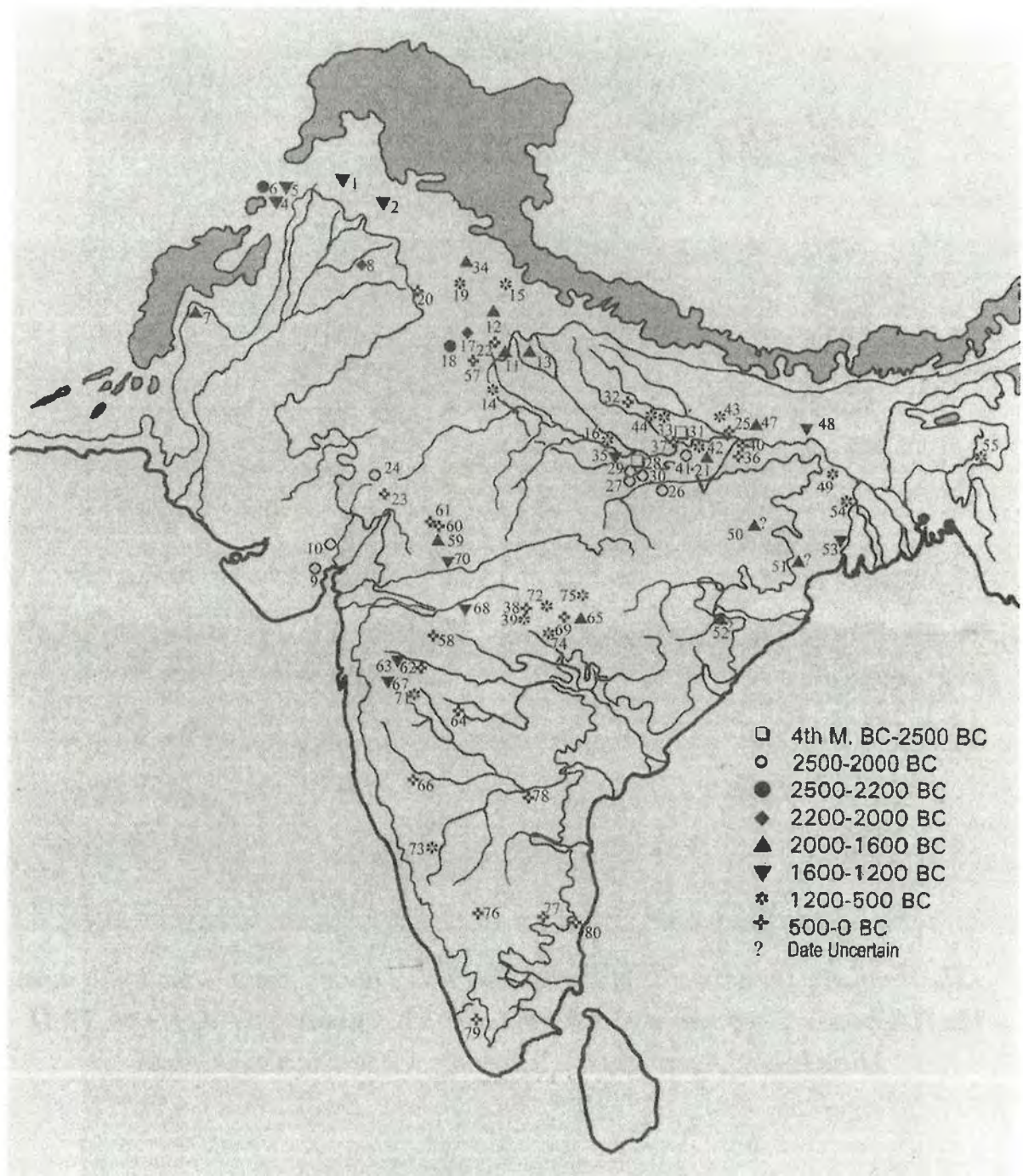


2. Map of Pyu Sites in Burma (from Stargardt, Janice 1990: *The Ancient Pyu of Burma. Vol. 1, Early Pyu Cities in a Man-Made Landscape*. Cambridge, PACSEA & Singapore, ISEAS).



3. *The Prehistoric Diversification of Food Crops in the Deccan (from Dorian Fuller 2000: The Emergence of Agricultural Societies in India: a Bioarchaeological Approach. Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Archaeology, University of Cambridge).*



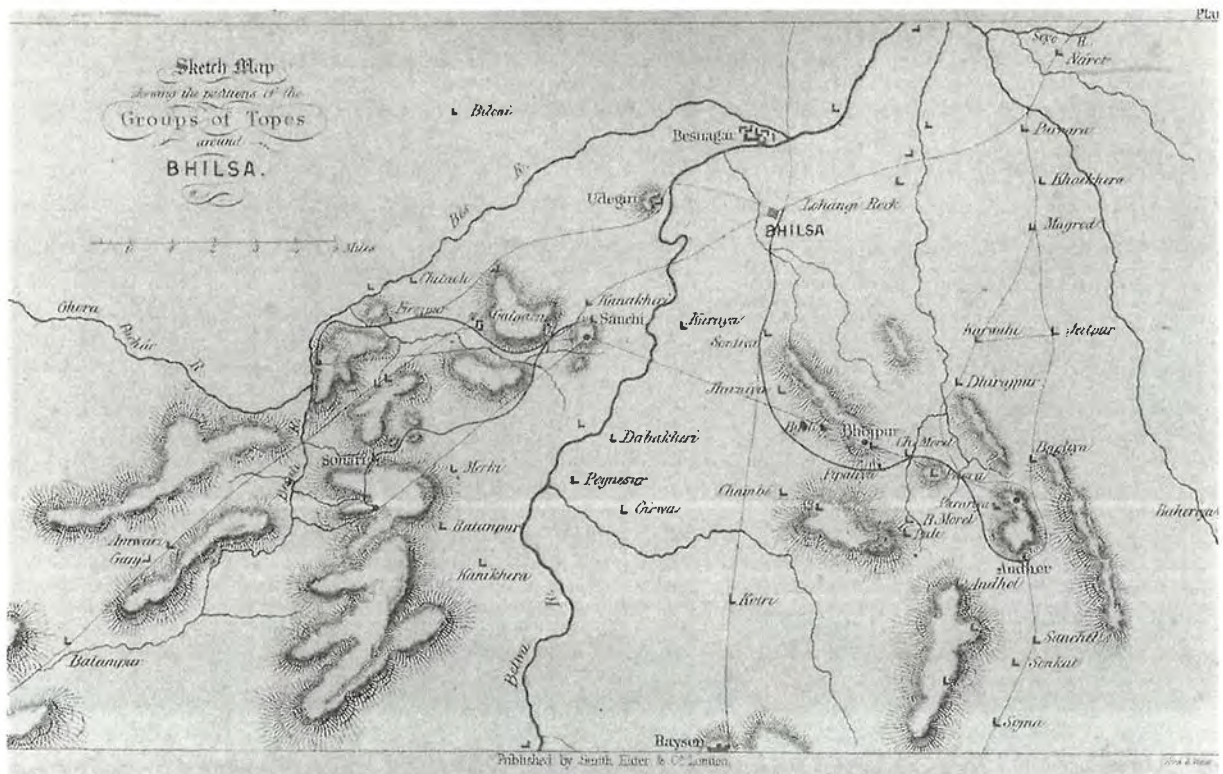


4. Find-sites and Dates of Early Rice in India (from Dorian Fuller, *in press*: 'Fifty Years of Archaeo-botanical Research in India: laying a solid foundation,' in Settar, S. & Korisettar, R. (eds.), *Indian Archaeology in Retrospect. Vol. 3: Archaeology and Interactive Disciplines*. Delhi.



