

**Exhibition of Masterpieces from Private Collections at the
Bangkok National Museum from 6th March–6th April 1968**

by

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In the Journal of Archaeology Vol. 2, No. 4, the Sukhothai art exhibits displayed at the Bangkok National Museum from 6th March - 6th April 1968 have been discussed. Now the objects of the following periods will be described.

First of all, the bronze Buddha subduing Mara 56 cm. high in Chiengsaen style, lent by General Pao Pianlert Baribhandha Yuddhakich (fig. 1), will be discussed. Buddha images of Chiengsaen style in northern Thailand are largely divided into two groups: the first group which resembles very much those of the Pala style in north-eastern India (8th-11th century A.D.) is thought to have originated in Thailand about the 11th century before the Sukhothai period; the second group already shows Sukhothai influence so its date must be after the middle of the 13th century. It is believed that this second group probably began near the end of the 14th century. There is a recent theory by Mr. A.B. Griswold that the Chiengsaen Buddha images of the first group (called in Thai "Early Chiengsaen") might be contemporary with those of the second group (late Chiengsaen) and later than the Sukhothai ones. This new theory is now losing credence as new evidence at Sukhothai has been found refuting it.

This beautiful Chiengsaen Buddha image of General Pao Pianlert retains the early Chiengsaen iconography. Unfortunately the halo, which might be in the form of a lotus bud or a flame-like motif has been lost. The hair - curls are quite

large and the face of the Buddha is round with a double chin. The body is corpulent with a developed chest and the short end of the robe is terminated by a knotted design on the left shoulder. The Buddha is in the attitude of subduing Mara with his right hand pointing down to the ground and is seated in a crossed-leg fashion. This iconography belongs to the Pala style of Indian art, indicating the early Chiengsaen group. However, the upper hem of the lower garment of the Buddha traces a wavy line at his waist which shows that it probably derives from a decorated belt of the crowned Buddha in the Lopburi style not antedating the late 12th - 13th century. The lower hem of the upper garment of the Buddha under his knees might also denote the late date of this Buddha image as this feature is always displayed on the late Sukhothai Buddha images. The workmanship of this bronze Buddha image is, however, remarkable. According to the writer, this statue is probably a good copy of the early Chiengsaen type and its date is probably around the 14th - 16th century.

The next image, which is the bronze Buddha in meditation, 42.5 cm. high and belonging to Nai Bhavas Bun-nag, is easier to identify. This Buddha statue has also some characteristics of the early Chiengsaen style: a halo in the form of a lotus bud, large hair - curls, a round face and a rather corpulent body. But he is in the attitude of meditation which is rather rare in the northern Thai school. The end of the robe on the left

shoulder extends quite far down to the navel and the Buddha is seated in a folded-leg fashion. The base is also undecorated. These last three features point to the Sukhothai influence. Therefore this Buddha image could be dated late Chiengsaen group, around the 15th - 16th century.

Next we come to a glazed terracotta jar, 32 cm. high and belonging to Praya Buranasiripong (fig. 3). This jar was made in the northern part of Thailand and its date is probably around the 15th - 17th century. According to Thai history, around the middle of the 15th century A.D. a war broke out between the Ayudhya kingdom and the Chiengmai kingdom. The governor of Sawankhalok (former Sisatchanalai in the Sukhothai kingdom) betrayed the king of Ayudhya and moved his townsmen, who had been mostly potters since the Sukhothai period, up into Chiengmai territory. These potters were sent to settle down in many districts where they continued their profession. Many kiln-sites have been discovered in the northern part of Thailand for instance at Wiang Kalong in the province of Chiengrai, from where this beautiful jar probably came, and at San Kampaeng in Chiengmai province. The wares produced cannot be compared to those fabricated at Sisatchanalai. It might be that the clay was not as good and that the workmanship had already declined. One should also notice on the neck of this glazed jar, four figurines of climbing lezards.

