

**The exhibition of masterpieces from private collections  
displayed at the Bangkok National Museum from  
the 6th March-6th April 1968**

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In commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of the International Council of Museums, the National Council of Museums of Thailand arranged an exhibition of masterpieces from private collections at the Bangkok National Museum from the 6th March-6th April 1968. Many famous art collectors in Bangkok participated in this exhibition from H.M. the King downwards and it was attended by 77,235 visitors. Here is a brief description of some of the important art objects displayed.

First of all is the bronze image 56 cm. high of H.R.H. Prince Bhanubandhu Yugala. This statuette represents the Buddha in Indian Amaravati or early Singhalese style, from about the 2nd-4th century A.D. He is in the attitude of preaching (vitarka) with his right hand while his left hand holds the end of the pleated monastic robe (fig.1). This image was found at Su-ngaikolok, in the southern province of Narathiwat, and it supports the theory that Indian merchants came by sea to trade in South-east Asia as far back as the 2nd century A. D. The wooden base is newly made.

Then comes the Dvaravati period (7th-11th century A.D.), the earliest known historical period of Thailand. Here 8 specimens will be described.

First of all there is a Dvaravati stone standing Buddha image 1.45 m. high belonging to Nai Lek Viriyapan. The Buddha is in the attitude of giving blessing with his right hand whereas his left one is lifted in order to hold the end of the robe (fig.2). His body is in a slight triple flexion and covered by a thin transparent monastic robe leaving the body quite clear underneath showing a cloth belt around the waist. Judging hastily, this image might be attributed to the early Dvaravati style because of strong Indian Gupta and post-Gupta influences mentioned above. But if one examines closely the facial features of this image, one will notice that they are quite different from the Indian prototype, and they do not resemble the native characteristics of the Dvaravati style which can be seen in fig. 4. One can therefore surmise that this image might be a late copy of the early Dvaravati sculpture and its date might be around the 9th-11th century A. D.

The second figure of the Dvaravati period is a stone sculpture 42 cm. high of Nai Dhada Vanichsombat, representing the Buddha descending from Tavatimsa heaven flanked by Indra and Brahma (fig. 3). Each of the figures is standing on its own lotus base. The Buddha is also standing on the head of a curious beast with wings. This type of iconography has never been found in India. Some have surmised that the beast represents the mixture of the three mounts of the great Hindu gods: the bull of Siva, the garuda (king of birds) for Vishnu and hamsa (wild goose) for Brahma and this image is meant to denote that Buddhism is stronger than Hinduism. The Dvaravati bas-relief carved on a cave-wall at Saraburi in central Thailand which depicts Vishnu and other Hindu gods listening to the sermon of the Buddha seems to support this theory. As the workmanship of this stone image is quite good and both Indra and Brahma are still standing in a triple flexion, we might attribute this standing figure to the early Dvaravati style of about the 7th-9th century A.D.

The third image is quite an important one (fig. 4) and belongs to the royal collection of H.M. the King. It represents the Dvaravati Buddha image in gold, seated in the attitude of meditation and wearing a monastic robe leaving the right shoulder bare. The base is newly made. The image is 8.5 cm. high and it is quite rare to find a statuette of such height in gold. The facial features represent the native style of this period : a broad face, curved and connected eyebrows, protruding eyes, a flat nose and thick lips. This image was discovered at Dong Si Maha Pot in the province of Prachinburi in eastern Thailand in 1856. It was presented by the founder to King Mongkut who kept it in the royal private chapel and later on named the image Pra Niran Tarai (Without Danger) for a thief once broke into the royal chapel but failed to take notice of this valuable image. Now it is enclosed within a larger Buddha image also of gold cast by command of King Mongkut in the style of his reign (the middle of the 19th century). As for this gold Dvaravati Buddha image, it might date from the 7th century A.D.

The next image is of the Buddha subduing Mara in bronze (fig. 5). It was lent by Dr. Viroj Kanasut and was found at Nakhon Sawan in the north of Thailand. The image is seated on a lotus base with a halo around its head and body. The whole figure is in a rather dilapidated condition. The face is rather ugly and this image probably belongs to the late Dvaravati style of about 9th-11th century A.D. Its height is 27 cm.

The next image clearly shows that it belongs to the late Dvaravati style and denotes already the Lopburi (Khmer) influence. The Buddha is in the attitude of subduing Mara (before his Enlightenment) but he is at the same time protected by the Naga (snake). This is contrary to the episode in the life of the Buddha as during

that time he was in his meditation. However, this mistaken iconography exists in the arts of Thailand and the most famous and largest image of the kind is probably the large bronze Buddha image from Wat Wieng, Chaiya, in the province of Suratthani in the south. It is dated 1183 A.D. by an inscription on the base, belongs to the Srivijai style and is now preserved in the Bangkok National Museum. This small image 19 cm. high belongs to Nai Dhada Vanichsombat and denotes some influences from the Lopburi style: for instance, the facial features of the snake, the small band on the forehead of the Buddha, his face and the end of the robe over his left shoulder (fig. 6). It is therefore quite late in the Dvaravati style and can be attributed to the 11th-12th century A.D.