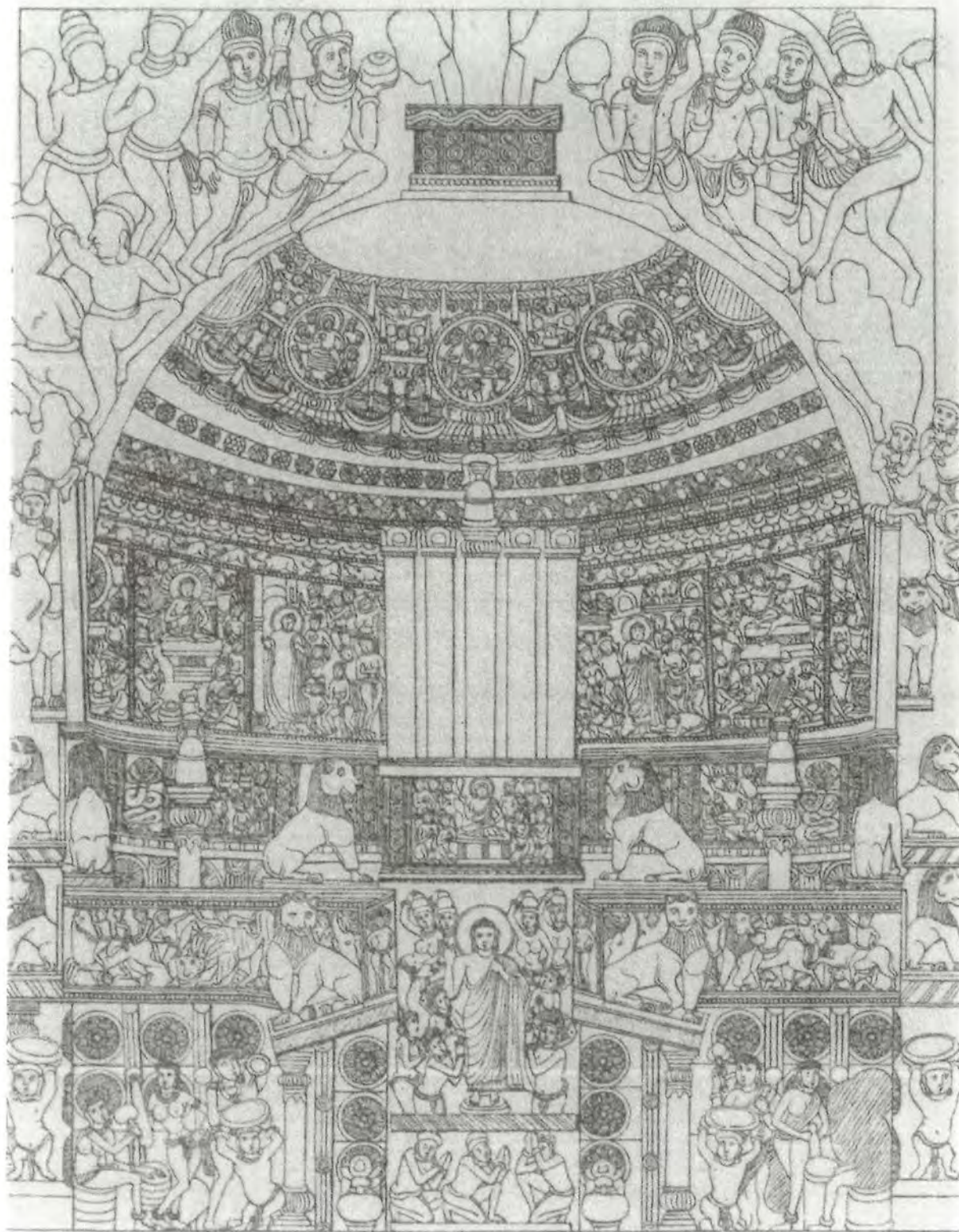


5. *The High and Flat Lands of an Historical Landscape at Salibundam, Southern Orissa (from the fieldwork of Professor K.R. van Kooij, Kern Institute).*



6. *Map of 1854, Showing the Early Buddhist Stupas at Sañchi and Bharbut on High Ground. (from Cunningham, A. 1854. Bhilsa the Topes; or Buddhist Monuments of Central India. London, Smith Elder).*





7. Mackenzie's Drawing of a Drum Slab of the Great Stūpa, Amāravati 1816 (from Burgess, J. 1887: *The Buddhist Stupas of Amaravati and Jaggayapeta, in the Krishna District, Madras Presidency*. London, Trübner).