The next two bronze Buddha images belong to the U-tong school of art in Thailand. This style, created by Thai artists, developed in the central part of the country presumably from the 12th to the 15th century. It received artistic influences respectively from the Dvaravati, Khmer or Lopburi and Sukhothai arts and the Buddha images in this style can be largely divided into three successive groups. The first image 54 cm. high (fig. 4) belongs to the first group which denotes the mixture between the Dvaravati and Lopburi influences. It represents the Buddha in the attitude of subduing Mara and belongs to Nai Dhada Vanichsombat. The halo is in the form of a lotus bud with a row of lotus petals decorating the base. The hair-curls are quite small and a small band exists between the hair and the forehead, this last feature being one of the important characteristics of the U-tong school. The square face with straight eyebrows and rather austere looking denotes the influence from the Lopburi school, whereas the thick lips probably indicate the lingering Dvaravati influence. The body is slender with the long end of the robe leaving the right shoulder bare terminated in a straight line, another characteristic of the U-tong style. This long end is continued by a line that passes over the left wrist and thigh, a feature of the late 12th- early 13th century Lopburi or Khmer school. The wavy line of the upper hem of the lower garment at the waist also reminds one of the decorated

belt of the Lopburi crowned Buddha. The Master is seated in a folded - leg fashion with his right hand pointing down to the ground in the attitude of subduing Mara, also typical of the U-tong school. One can therefore determine that this bronze Buddha statue illustrates the mixture of the Dvaravati and Lopburi schools. It can be identified as pertaining to the first group of the U-tong style which dates around the 12th - 13th century.

The second image, 54 cm. high (fig. 5), also of Nai Dhada Vanichsombat belongs as well to the U-tong style. It falls into the second category, however, as the Khmer or Lopburi influence is more predominant. One realises that in general features this Buddha statue still resembles the first one. The differences are only that the halo has turned into a flame-like motif which might be the invention of the Thai artists during this period before they handed it on to the Sukhothai school and that the Dvaravati influence has disappeared, leaving the Khmer style dominant. One should, however, note that the countenance of the Buddha has become much softer with a smiling expression. This might indicate that this statue is at the end of the second group of U-tong style when it will be superseded by the third group which displays strong Sukhothai artistic influence. The permanent U-tong characteristics of this image are : a small band on the forehead, the attitude of subduing Mara, a folded-leg position and a base that curves in-

side.

The next item is a metal Buddhist votive tablet 18.5 cm. high, belonging to Nai Dhada Vanichsombat (fig. 6), and cast during the Ayudhya period. Buddhist votive tablets originated in Thailand since the earliest historical time, the Dvaravati period (7th - 11th century A.D.). They were probably made to prolong the life of Buddhism which has been thought to exist for only 5000 years. Therefore, when a *stupa* was built, thousands of these terra cotta votive tablets would be made from moulds, sometimes inscribed on the back with the Buddhist credo "Ye dhamma" and enshrined in the *stupa* in the hope that once Buddhism had disappeared, people might find them and convert again to Buddhism. This tradition has continued to the present day with the evolution of Buddhist votive tablets into more decoration and casting in metal. During the Ayudhya period (14th - 18th century A.D.) one type of votive tablets came into fashion. It was cast into a metal plaque on which were small figurines of the seated Buddha, usually in the number of 500. This is the one shown in this figure. Nowadays most of the Buddhist votive tablets, especially the smaller ones have been regarded as invulnerable talismans or charms.

During the late Ayudhya and early Bangkok periods (17th - 19th century) pentachromatic (called in Thai, *bencharong*) ware was quite popular in Thailand. These ceramics were fabricated in China



