

THE PLACE OF MAHAPARINIBBANA OF GAUTAM BUDDHA

Not Kasia in U. P. but Kusabati, *i.e.* Kusinara, present Hajo in
Assam is the place of Mahaparinibbana of
Gautam Buddha



THE MUKUTA-BANDHAN

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Price—Rs. 5.

Sh. 6.

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Assam is the place of Mahaparinibbana of
Gautam Buddha.

By

Umesh Chandra Talukdar, B. Com.

THE STATESMAN PRESS, CALCUTTA

1957

Dedicated to them
who have showed my way
and
To my father
Late Anandi Ram Talukdar
and
To my eldest son
Late Nagen Chandra Talukdar

PLATE I



GAUTAM BUDDHA

All compound things are subject to decay.
Only the truth will remain for ever.

Buddha

P R E F A C E

I was never a writer nor a historian. Even never I thought in my life that I shall have to deal with such a subject and write this text, a mixture of many things which is not only impossible but also desperate for the life of an office assistant. Yet I find that something is making me to do so.

That Gautam Buddha died at Hajo in Assam is a noise after 2500 years. Is there any truth in it, is to prove, is this text. The first shots were made by the personalities like the Hungarian traveller Csomo de Koros, Dr. Waddel, Mr. Robinson, L. W. Shakespear, Captain Edward Tuite Dalton and many others at different times and in different ways but those shots were being lost in the oblivion, after a long laps of time, suddenly again a shot was made by Shri Daibya Chandra Talukdar an office assistant of the Deputy Commissioner's Office, Gauhati with his *Buddha Hajo* in 1949. But he was so hurry that it made people to think but not to believe. Next came our Chief Minister's address on the fact on his lecture at Buddha Jayanti on 23-5-56. Then comes mine this humble contribution like Pope said, "fools rush in where angels fear to tread". Yet I find a fertile field of positive facts lying at our Hajo and the historical materials at our Historical Department, and my position being a mixture of the two, I take it to be my sacred duty to take up the task in the pursuit of truth and for the interest of my motherland, this unfortunate and exploited Assam. With much struggle and perseverance I have arrived at this stage which is now put before others for trial.

What I have presented here is how the course of events have been diverted to another direction along with the changes of courses of the rivers and topography of the places caused by the calamities of nature and how the positive facts have been tried to be mutilated and defaced and been given a different footing. This is not only the solitary and one case. Who is responsible for all these mischiefs ?

I get the historical materials from our Department and the *Mahaparinibhana-Sutta* from our Director and now Vice-Chancellor of the Gauhati University, Dr. S. K. Bhuyan. I get much trouble with Plate III. I tried to procure an aerial photograph of these places but that effort being failed I had to go with Shri Datta to those places and take up sketches and assimilate them in the present form. I am taking here what I really want and avoiding others what I do not feel necessary at present. So there will be found disappearance of a few hillocks and mountains from the Plate.

Would there be no Dr. S. K. Bhuyan and the Historical Department probably my this humble work would not have come into being. I never forget in my life the assistance rendered by Shri T. N. Datta our fellow assistant of the Department by drawing the line blocks with his manifold difficulties. I am no less grateful to Shri Manoj Kumar Datta, a sixth year student of the Gauhati University and his friend Shri Subodh Chandra Bardaloi, a student of the Engineering Institute, Gauhati for taking up for me the photos for the Plates IV, VIII, IX, XII, XVII, XVIII, XIX and XX, in the burning sun. I am also grateful to Shri Bimala Kanta Barua, B.A., Special Officer for Ahom Studies of the Department for helping me in taking up the photos for the Plates XV, XVI-(a) and XXI. I am also grateful to Shri Hemrath Barman our fellow assistant for lending his picture of Gautam Buddha for my use for Plate I. The photos for Plates VI, X, XI, XIII, XIV, XVI-(b) are taken by myself by an ordinary camera lent to me by my friend, manager, Octo Studio, Gauhati. I am very much grateful to the Statesman Press for taking enough trouble and giving me their all kinds of help with utmost sympathy in printing the book. Lastly I owe my acknowledgment and gratefulness to all of them who helped me much in my struggle towards the fulfilment of my this humble task.

After completing my work I applied to our State Government and personally approached the Chief Minister for help for printing the book but in vain and I have to send the same to the press under hard pecuniary circumstances. So though I had a mind to add a few more pages and a few more photos with the text I could not do the same for want of means.

Though I had a mind to print the book by the 15th November last I could not do the same for some misfortunes and distresses in my family practically making me impossible to attend to it for some unlimited difficulties under some unkind circumstances making life very much weary to me and I have to finish this preface by the side of the death bed of my father.

I am very much sorry to state that I made an attempt to show my work to Dr. Edward J. Thomas, at Cambridge, who is the authority on the subject and if possible to convey him here for physical verification of my claim but I could not do the same for his illness.

Hajo is a meeting place of five religions, Buddhism, Vaisnavism, Saivism, Saktism and Mohammedanism. Therefore their historical incidents and illustrations will naturally be many. What I have presented here with my small means at my disposal is a small fragment of the positive side of Buddhism.

It is true that Lord Buddha died in Assam and I claim Hajo to be the place of Mahaparinibbana of Gautam Buddha and the image is not of Hayagriva but of Lord Buddha. Now others to see if it is so otherwise.

Further I pray the communities of all religions of the world to kindly come to the place and examine my claim and I am sure that they would not only find me true but also a wrong done to Lord Buddha and to his religion. I do not know how the Buddhist world would bear this but I pray others to do justice in redressing this wrong.

Hajo.

THE AUTHOR

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THE PLACE OF MAHAPARINIBBANA OF GAUTAM BUDDHA

TO question the last halting place of Gautam Buddha is a sort of madness while thousands are paying respects to present Kasia. But still some human minds, know not why, fill up with thoughts and most reluctantly admit the reality of it. So we find that while a majority are agreeing with Kasia, at least a few are showing their doubts.