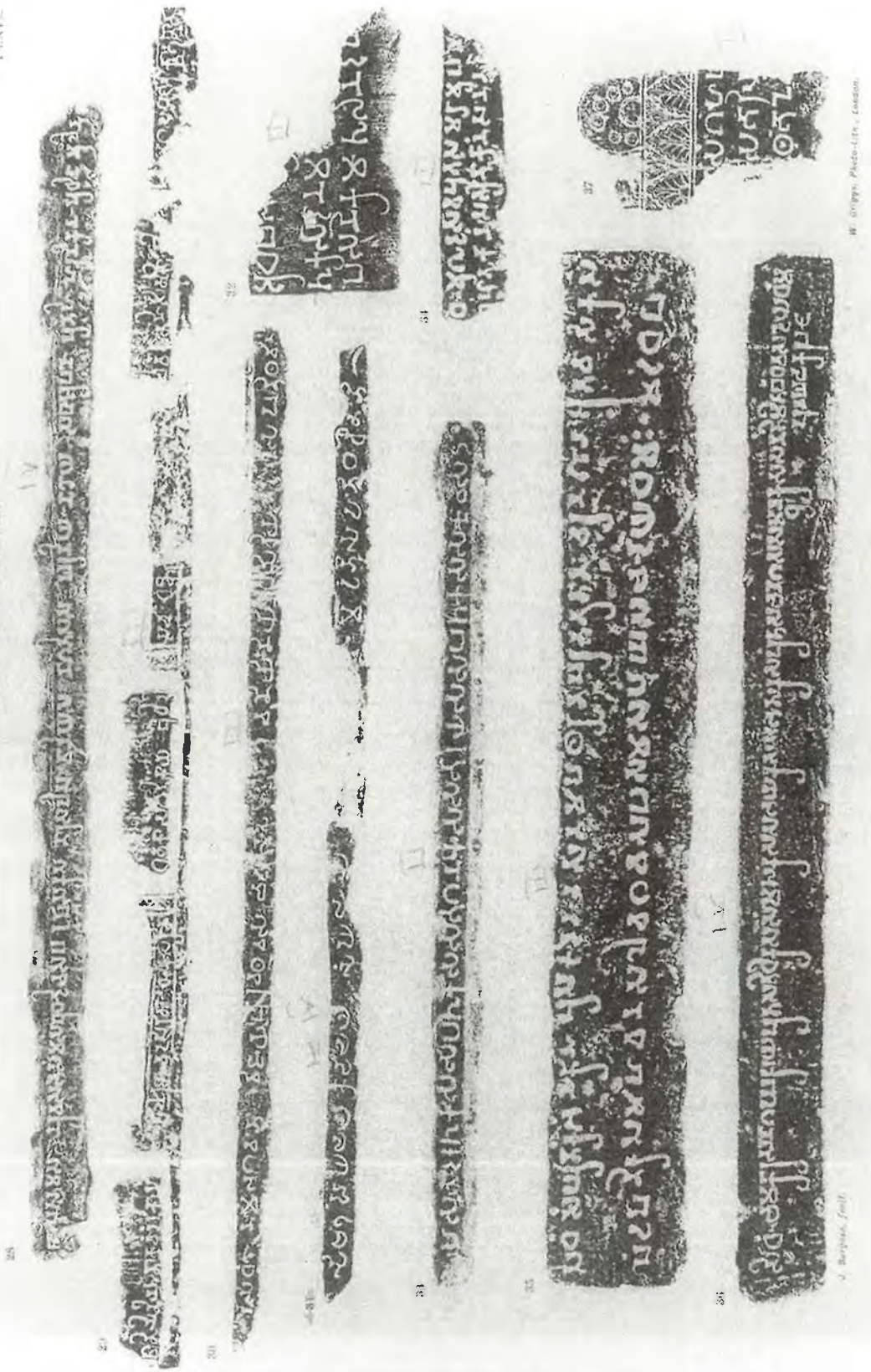


8. Burgess' Photograph of a Drum Slab of the Great Stūpa, Amarāvati 1886 (from Burgess, J. 1887, Frontispiece).



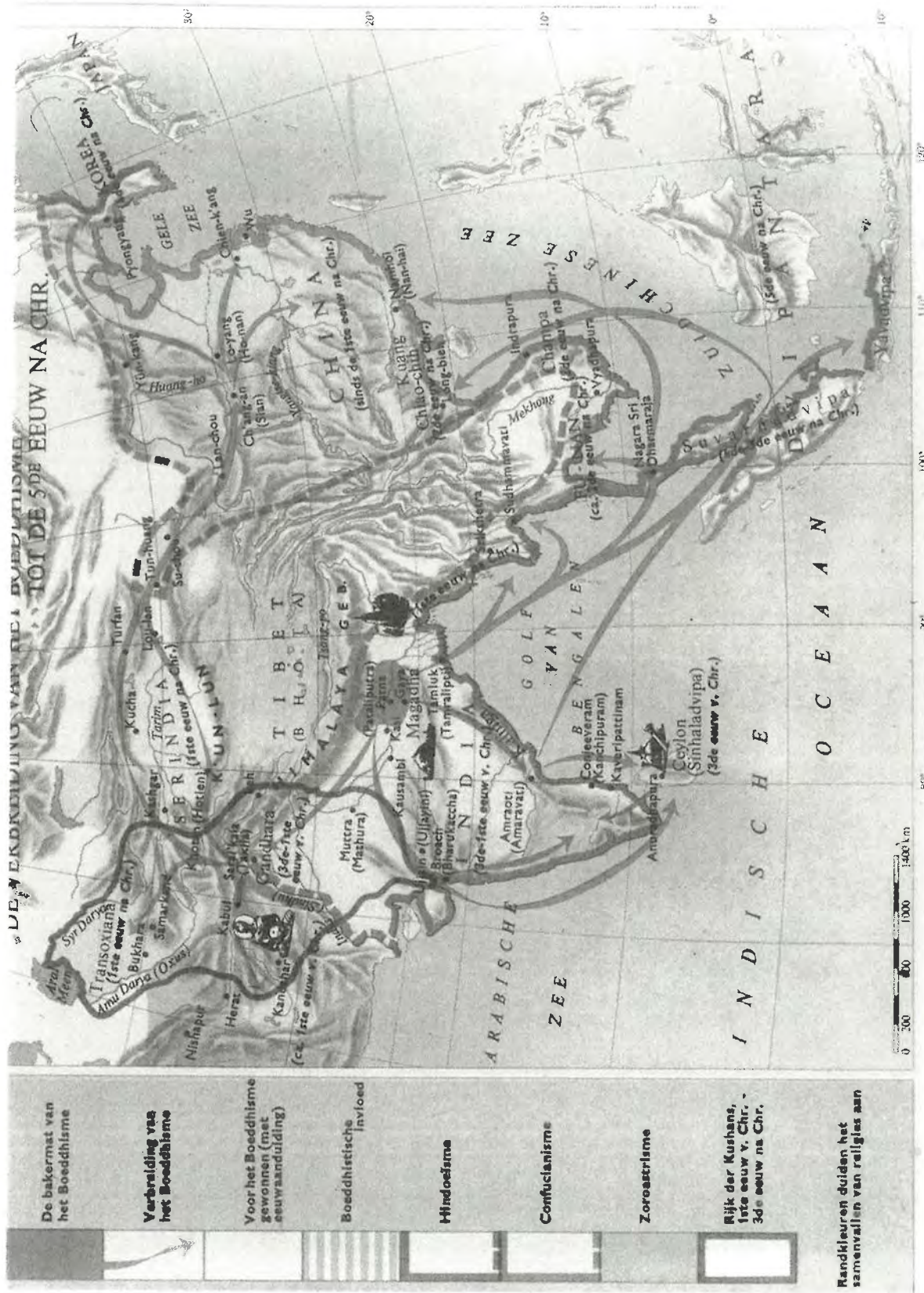
AMARAVATI INSCRIPTIONS.

PLATE



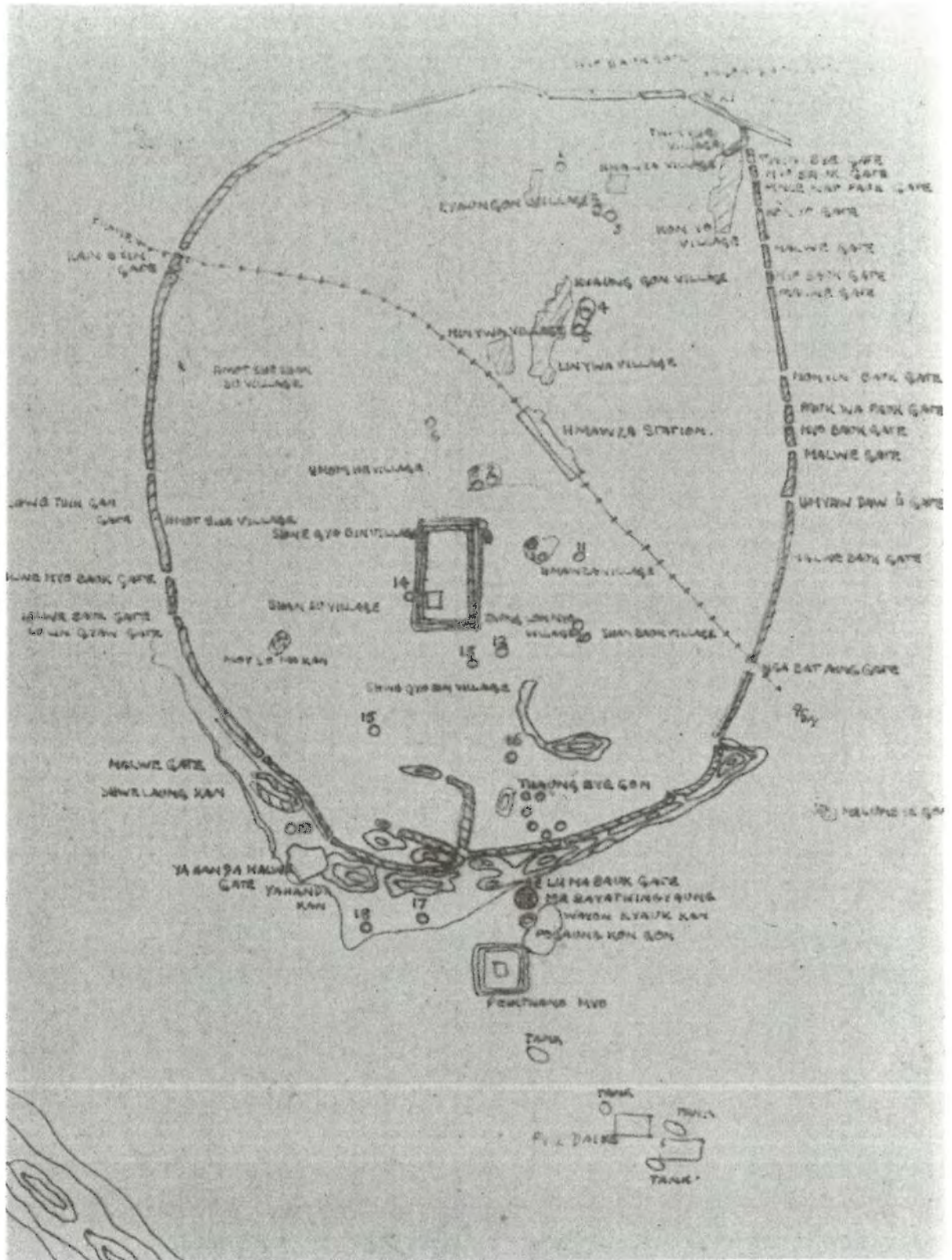
9. Amarāvati āyaka-Pillar Inscriptions of the Śatavāhana Period, Reinscribed in the Ikṣvāku Period (from Hultzsch in Burgess, J. 1887).