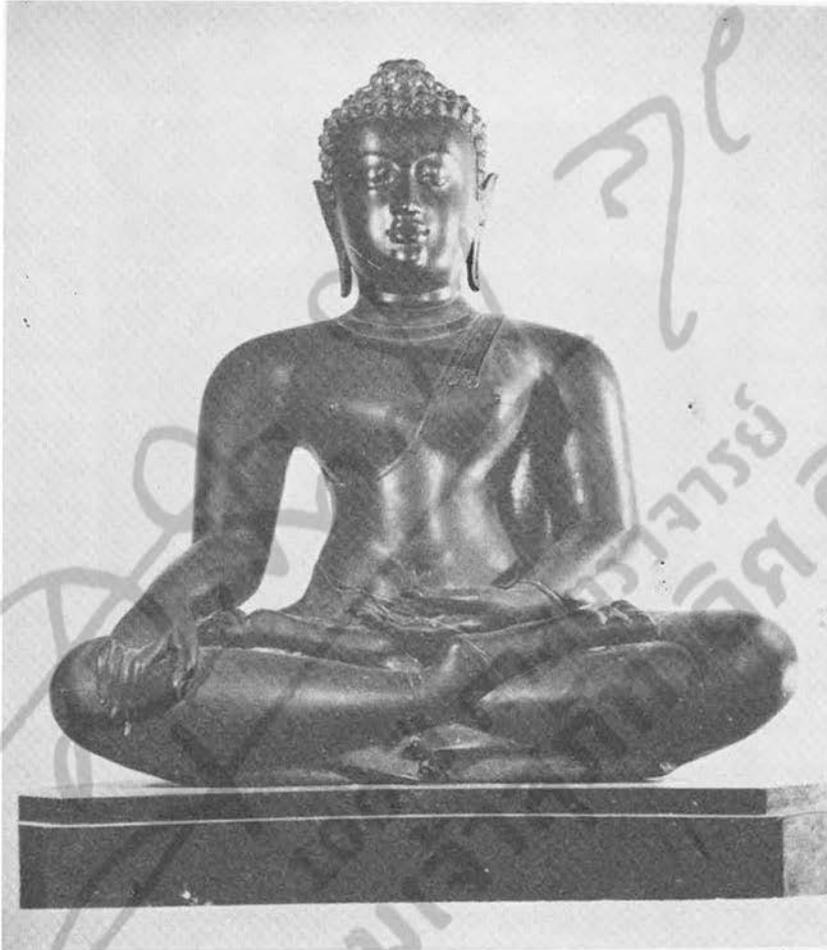
WIANG KALONG JAR

Height 32 cm.

Late Chiangsaen Style.

15th – 17th Century A.D.

Lent by Praya Buranasiripong.



BUDDHA SUBDUING MARA

Bronze. Height 56 cm.

Chiangsaen Style.

About 14th — 16th Century A.D.

Lent by General Pao Pianlert

Boribhandha Yuddhakich.



BUDDHA IN MEDITATION

Bronze. Height 42.5 cm.
Late Chiangsaen Style.
15 th - 16 th Century A.D.
Lent by Nai Bhavas Bunnag.



BUDDHA SUBDUING MARA

Bronze. Height 54 cm.

First Period of U-Thong Style.

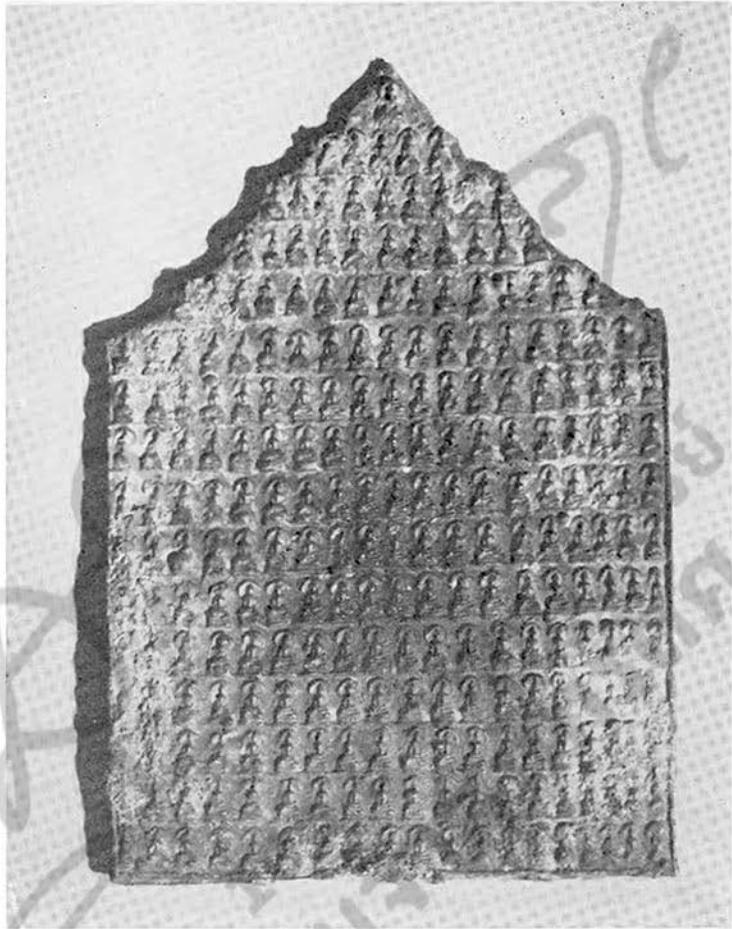
12 th - 13 th Century A.D.