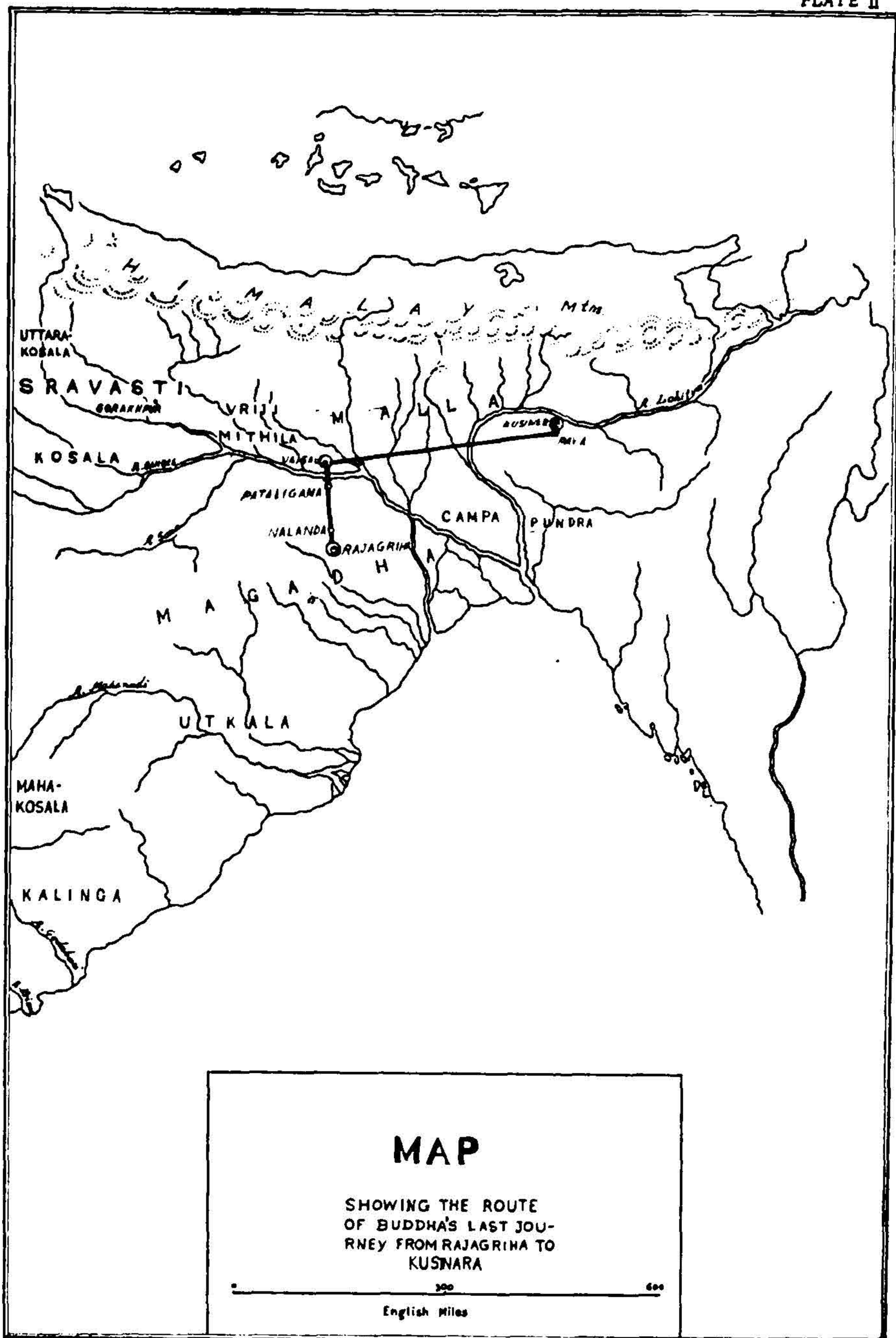
The texts that deal with the account of Buddha's last days are *Mahaparinibbana-sutta*, *Mahasudassana-sutta* and *Janavasabha-sutta* of which *Mahaparinibbana-sutta* is the main and the other two are further accretions to it. The *Mahaparinibbana-sutta* gives the account of the journey from Rajagaha on Gijjhakuta hill¹ to Vaisali where he kept his last Retreat, then by stages to Kusinara in the country of the Mallas, where he passed away.

Buddha died on 483 B.C. and the *Mahaparinibbana-sutta* was written on a later date.² So there is every chance of some passage being added or left out from the original text. As for an example the presence of a vihara near the sal grove and presence of Subhadda again with Kassapa are all latter additions. Again the incident of Buddha's journey from Vaisali to Pava seems to be totally lost or intentionally left out and the same is filled up with the names of a few places such as Hatthigama, Ambagama and Jambugama which really means Elephant-village, Mango-village and Roseapple village and which are unknown.³ And Anupiya which was in the Malla country was not mentioned.⁴ From these facts it seems that the compiler was not free from defects and doubts. I give below an itinerary of the journey according to *Mahaparinibbana-sutta* to understand the same very easily.

¹ This was the old hill-town surrounded by five hills, the new one was built by Bimbisara.

² Edward J. Thomas, *The Life of Buddha*, pp. 156-57.

³ & ⁴ These names mean Elephant-village, Mango-village, and Roseapple-village. They are unknown, but there is no reason why they should be inventions. They were evidently on the



road northwards to the Malla country, and were probably known to the compilers of the legends. It is noteworthy that Anupiya, although it is in the Malla country is not mentioned. This indicates that the route to Kusinara went

ITINERARY OF BUDDHA'S LAST JOURNEY

It shows the journey from Rajagaha across the Ganges to Vaisali, where Buddha spent Retreat for the last time and then by stages to Kusinara in the country of the Mallas where he passed away.

	0	— KUSINARA ¹	
	o	— Pava	
Buddha addressed the monks on the four Great Authorities. Then leaving Bhoganagara he went to Pava and stayed in the mango grove of Cunda.	o	— Bhoganagara	
	o	— Jambugama	
	o	— Ambagama	
	o	— Hatthigama	
	o	— Bhandagama	
Buddha preached on the morality, concentration, insight and release.	0	— VAISALI	— Buddha declared that he would attain Nirvana in three months time from then. He looked back to the city for the last time and went to Bhandagama.
A village with the <i>Chapala</i> shrine. Buddha determined to keep Retreat at Vaisali and told the monks. After entering on Retreat he became dangerously ill but he repressed his sickness.	o	— Beluva	— Buddha stayed in the grove of Ambapali. He accepted Ambapali's invitation and refused the Licchavis of Vaisali.
	o	— Ambapali	— Buddha addressed the monks on four Truths. His next stay was with the Nadikas where he told the story recorded as <i>Janavasabha-sutta</i> .
	o	— Kotigama	
A village on the south bank of the Ganges. Buddha prophesied the future greatness of the place as the city Pataliputta.	o	— Pataligama	
	o	— Nalanda	— Buddha met Sariputta who uttered Lion roar (<i>sinhanada</i>) of faith in Buddha.
	o	— Ambalattika	— Buddha went to Ambalattika and then to Nalanda.
	0	— RAJAGAHA	— (On Gijjhakuta hill). Buddha discussed on the seven conditions of prosperity in connection with King Ajatasattu and Vajji tribes.

further to the east.—Edward J. Thomas. *The Life of Buddha*, p. 148 fn.

¹ This place was identified by Cunningham with Kasia in the

Buddha started from Rajagaha on Gijjhakuta hill and passed through Ambalatthika, Nalanda, Pataligama, Kotigama, Ambapali, Beluva and then to Vaisali. Up to Vaisali no body has anything to say, but after Vaisali there are many differing in opinions. As such the right place of Buddha's Mahaparinibbana is remaining still unknown.

Mr. Cunningham in his monumental book *Ancient Geography of India* gives the name of Kasia near Gorakhpur as the place of Buddha's Mahaparinibbana but his arguments on pages 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 712, 713 and 714 of his book in support of his claim are very poor on the following grounds: (1) The course of Buddha's journey from Rajagaha to Vaisali shows that Buddha was proceeding towards north-east and there was no reason or indication for changing the course towards north-west. Further at the time of his elephant look (last look) to Vaisali he was turning by his right,¹ which also shows that he was taking his course evidently towards north-east. Mr. Cunningham has given no reference of the Malla country or name of any places touching the route towards north-west, as he thought. It is impossible to believe that during his long course of three months' journey Buddha did not come in contact with any people of any of these localities with towns and cities or crossed any river when there were many of them. Mr. Cunningham possibly mixing it with the positions of the Buddhist shrines and thought that where there were Buddhist shrines Buddha would go and *vice versa*. In fact that was not the case. (2) According to *Mahaparinibbana-sutta* Buddha took his last meal at Cunda's house at Pava, where he fell seriously ill and went to Kusinara with Ananda. There is no mention of changing his course. But Mr. Cunningham states that north-north-east of Kasia there is a village named Padaraona or Padaravana, which changes to Parban and Paban then