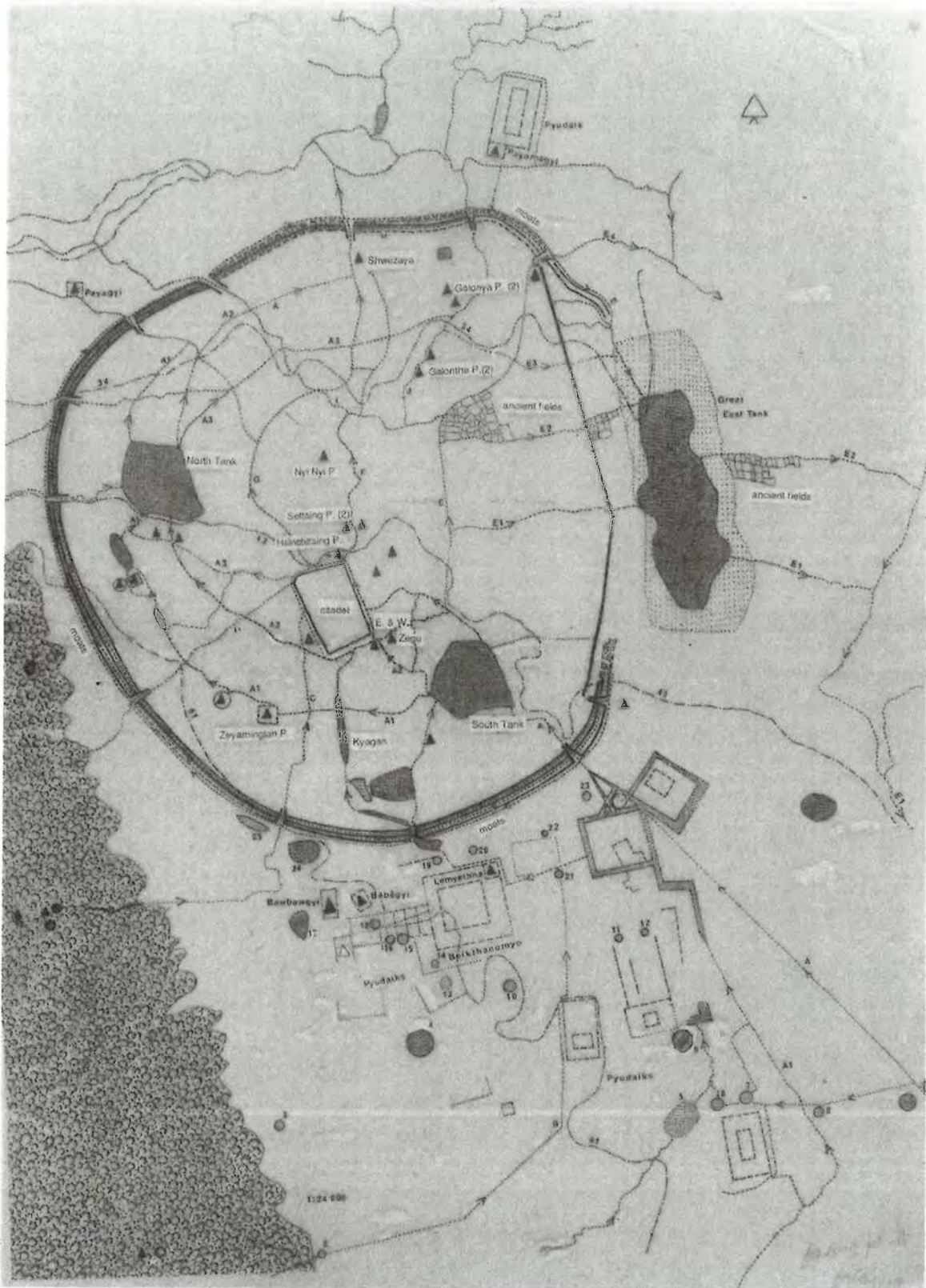
10. Map on the Spread of Buddhism in the 5th Century (from Zürcher, E. 1962: *Buddhism: its Origin and Spread in Maps and Pictures*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul).





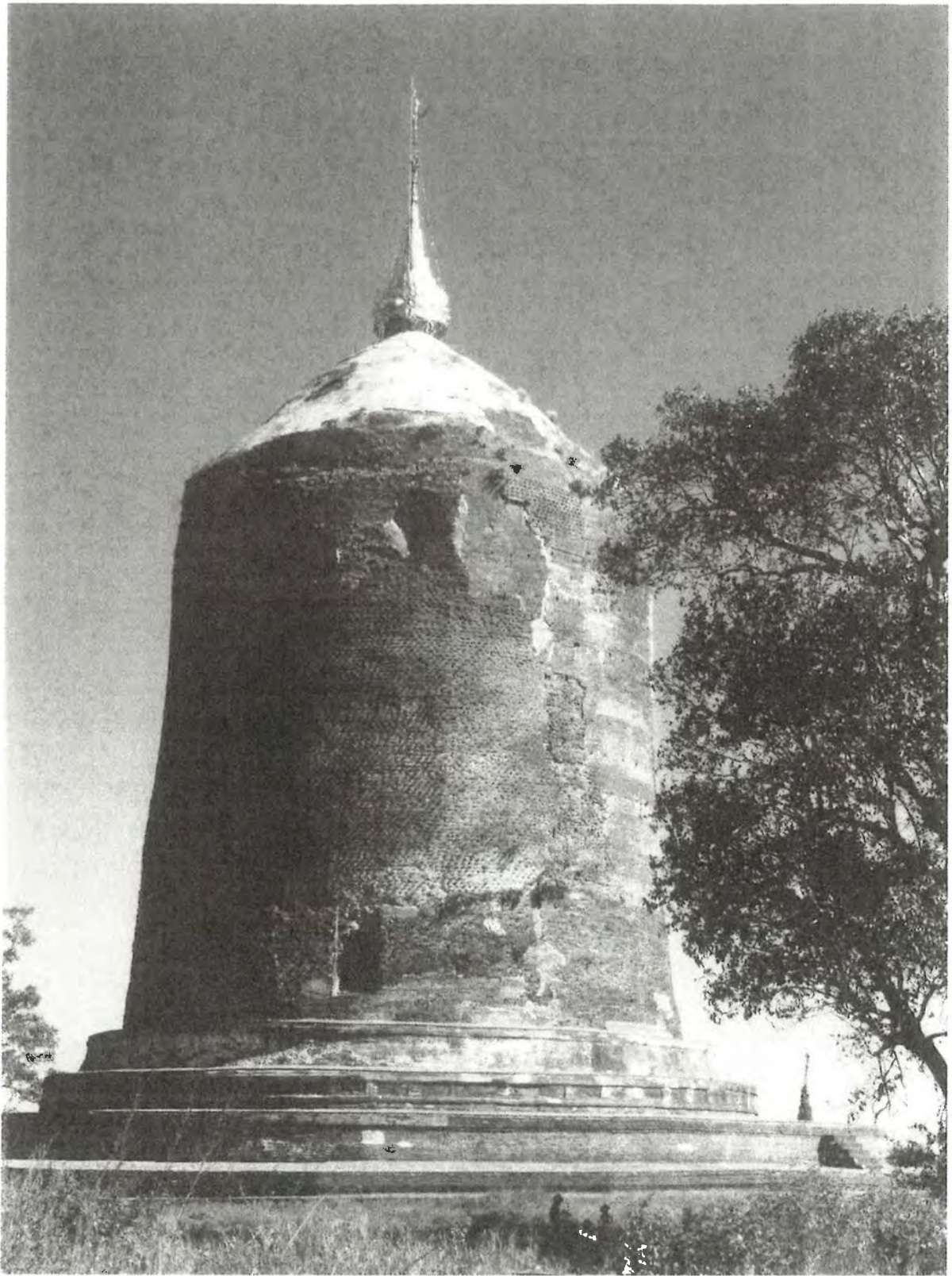
11. Taw Sein Ko's Map of Śrī Kṣetra, 1920 (from Report of the Superintendent of Archaeology, Burma Circle. Rangoon, Office of Government Printing, 1920).