Lent by Nai Dhada Vanichsombat.



BUDDHA SUBDUING MARA

Bronze. Height 54 cm.
Second Period of U-Thong Style.
13 th - 14 th Century A.D.
Lent by Nai Dhada Vanichsombat.



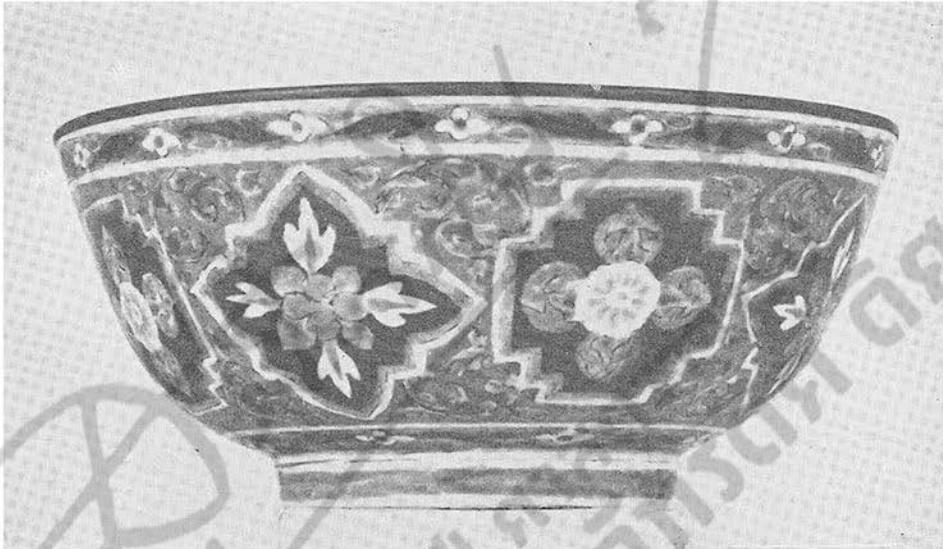
BUDDHIST VOTIVE TABLET

Metal. Height 18.5 cm.

Ayudhya Style.

15 th - 18 th Century A.D.

Lent by Nai Dhada Vanichsombat.



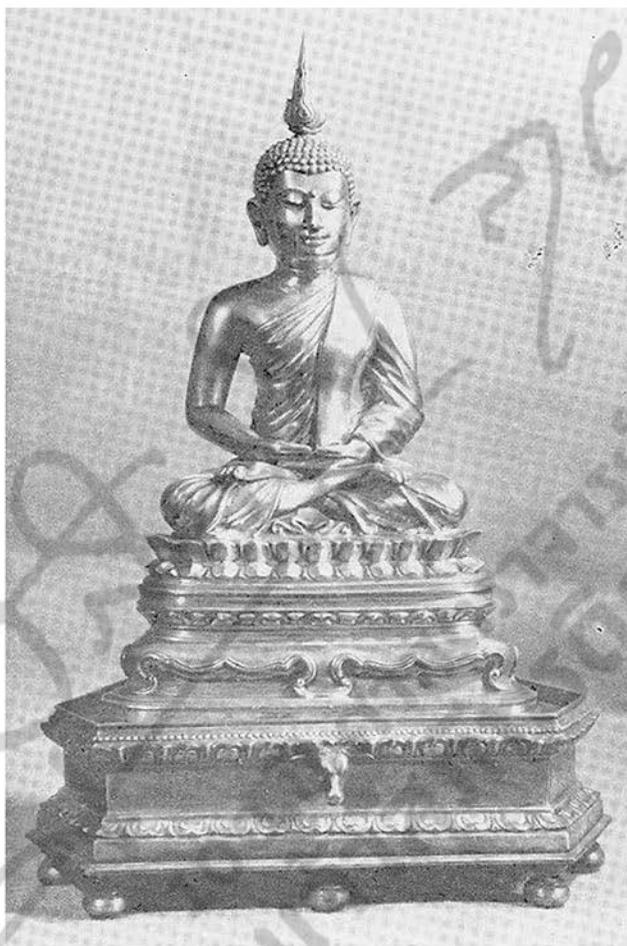
PENTACHROMATIC WARE

Diameter 19.5 cm.