Many terracotta and stucco sculptures were used to adorn architectural bases of the Dvaravati style. In this exhibition of masterpieces from private collections, only one stucco piece was displayed. It came from Ku Bua in the province of Ratburi, one of the most famous Dvaravati sites which has produced many beautiful terracotta pieces which are now preserved in the Bangkok National Museum. This head portrays a typical Dvaravati native face, 23 cm. high, and belongs to Nai Dhada Vanichsombat and probably dates from the 7th-11th century A.D. (fig. 7).

At U-tong in the province of Supanburi, central Thailand, many beads and gold ornaments were unearthed. The beads were probably used from prehistoric times down to the Dvaravati period. Here they are represented in fig. 8, the topmost piece being 10 cm. long. They were all found at U-tong and probably date between the 7th-11th century A.D. All were lent by Air Vice Marshal Montri Harnvichai who is a great collector of beads and gold ornaments. The gold ornaments (fig. 9) were found at Nakhon Pathom. The left plaque is 7 cm. long. They again belong to the Dvaravati style and probably date from the 7th-11th century A.D. These precious small objects were also lent by Air Vice Marshal Montri Harnvichai.

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(to be continued)



Fig. 1

**Preaching Buddha**

Bronze. Height 55 cm.

Found at Su-ngai Kolok, Narathiwat,  
dian Amaravati or early Singhalese style.  
About 2nd-4th century A.D.

Lent by

H.R.H. Prince Bhanubanbhu Yugala.

Fig. 2

**Buddha giving blessing**

Stone. Height 1.45 m. Dvaravati style,  
7th-11th century A.D.

Lent by Mrs. Prapai Viriyapan.

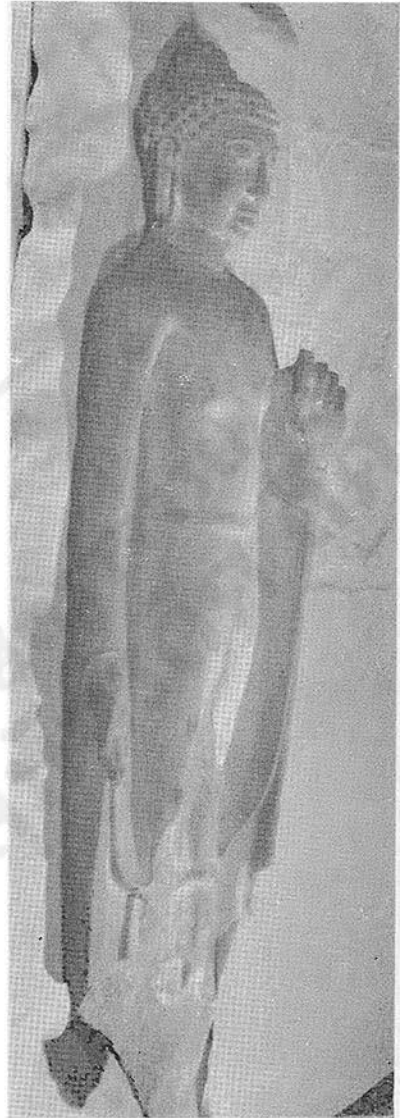




Fig. 3

**Buddha descending  
from  
Tavatimsa heaven**

Stone, Height 42 cm.

Dvaravati style, 7th-9th century A.D.

Lent by Nai Dhada Vanichsombat

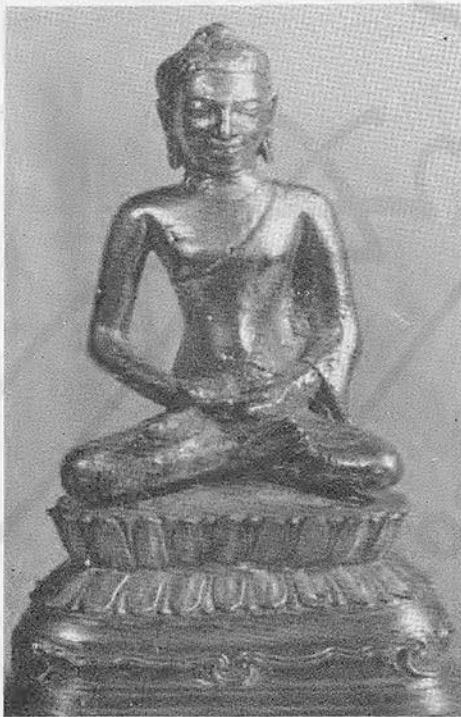


Fig. 4

**Buddha in Meditation**

Gold, Height 8.5 cm.