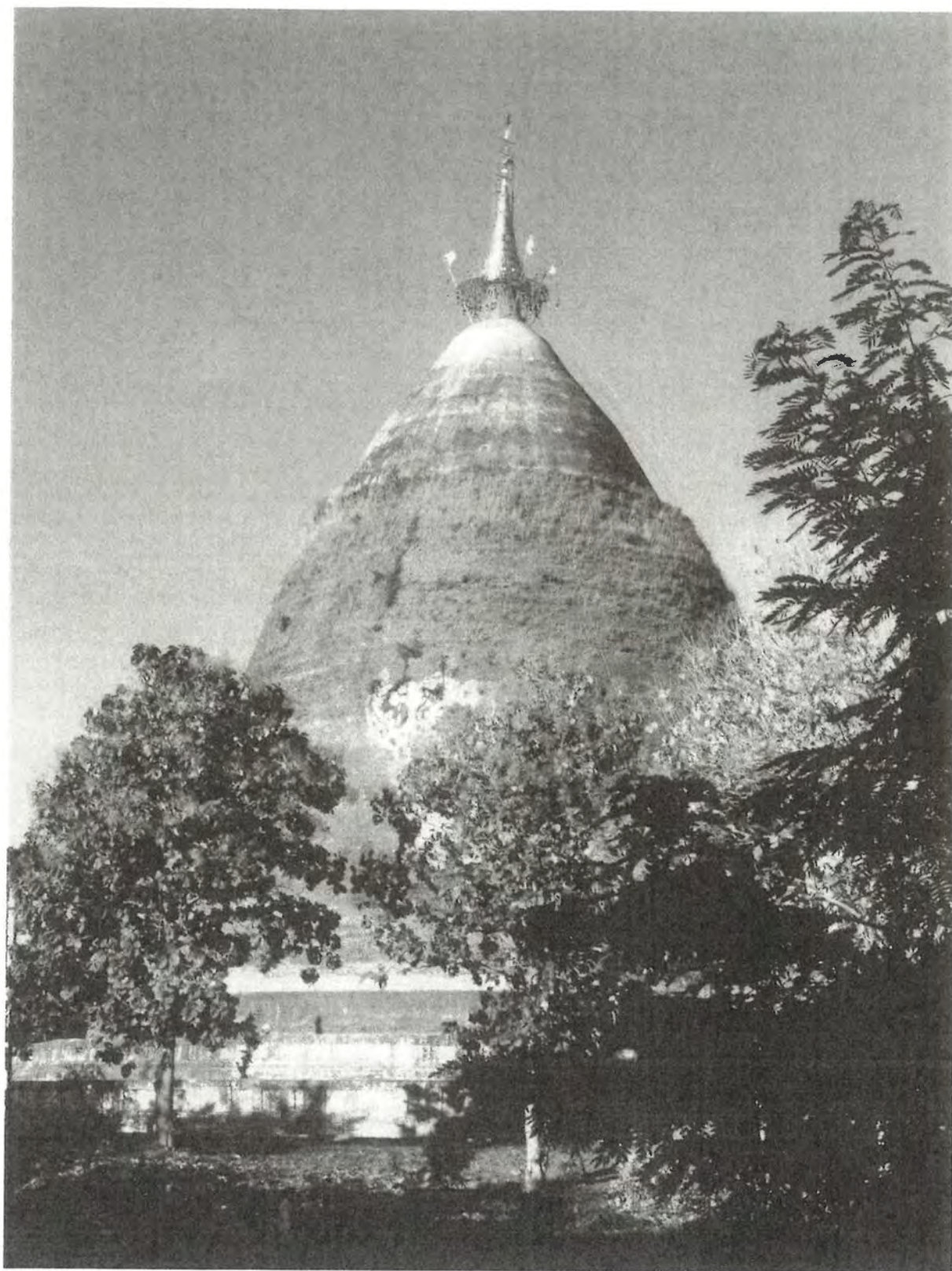
12. Map of Śrī Kṣetra from Aerial and Surface Survey, 1990 (from Stargardt, Janice 1990: *The Ancient Pyu of Burma. op. cit. Fig. 14*).