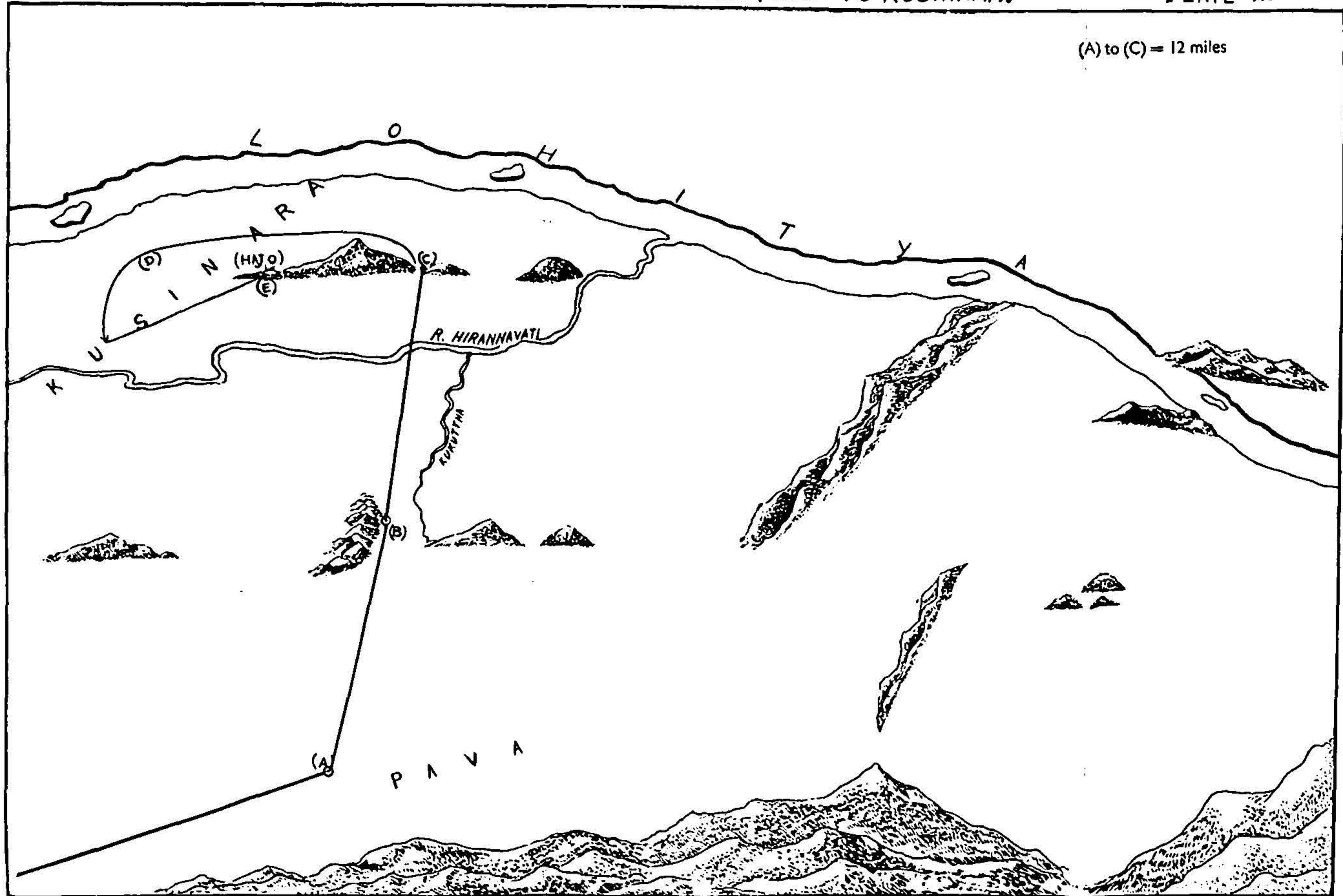
Gorakhpur District. V. A. Smith thought it was in a still undiscovered place in Nepal, some 30 miles east of Kathmandu.—*JRAS.* 1902, p. 139.—Edward J. Thomas, *The Life of Buddha*, p. 151 fn.

¹ Edward J. Thomas, *Early Buddhist Scriptures*, p. 42.

THE SITE SHOWING BUDDHA'S LAST DAYS' JOURNEY FROM PAVA TO KUSINARA.

PLATE III

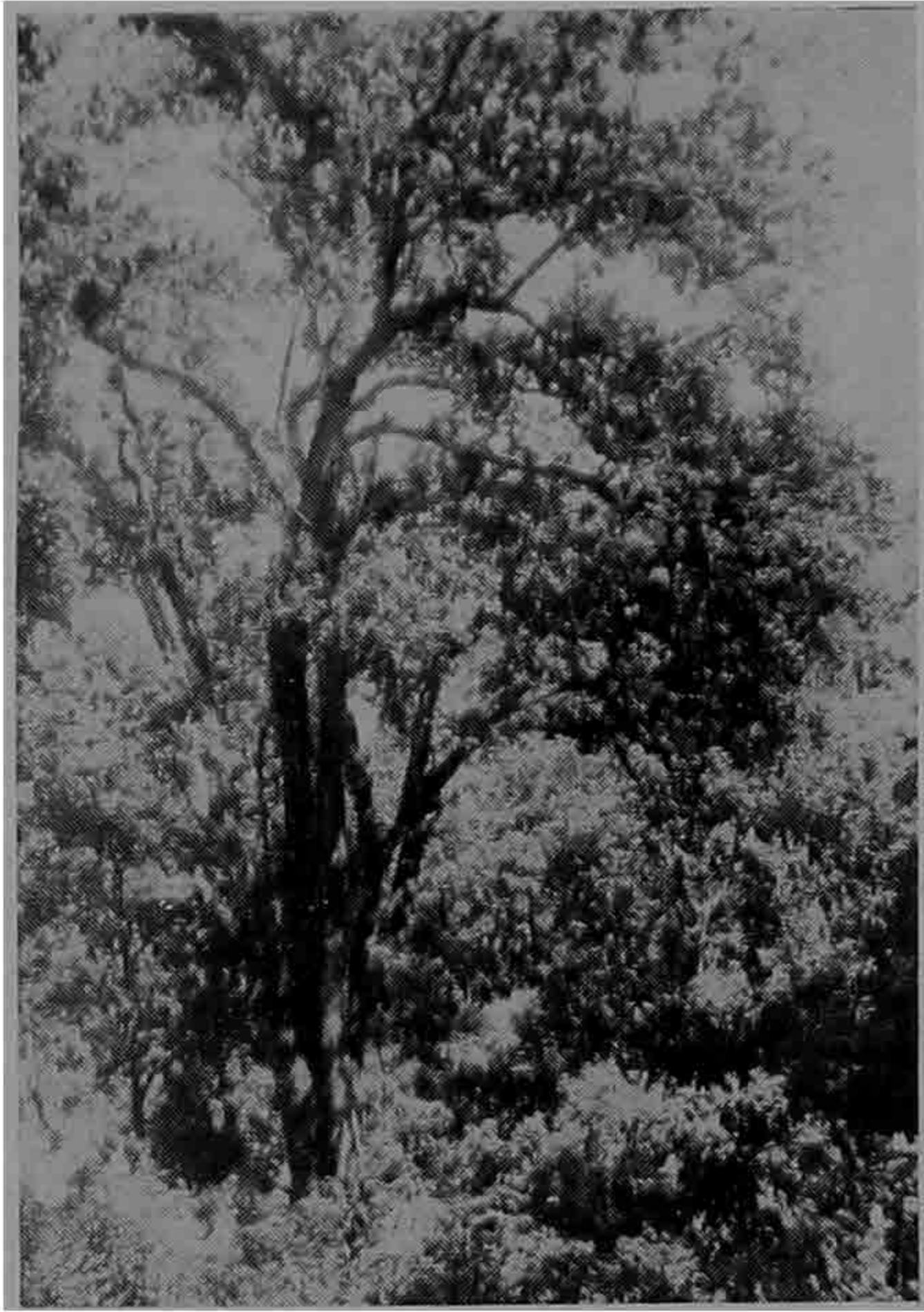
(A) to (C) = 12 miles



- (A) THE PLACE WHERE BUDDHA TOOK REST AT PAVA AND TOOK HIS LAST MEAL PROVIDED BY CUNDA, THE SMITH.
- (B) THE PLACE WHERE BUDDHA TOOK REST ON HIS WAY TO KUSINARA AND DRANK WATER FROM THE TURBID STREAM KAKUTTHA.
- (C) THE PLACE WHERE BUDDHA ATTAINED NIRVANA UNDER THE JAMAK SAL TREES. THIS WAS THE UPAVATTAN (I.E. ROAD TOWARDS EAST BY THE SOUTH THEN TURNING BY THE