Ayudhya Style.

17 th - 18 th Century A.D.

Lent by Praya Buranasiripong.



PRA NIRANTARAI

Gold with gilt bronze base.
Height without base 27.8 cm.
Bangkok Style of The Fourth Reign
(1851 - 1868)
Lent by H.M. The King.



PENTACHROMATIC TRAY

Diameter 36 cm.

Bangkok Style.

Late 18 th - 19 th Century A.D.

Lent by Nai Athorn Sirikantraporn.



NIELLO BOWL

Diameter 13.8 cm.

Bangkok Style.

Late 18 th - Early 19 th Century A.D.

Lent by M.C. Piyarangsit and M.C. Sanidprayurasakti Rangsit.



DRUM

Ceramic. Length 36 cm.
Bangkok Style.
19 th Century A.D.
Lent by Nai Prapot Paorohit.

but decorated with Thai designs which had been sent at the same time with the order. Most of the Ayudhya ones are green inside, whereas those of Thonburi (a capital for 15 years before Bangkok) and Bangkok are white. The first specimen, a bowl with a diameter of 19.5 cm. (fig. 7), according to its owner, Praya Buranasiripong, might belong to the late Ayudhya period and its date is probably around the 17th - 18th century. The second specimen, a tray of 36 cm. diameter (fig. 8) belongs to Nai Athorn Sirikantraporn. It was probably ordered from China during the Bangkok period and can be dated around the late 18th-19th century.

The next item is quite important. It is a Buddha image in gold, 27.8 cm. high, placed on a gilt bronze base (fig. 9) graciously lent by H.M. the King for the exhibition. This image was cast by command of King Mongkut or Rama IV (1851-1868) to cover the gold Dvaravati Buddha image found at Dong Si Mahapot, Prachinburi (fig. 4 in Journal of Archaeology Vol. 2 No. 1). The king named this image Pra Nirantarai (Without Danger) as the gold Dvaravati Buddha image inside had already escaped twice from destruction: the first time from its founder who in stead of destroying or selling the image presented the statue to the king and the second time from a thief who broke into the private chapel in the Grand Palace. It can be seen from this image that King Mongkut invented a new type of a Buddha image in his reign by

going back to many early Indian characteristics. One notices that the protuberance on the head of the Buddha has disappeared and the halo rests immediately upon the head of the Buddha which is covered by hair-curls. The urna or a tuft of hair between the eyebrows which is one of the auspicious marks for great heroes and occurs quite frequently on Indian Buddha images is represented. The monastic robe is covered with folds and the attitude of the Master is meditation. He also sits in a crossed-leg fashion, which is familiar to the Indian northern schools as well as to the Thai early Chiengsaen style. The lower base is decorated by the head of a bull gargoyle, which signifies Gotama, the family of the Buddha. This type of the Buddha was, however, only popular in the reign of King Mongkut. After his period, Thai artists again turned to the usual type of the Buddha that more or less continued the Ayudhya style which, in turn, had adopted the Sukhothai tradition.

During the Ayudhya and early Bangkok periods though statuary declined, minor arts flourished. In the early Bangkok period, from the reign of King Rama I to that of King Rama III (1782-1851) the workmanship in producing minor arts could equal that of Ayudhya, but after that period it began to decline; probably owing to the infiltration of western influence. Here two specimens of such minor arts are shown: the first one being a silver niello bowl with a diameter of 13.8 cm., belonging

to M.C. Piyarangsit and M.C. Sanidprayurasakti Rangsit (fig. 10). This bowl was probably fabricated in the early Bangkok period between the late 18th to early 19th century. One can see a design of a *garuda* of an early type (?) flying in front of subtle scrolls. The later niello ware will have more complicated and heavier designs and will be

mostly gilt; the black background being much more limited. The next specimen is a drum 36 cm. long which belongs to Nai Prapot Paorohit (fig. 11). Its handle is made in ceramic which was probably ordered from China and decorated with Thai designs. This drum was most likely made in the late 19th century, later than the silver niello bowl mentioned above.