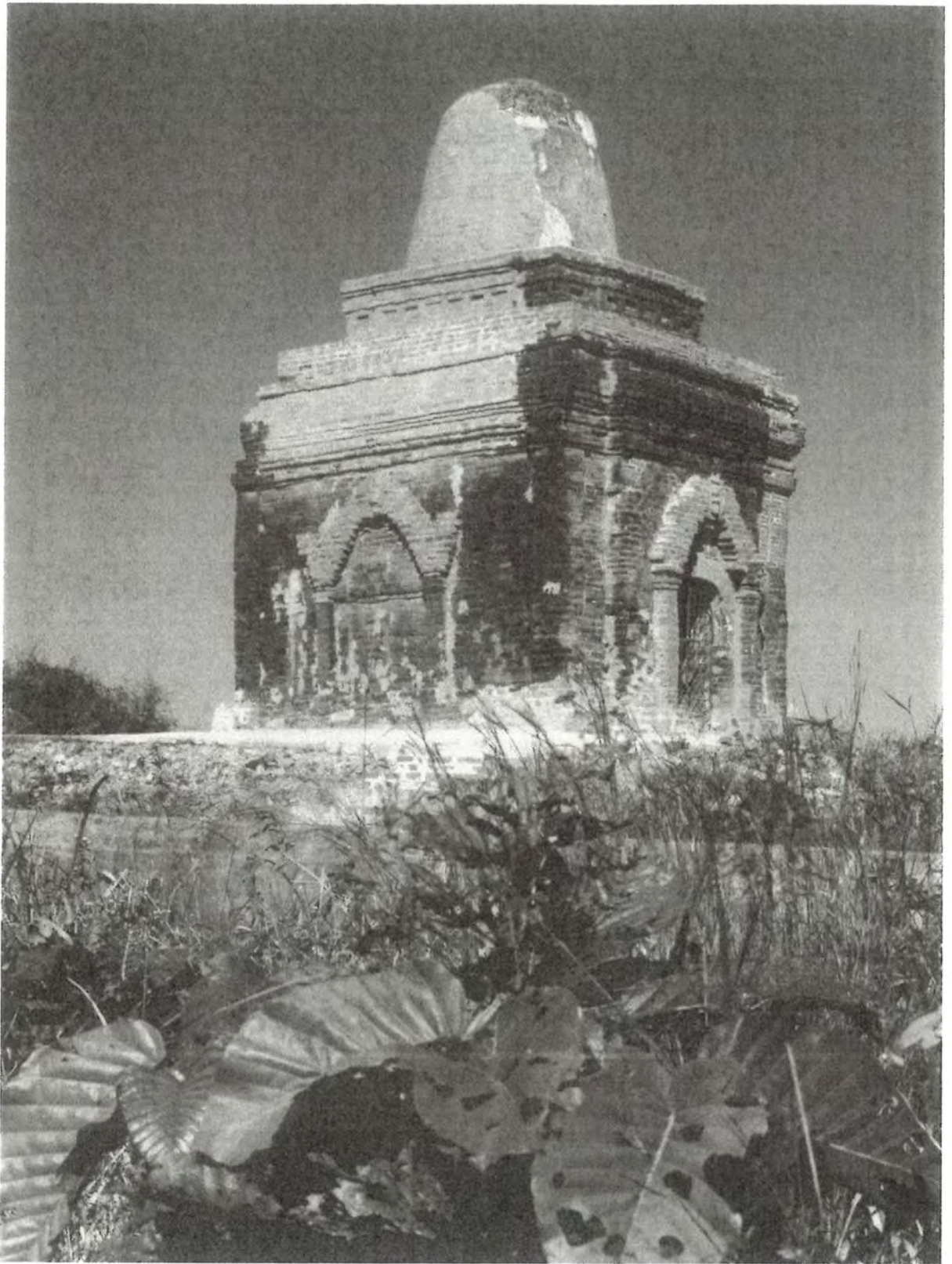
13. *The Bawbawgyi Stupa, Śrī Kṣetra (courtesy of Drs. Frans Janssen, Utrecht, fieldwork in Śrī Kṣetra).*





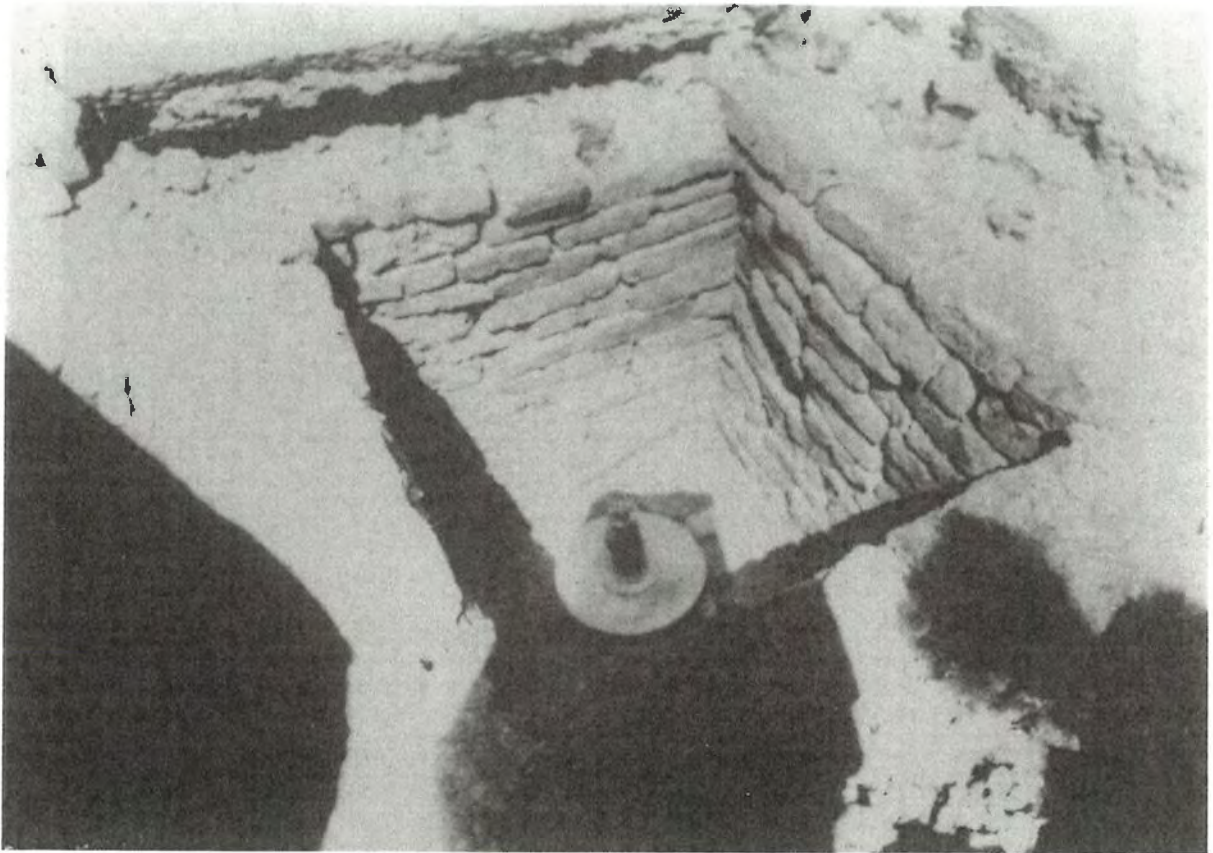
14. *The Payagyi Stupa, Śrī Kṣetra (courtesy of Drs. Frans Jansen).*





15. *The Bebegyi Temple, Śrī Kṣetra (courtesy of Drs. Frans Janssen).*





16. *The Khin Ban Mound Relic Chamber under Excavation (Glass Plate Negative, Courtesy of the Archaeological Survey Department, Burma).*



17. *The Golden Pali Text of Śrī Kṣetra Closed (Glass Plate Negative, Courtesy of the Archaeological Survey Department, Burma).*





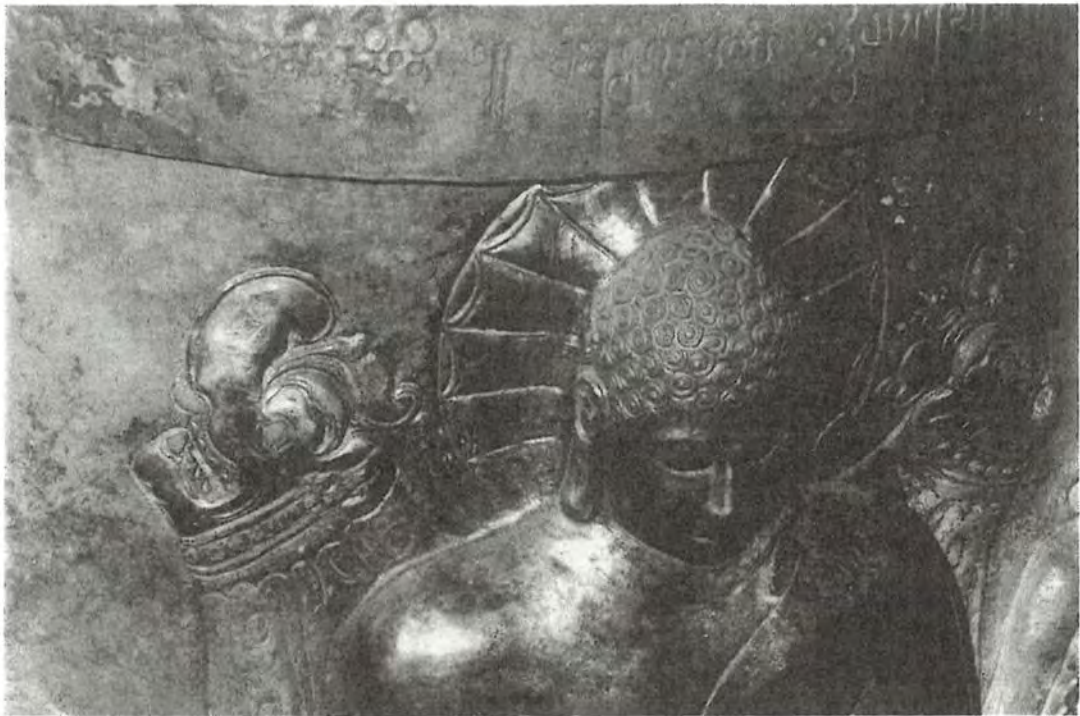
18. Detail of a Buddha on the Great Silver Reliquary of Śrī Kṣetra (Janice Stargardt, fieldwork in Burma, 1995).