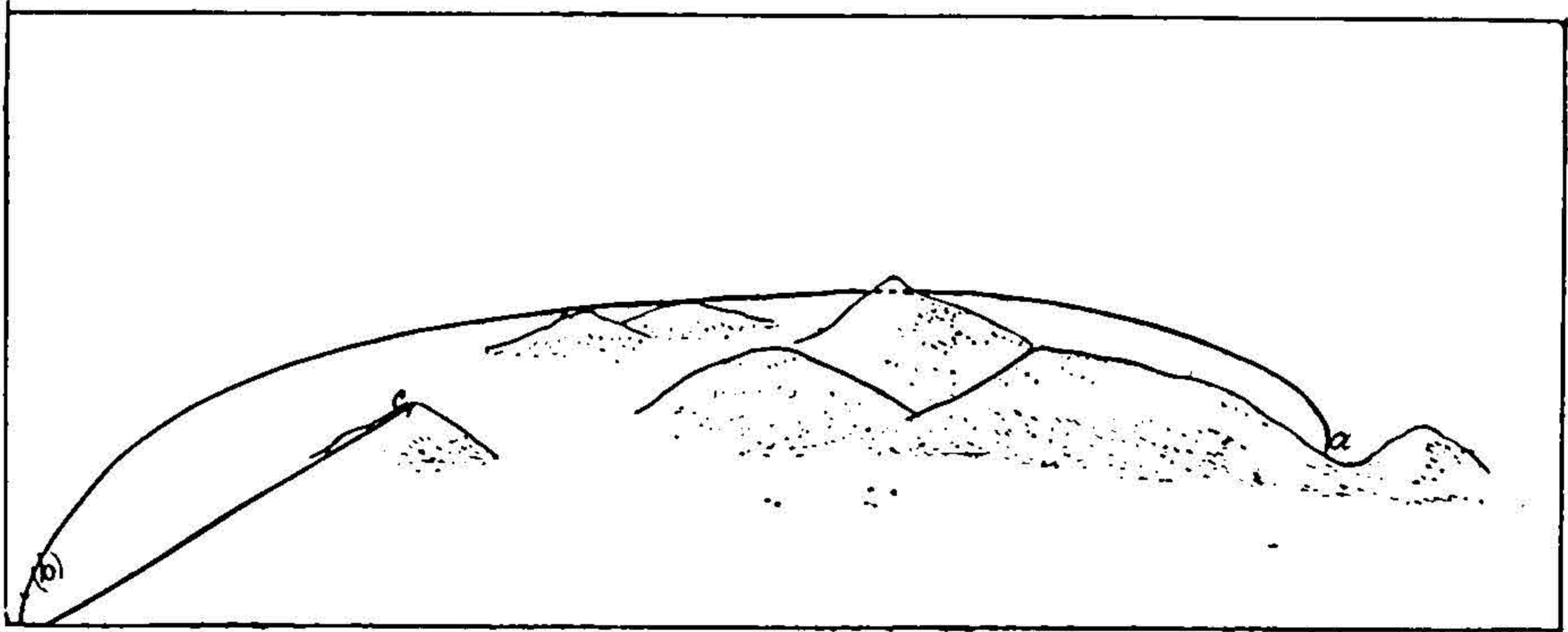
- (D) THE ROUTE SHOWING HOW THE DEAD BODY OF BUDDHA WAS CARRIED TO THE BURNING PLACE MUKUTA-BANDHAN.
- (E) THE MUKUTA-BANDHAN WHERE THE DEAD BODY OF BUDDHA WAS BURNT AND THE RELICS WERE KEPT. THIS WAS THE CORONATION GROUND OF THE MALLAS, MAHAPARINIBBANA-SUTTA, DISCOURSE NO. 31.

PLATE IV



**ONE OF THE SAL TREES UNDER WHICH
BUDDHA ATTAINED NIRVANA**

PLATE V



THE ROUTE (a-b-c) SHOWING HOW THE DEAD BODY OF BUDDHA
WAS CARRIED INTO THE CITY BY THE NORTH GATE AND OUT BY
THE EAST GATE TO THE MUKUTA-BANDHAN

Pawa¹. This is a round about route to Kusinara and towards south-west, which in fact Buddha never took. The derivatives of the words also from Padaraona to Pawa and Kasia to Kusinara and *vice versa* are doubtful. Mr. Cunningham states that between Pawa and Kusinagara there was a stream called Kukultha where Buddha bathed and drank², in fact, there were two, *viz.*, Kukultha and Hirannavati which was the last river Buddha crossed in his life. The position of the river Hirana, which Mr. Cunningham wants to represent for Hirannavati also does not agree with the above fact. Mr. Cunningham's Badhi or Barhi or Bandhi Nala cannot be deduced to Kukultha or *vice versa*. (3) According to *Mahaparinibbana-sutta* Buddha died under a sal grove, then his body was taken into the city by the north gate and brought out from it by the east gate to the burning place. This has an association of three things, *viz.*, the position of the city and the city gates, the position of the places where Buddha died, and where he was burnt and his relics were kept. All these do not tally with what Mr. Cunningham wants to represent for Kusinara and the stupas³. He identifies Buddha's place of Nirvana with the stupa *Matha-kuar-ka-kot*, north-west of Anrudhwa, *i.e.*, south-west of Kasia, which ought to have been on the north-east of Kasia ; and the place where the body was burnt with stupa *Devasthan* to the north-east of Anrudhwa, *i.e.*, south of Kasia, which ought to have been on the east. The position of the river Hirannavati also ought to have been by the south and not between them. There may be also some reason for the same river being named Chota Gandak, while there is another Chota Gandak, as his map shows, within an area of about fifty miles which rarely happen. Moreover the discourses in item No. 41 of Chapter V of *Mahaparinibbana-sutta* shows that Buddha did not take his journey in that direction.

Like the situations the names of these places also vary to a great extent. In Hindi the word *Matha-kuar-ka-kot* is equivalent to *Head-Prince-of-fort* and the word *Devasthan* means place of a Devi, which seems to be the legends of

¹ & ² Cunningham, *The Ancient Geography of India*, p. 498.

³ Cunningham, *The Ancient Geography of India*, pp. 493-96.