Found at Dong Si Maha Pot, Prachinburi.

Dvaravati style, 7th-11th century A.D.

Lent by H.M. the King.



Fig. 5

**Buddha subduing Mara**

Bronze, Height 27 cm.

Found at Nakhon Sawan.

Dvaravati style.

About 9th-11th century A.D.

Lent by Dr. Viroj Kanasut



Fig. 6

**Buddha Subduing Mara under Naga**

Bronze, Height 19 cm.  
Late Dvaravati style.  
11th-12th century A.D.  
Lent by Nai Dhada Vanichsombot



Fig. 7

**Stucco Head**

Height 23 cm. Found at Ku Bua, Ratburi.  
Dvaravati style.  
7th-11th century A.D.  
Lent by Nai Dhada Vanichsombot.

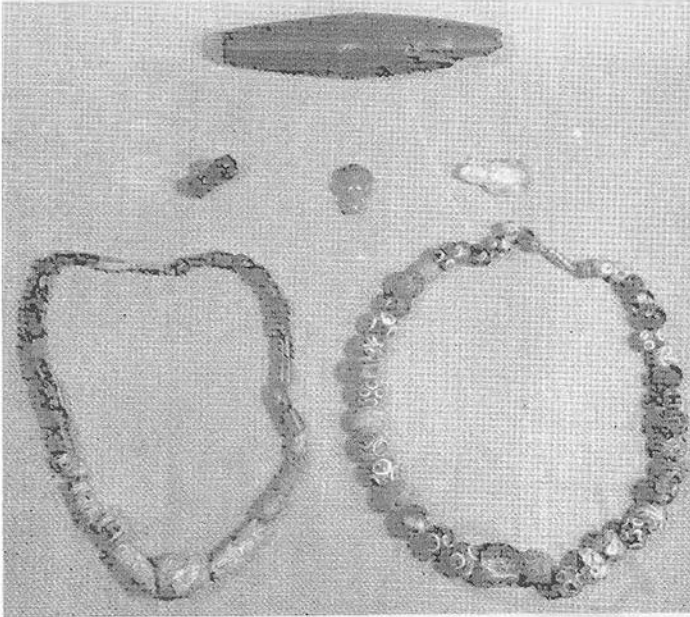


Fig. 8

**Beads**

The topmost piece being 10 c.m. long. Found at U-thong, Supanburi. Dvaravati style. 7th-11th century A.D. Lent by Air Vice Marshal Montri Harnvichai.

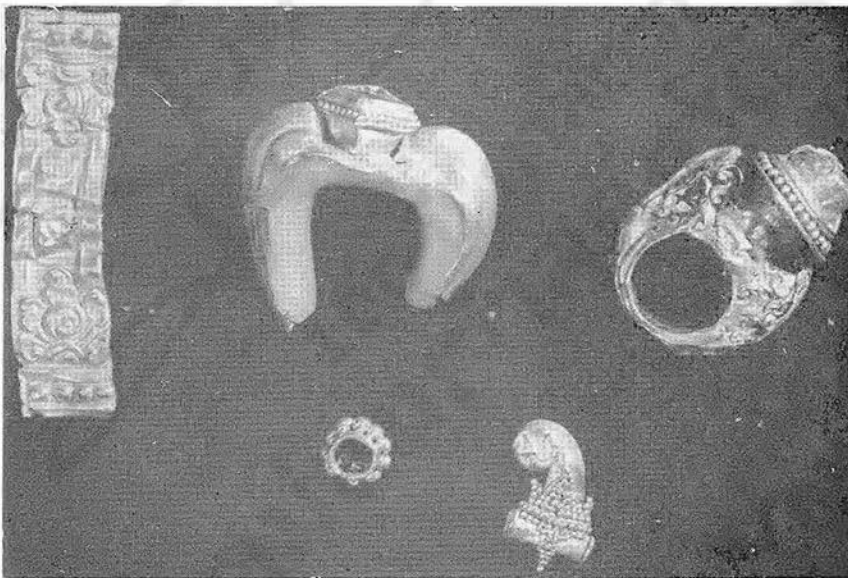


Fig. 9

**Gold ornaments**

The left plaque being 7 cm. long. Found at Nakhon Pathom. Dvaravati style. 7th-11th century A.D. Lent by Air Vice Marshal Montri Harnvichai.