19. *Detail of a Disciple on the Great Silver Reliquary of Śrī Kṣetra (Janice Stargardt).*





20. *Palaeography of the Lid Rim Inscription of the Great Silver Reliquary (Janice Stargardt).*

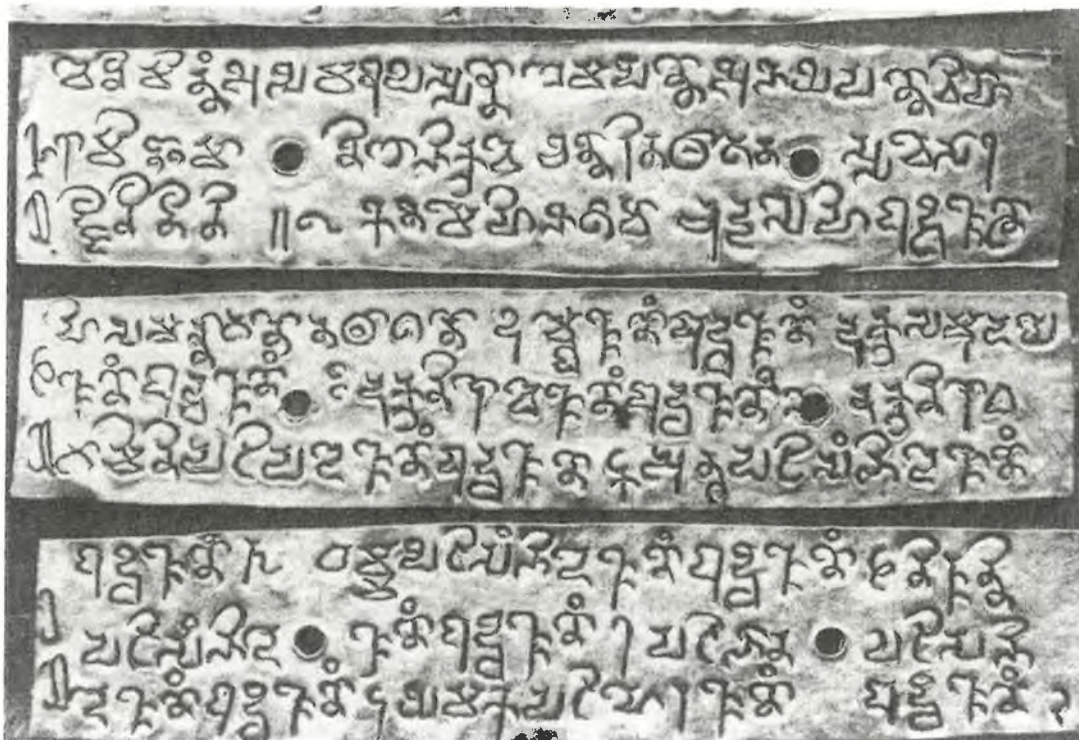


21. *Palaeography of the Lid Rim Inscription on the Great Silver Reliquary (cont.) (Janice Stargardt).*

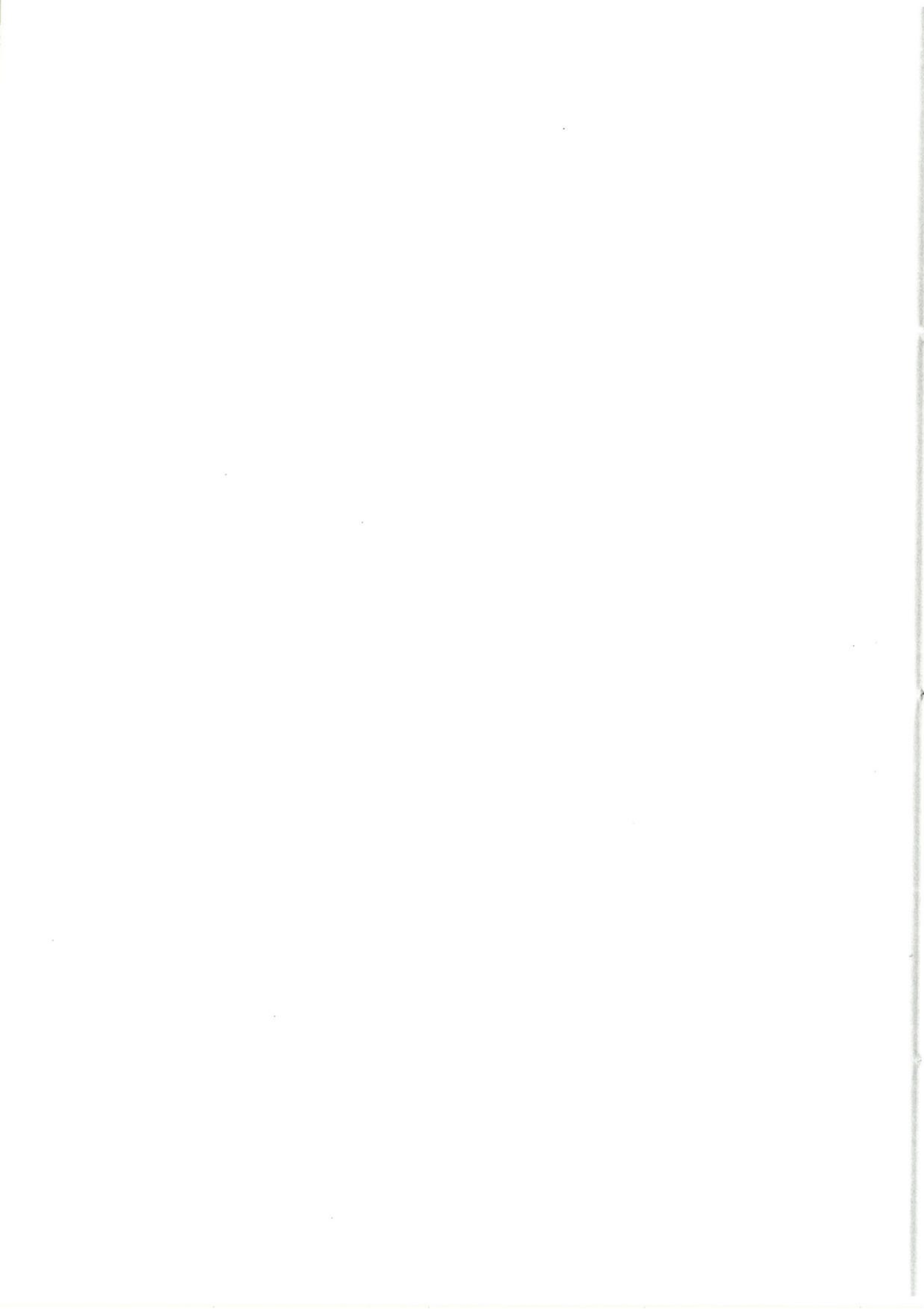




22. The Inscriptions on the First Four Leaves of the Golden Pali Text of *Sri Ksetra* (from Luce, G.H. 1985: *Pre-Pagan Phases of Burma*. Oxford, O.U.P., Vol. II).