Illustration No. 1

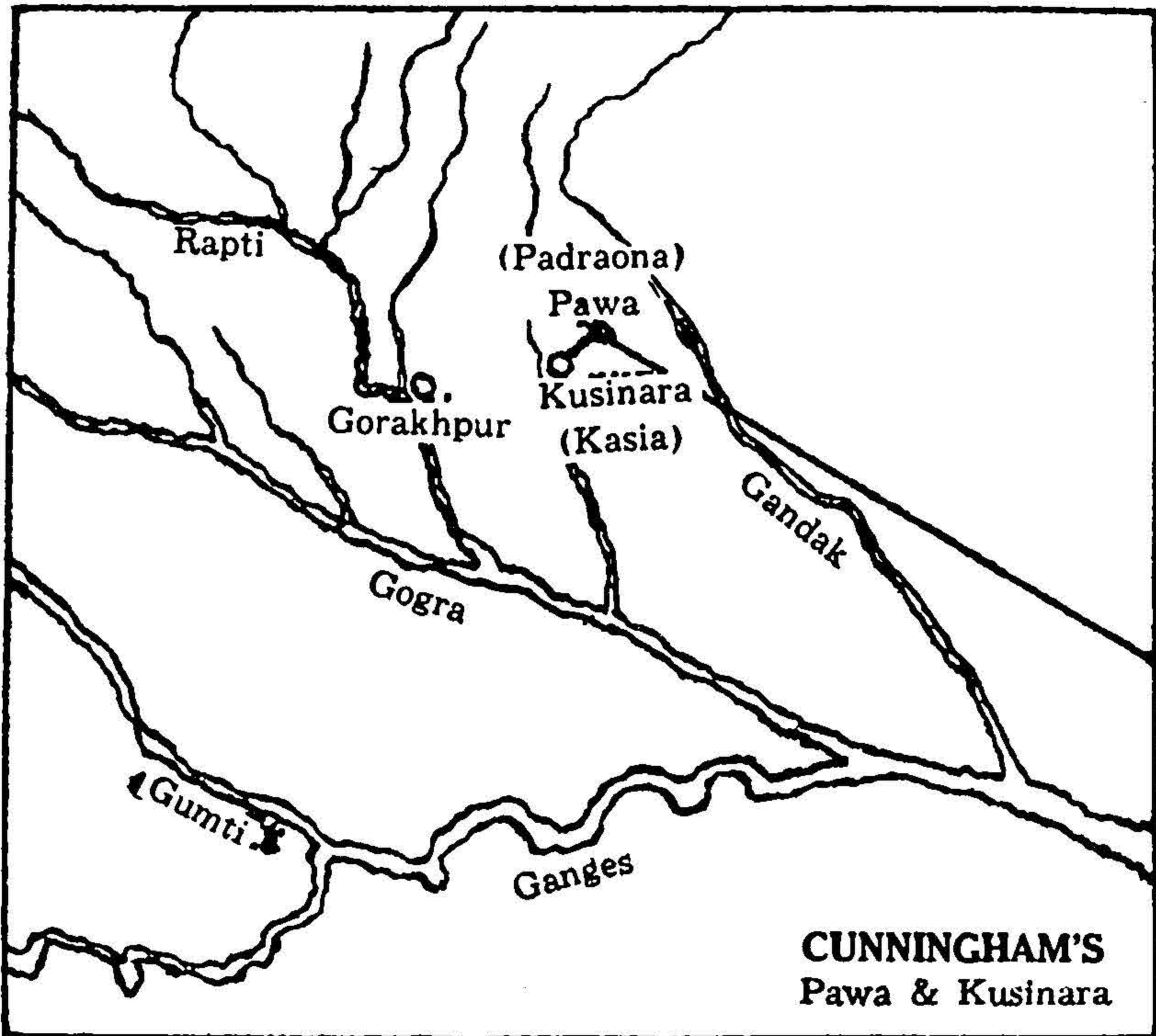
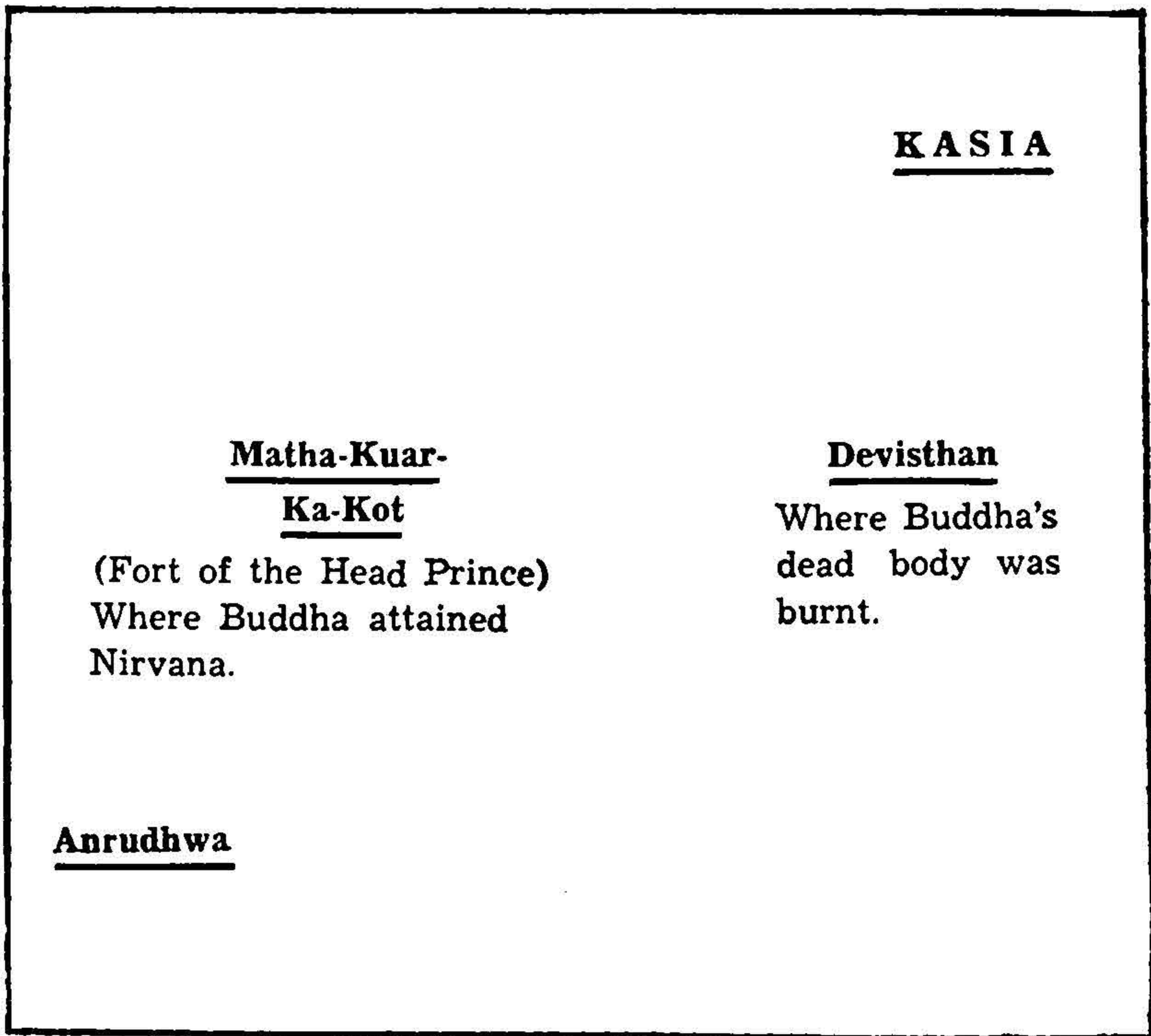


Illustration No. 2



different periods. Particularly the word *Devi* is a Hindu name. Mr. Cunningham while says nothing for the word *Devasthan*, he is giving too much emphasis upon the word *Matha Kuar*. His renderings of the word *Matha Kuar* is *Dead Prince*, and that is also done with too much strain. He is drawing another inference from a statement of Hwen Thsang who saw a brick vihara in which there was a statue of Buddha on his death-bed, with his head towards the north. Mr. Cunningham relied upon this statement. So without any scrutiny he is trying his best to give form to his inference drawn from the statement of Hwen Thsang, which was the only criterion of his assumption and through the medium of his strange deductions of the word *Matha* in a round about way is trying to establish his claim at the sacrifice of other historical datas and traditions. Buddha probably was never and nowhere called a *Dead Prince* or a *Prince*. At the time of his death he was eighty years of age. There may be also a symbolical shrine with an image of Buddha on his death-bed with his head towards north, anywhere in Burma, Ceylon, China or Japan.

This place was twice excavated.¹ At the first time² ruins of monasteries, ancient coins, 464 clay seals with the legend *Sri-Mahaparinirvana-Vihare Bhikshusamghasya* and a seal-die *Sri-Vishnudvipa-Vihare Bhikshusamghasya* were found. And at the second time³ a number of clay seals with "Buddha's Coffin"⁴ and the legend *Sri-Mahaparinirvana-Vihara* in "Gupta Characters" and a copper plate inscribed in ink ending with *Nirvana-Chaitye tamrapatta iti* were found. Dr. Vogel identifies this place with Vishnudvipa or Vethadipa which received a portion of the relics of Buddha, where a Nirvana-chaitya was made. In fact this is Vishnudvipa which received a portion of Buddha's relics and where a Nirvana-

¹ Cunningham, *The Ancient Geography of India*, p. 714.

² *An. R. A. S. I.*, '04-5, pp. 43-58; '05-6, pp. 61-85; '06-7, pp. 44-85.

³ *An R. A. S. I. for 1910-11*, p. 63ff; p. 73, 1911-12, Part I. pp. 17-18.