23. The Defective Fifth Excerpt of the Golden Pali Text of *Sri Ksetra* (from Luce, G.H. 1985).





INVENTORY OF THE CONTENTS OF THE RELIC CHAMBER  
AT KHIN BA'S MOUND

- 1 The central Great Silver Reliquary 45 cm h. x 40 cm diam.
- 2 Silver cube-shaped reliquary with four seated Buddhas in high relief 13.5 cm h.
- 3 Four silver cylindrical stupas with 'waisted' dome and 8 umbrellas on finial, 23.5 cm h. [Āndhra type].
- 4 Silver umbrellas on silver rod [belonging to 3. above].
- 5 Golden stupa same shape as 3. 11 cm h.
- 6 1 silver stupa same shape as 3. no umbrellas 4 cm h.
- 7 2 conical silver stupas cf. Shwedagon shape no umbrellas [no size given].
- 8 1 gold Buddha in *dhyana* mudra with gold halo, seated on silver *makara* throne supported by 2 lions rampant Buddha 14 cm h, throne 8.5 cm h.
- 9 1 gold Buddha with gold halo, no throne 9 cm h.
- 10 50 small Buddhas seated in *dhyana* mudra on low thrones ranging in h. from 4.5–11.8 cm and made of gold, silver and lead resp. [mandala pattern of distribution ?]
- 11 1 silver Buddha in *vitarka* mudra 9 cm h.
- 12 1 Buddha seated cross-legged on circular throne [poss. Indian import] 7 cm h., Buddha gold, throne silver.
- 13 Head of Buddha, gold 2.5 cm h.
- 14 Headless figure (Buddha), cross-legged, right hand in *abhaya* mudra, left hand holding edge of robe, bronze 6.5 cm h.
- 15 Buddha seated European style, feet on lotus, mixed alloy, thin metal leaf damaged, bright green glaze [? patina] 10 cm h.
- 16 24 thin sheets of gold and silver with Buddha in low relief circular or ovoid max. diam. 11.25 cm.
- 17 Buddha in *Parinirvāna* on silver sheet originally gilded 13 h x 6.5 w.
- 18 Fragments of green glass [? crystal] Buddha, head 5 cm h.
- 19 4 small statues in gilded silver: 2 Buddhas, 2 disciples 3.7–5 cm h.
- 20 Small silver Bodhisattva [devotee?] holding lotus [?], 4.8 cm h.
- 21 Flying deva in low relief on silver sheet partly gilded 5.6 cm diam.
- 22 1 small devotee standing, gold 6.5 cm h.
- 23 1 small woman standing, silver 5.3 cm h.

- 24 1 human body with horse's head and sword under right arm, 6.5 cm h.  
 25 5 Dvarapalas on silver circular sheets, partly gilded, max 18.5 cm h.  
 26 1 plain silver bowl with cover 16.5 cm h x 28.5 cm diam.  
 27 1 plain silver bowl without cover 7.5 cm h x 17.75 cm diam.  
 28 1 plain silver bowl without cover 7 cm h x 11.25 cm diam.  
 29 1 plain silver bowl without cover 6.75 cm h x 11.5 cm diam.  
 30 1 silver betel box shaped casket 7.5 cm h x 10 cm diam.  
 31,32 1 silver casket 1.75 cm h x 4.5 cm diam., with cover decorated with stylized lotus and ball of rock crystal of great clarity 4 cm h x 5 cm diam.  
 33 Gold casket and cover on chain 5.5 cm h x 9 cm diam.  
 34 Gold casket with 2 Brahmani ducks on cover 6.5 cm h x 8.3 cm diam, containing silver casket holding 12 rings set with stones.  
 35 5 small gold trays 6.8 cm diam each.  
*The above bowls and caskets contained small Buddha images, coins and beads and small gold and silver leaves with Pyu inscriptions.*  
 36 45 silver Pyu coins in several sizes.  
 37 20 leaves of Golden Pali Text, 2 gold covers and thick gold wire, sealing wax and glass[?] beads; text 16.5 cm l x 3.1 cm w, each leaf has 3 lines of text except 2nd last with 4 and last with 2. All except last two numbered on left side.  
 38 16 small gold and silver sheets with Pyu inscriptions in relief [?].  
 39 Seal stone from ring with 3 deeply incized letters [b/w pl from 1929, 4 letters].  
 40 Beads of thin gold and silver sheet laid over grey clay.  
 41 Beads: quartz, carnelian, amethyst, chalcedony, rock crystal, jade etc.[!], and glass of different colours [!].  
 42 12 small elephant beads in impure jade roughly cut 2-4.5 cm l. and 1 round jade bead of high quality.  
 43 1 *makara* in rock crystal 3.7 cm l.  
 44 1 tortoise in chalcedony with white spots 2 cm l.  
 45 Second set of 71 gold and silver rings, 1 set with 3 small stones.  
 46 1 ring of rock crystal.  
 47 4 large lotus flowers of thin silver sheet, many petals (2 with stalks) 18.75 cm diam.  
 48 3 lotuses in thin gold and silver sheet, many layers of petals, 5 cm diam.



- 49 46 lotuses single layer of petals, thin gold and silver sheet, circular and square 4 5.5 cm diam.
- 50 13 small sheets [silver?] with floral relief design, some gilded [no size].
- 51 33 small gold and silver bells.
- 52 1 small silver ball in the shape of a rattan football.
- 53 9 small gold and silver cups [?] max. 7.5 cm diam.
- 54 2 thin gold leaves decorated with dots, each 6.5 cm w.
- 55 Set of small silver boats [no number given, apparently large], max 18.75 cm l.
- 56 Gold and silver butterflies [no number given].
- 57 6 gold sheets with relief heads of lion max. 3.1 cm diam.
- 58 2 small gold deer.
- 59 1 small silver duck gilded.
- 60 2 small silver stands, 1 circular like a lotus throne 10 cm diam x 3.75 cm h. with square hole [for image?] and 1 conical 5.6 cm h., decorated at base with stylized lotuses with 2.5 cm hole at top [for image?].
- 61 Small coil of gold wire.
- 62 Small fragments of gold, silver, copper, bronze and iron.
- 63 Loose stones: spinels, sapphires, moonstones, topaz, agates, amethysts and jade.
- 64 A lump of quartz.
- 65 A pierced ball of rock crystal.
- 66 A conical piece of well-polished rock crystal with rutile inclusions.
- 67 A ball of polished rock crystal of great clarity [cf. 32].
- 68 A lotah-shaped terra cotta pot with spout.

[430 numbered objects were present in the relic chamber. In addition, no numbers were given for the sets of Buddha images, silver boats, gold and silver butterflies, or the precious stones, among other objects].

\* Based on *Annual Report, Archaeological Survey of India for the Year 1926-7*, pp. 176-81;

data and comments inside [ ] supplied by present author; conversion of measurements from imperial to metric systems also by present author.





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