⁴ This should not be confused for the coffin of Buddha. The dead body of Buddha was burnt.

chaitya with a recumbent statue of Buddha on his death-bed, with his head towards north as seen by Hwen Thsang was made, and not Kusinagara or Kusinara where Buddha really died.

Moreover the chronicle *Mahaparinibbana-sutta* seems to be written at a much later date,¹ but earlier than the time of Asoka. The chronicler also seems to know the right route but he intentionally avoided the incidents of Buddha's journey from Vaisali to Pava for inaccessibility of the eastern region. The stupa in question seems to be made at the time of the Guptas. It is natural that Asoka will also follow his predecessors. What Asoka did was subsequently followed by Hwen Thsang, Cunningham and others, which ultimately changes the course of events to another direction creating a historical confusion.

Buddha after his last look to Vaisali went to Bhandagama² and there he preached on morality, concentration, insight and release. After leaving Bhandagama he went to Anupiya³ in the Malla country and then to Bhoganagara⁴ where he addressed the monks on the four Great Authorities. After leaving Bhoganagara Buddha went to Pava and stayed in the mango grove of Cunda. Buddha took a meal provided by Cunda with *sukaramaddava* and with violent pains in his stomach left Pava and set out for Kusinara with Ananda. On the way he took rest under a tree and quenched his thirst with water taken by Ananda from a turbid stream called Kakuttha.⁵ There he met Pukkusa, a Malla, who became his disciple and presented him with a pair of gold-coloured robes, and announced his hour of death.

On arriving at the river Hirannavati he took a bath and after crossing the river reached the grove of the sal trees at Kusinara. He told Ananda to arrange a bed with the head to the north. There he laid down in the lion attitude on his right side and gave instructions on several points including how he would be buried. Ananda persuaded him

¹ Edward J. Thomas, *The Life of Buddha*, pp. 156-57.

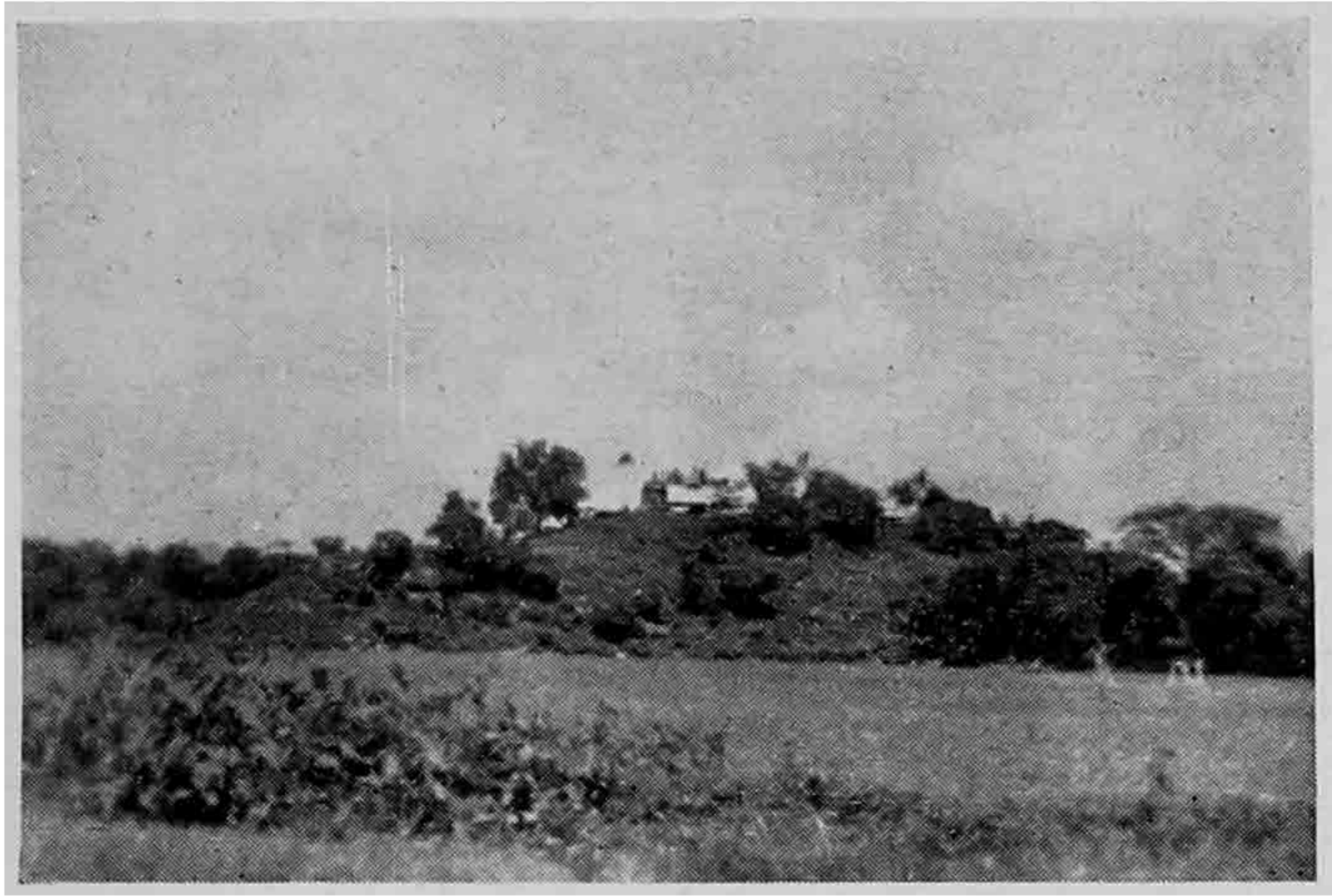
² Not mentioned by Mr. Cunningham.

³ Not mentioned by the chronicler.

⁴ Not mentioned by Mr. Cunningham.

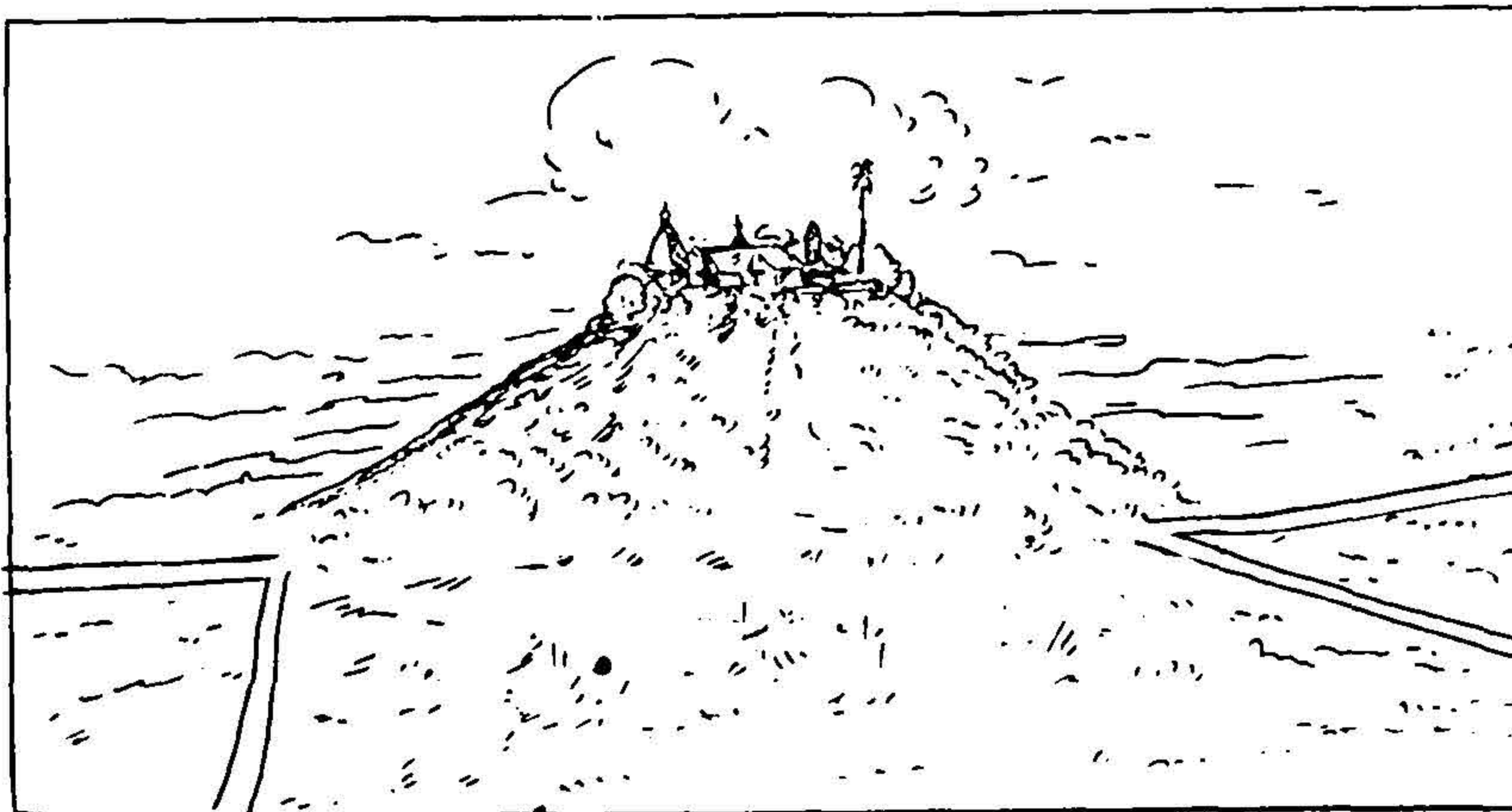
⁵ As in the Tibetan chronicle.

PLATE VI



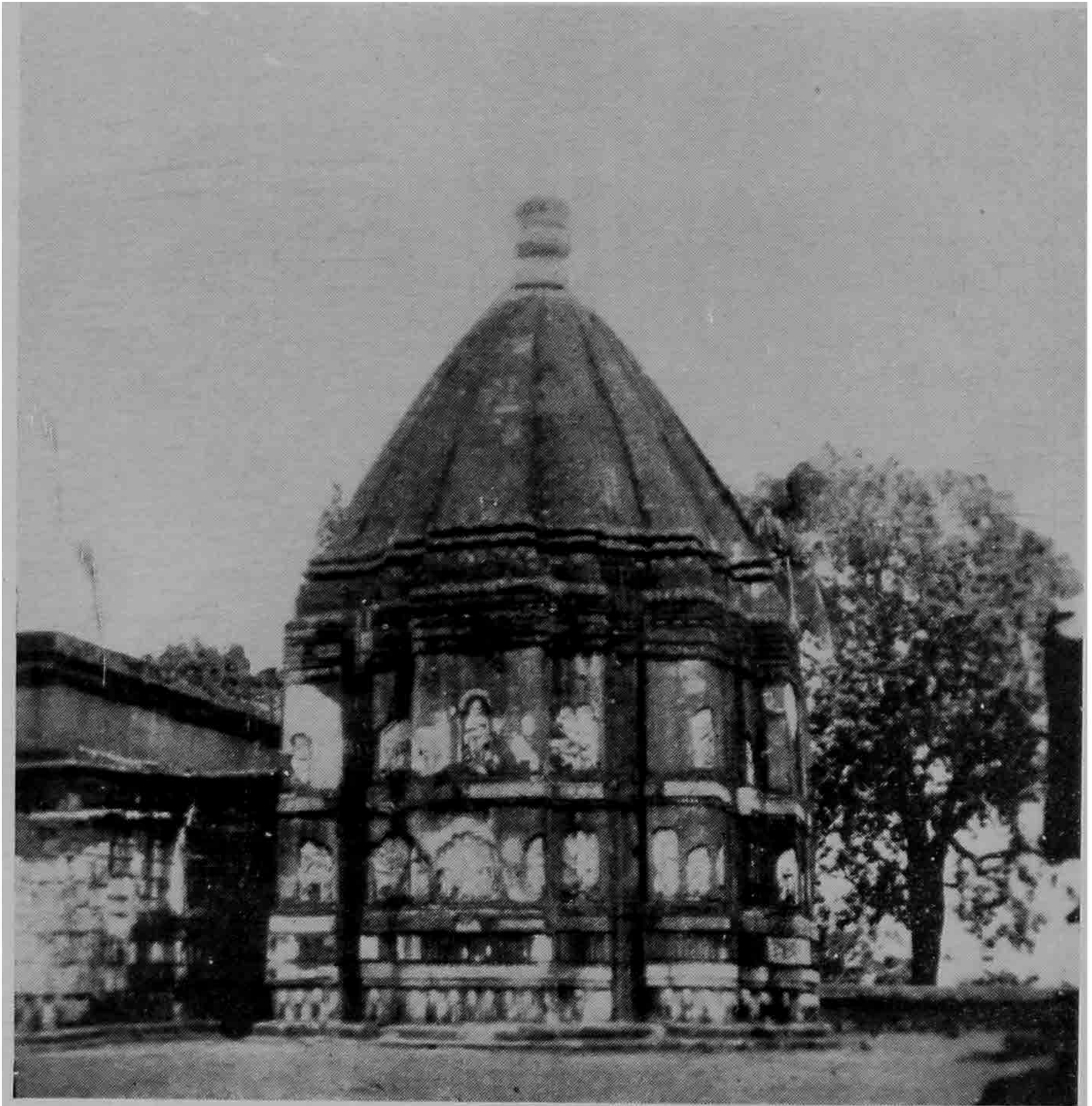
THE MUKUTA-BANDHAN WHERE BUDDHA'S FUNERAL
CEREMONIES WERE PERFORMED

PLATE VII



THE MUKUTA-BANDHAN SHOWING WITH THE
FOUR CROSS ROADS

PLATE VIII



THE MATHA IN WHICH THERE IS THE
IMAGE OF BUDDHA AND THE RELICS

not to pass away at Kusinara as it was a small place, but Buddha told him that it was once Kusavati, the capital of the great King Mahasudassana. It was prosperous like the city of gods. Buddha sent Ananda to announce to the Mallas of Kusinara that he would pass away on the third watch of that night and to invite them to see him for the last time. At the same time an ascetic of that place named Subhadda met Buddha and was admitted into the Order and became an arahat. Then Buddha addressed the monks for the last time and passing into all the trances attained Nirvana. It was the full-moon night of Vaisakha.

The body was taken to the middle of the city by the north gate, and out by the east gate to the *Mukuta-bandhan* where the ceremonies were performed and the cairn was made, at the four cross roads, as Buddha said. From that time this place was known as *Haju* and now Hajo¹ which means a holy hilly place.

NOTES ON PAVA AND KUSINARA

From Vaisali Buddha went by stages to Bhandagama, Anupiya, Bhoganagara, Pava and at last to Kusinara. These places were in the Malla country. This Malla country was on the north-east of the country of the Vrijis and occupied a vast area lying between India, Burma and China. They had no king and like the Vrijis they were subdivided under some feudatory chiefs. So we find the growth of different cities like Bhoganagara, Pavanagara and Kusinagara, etc., in their country. Kusinagara was on the north. This great Malla race had a common unity and a common culture and civilisation of their own. After leaving Bhoganagara Buddha entered Pavanagara and stayed in the mango grove of Cunda. This Pavanagara was extended over a surface of a large tract of hills and plains, Bhoganagara being on the west and Kusinagara on the north and comprises the areas of present Pandu, Palasbari, Chaygaon and Bako, etc. The course² of the river Brahmaputra with

¹ Place-names of Bodo origin—hajo, a temple on a hill-top near Gauhati, (hajo, a hill),—Dr. B. K. Kakati, *Assamese Its Formation and Development*, p. 56. The Tibetans call the place *Tsam-cho-dum* and the Bhutanese *Tsam-churu*. In Tai and Ahom languages *Ha* means 'five', *ju* means 'establishment', i.e. a place of five establishments.

² There is a legend for the change of the course of the river Brahmaputra from its original position to its present position. It has been mixed with the name of a *Puspabhadra*. It is said that originally the river was by the north of Hajo. It will take its original course as soon as the curse upon

different name¹ was on the north of Kusinagara. The place where Buddha took rest at Pava is now known as Munipur. The name of Cunda has been interpolated with the name of *Cando*, the hero of *Padma-Purana*. The present remains which is known as *Candor Merghar* is the remains of the stupa of the share of relics obtained by the Mallas of Pava.² The place where Buddha took rest on his way to Kusinara and met Pukkusa is near present Sualkuchi. The turbid stream Kakutha from where Buddha drank water is still in its original position except the part that mixes with the river Brahmaputra and still known as *Kaithuthi*. The river Hirannavati slightly changes its course and now known as *Hajo-suta* and locally *Na-nadi*, i.e., new river, the old being lost in the earthquake. One of the sal trees³ under which Buddha attained Nirvana is still in existence and still a sacred place for the Hindus and the Buddhists. The *Jyaishti Purnima* is observed here every year both by the Hindus and the Muslims. And the place where the body of Buddha was burnt and the cairn was made at the four cross roads is now known as *Manikut*. I have shown all these in the site map in Plate III. Kusinara as Buddha said to Ananda was Kusabati, capital of Great King Mahasudassana, whose territory was not only limited in Assam but also extended to Nepal and Bhutan. This old name Kusabati still clings to a hillock near the sal grove where Buddha died. Kusinara as it was said to be 12 jojana in length, 7 jojana in breadth which is equivalent to about 6,804 sq. miles, and then it was about one-fourth of this area. The aboriginal residents were the Mallas. They were Kshatriyas. What was their former religion was not known but after the death of Buddha they took Buddhism as their own religion. In course of time they fell victim to two depredations which shattered their very existence. They were natural and man made. The first misfortune came to them along with the great earthquake changing the original structure of the surface of the land and the courses of the rivers and particularly of the river Lohitya to

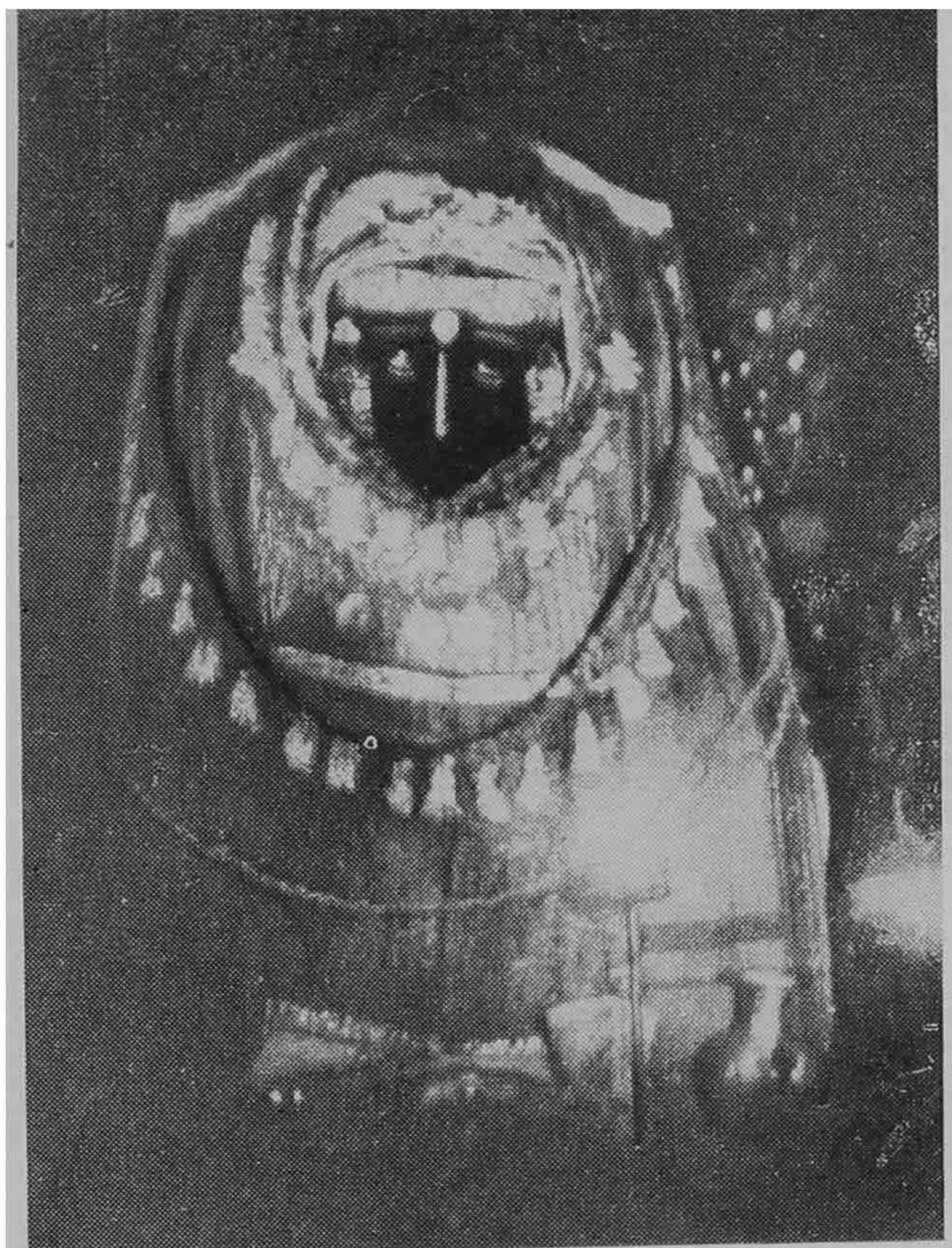
Puspabhadra will be released. The seven villages which are now lying on the vacated basin of the river are liable to vacate their places at once when the curse upon *Puspabhadra* will be released and we heard such strong rumours in our boyhood which made the people of these villages fear stricken. This rumour is very strong and still current in these localities. What the actual fact was there was a very strong earthquake, which not only changed the course of the river Brahmaputra but also did many wrongs to this part of the country.

¹Prior to the name Brahmaputra it was known as *Lohit-ya* (Luit) and before that as *T. Sao* (*T. lao*).

²I do not know whether there is any remains of stupa at Mr. Cunningham's Pawa.

³From this grove there are now growing many as the sal trees increase very rapidly.

PLATE IX



THE IMAGE OF BUDDHA TRANSFORMED INTO
HAYAGRIVA

PLATE X



A BROKEN HEAD OF AN IMAGE

(Restored from the middle of the tank during its renovation in 1955 and kept in the present position.)

PLATE XI



KASSAPA THE GREAT, WHO ATTENDED BUDDHA'S FUNERAL CEREMONY WITH FIVE HUNDRED MONKS

the present position. Many places were going down into the earth and many places were coming up from the earth. So we come to hear many tales and stories about these places like the story of lake Dipar, Chanduvi, etc. Before getting time to repair their sorrows and sufferings they fell victim to their second misfortune, the onslaught of the non-Buddhists upon their sect. They were put to all kinds of severities and subjections, and as such they have been compelled to leave Buddhism for good and to forget its name. They interpolated the whole fact by giving different colour to it and thus they tried to transform the whole Malla race and their country to a different footing and identities. The immediate disappearance of the name Malla from the history and the growth of the legend of the change of the course of the river to its present position and the name with a Parasurama have a combining effect upon this change. Henceforward we do not hear the name of Mallas but of Kusa and this is the origin of the great Kocha race, who ruled us before two thousand years. The samples of their powerful achievements are still lying in fragments all over the State. As they had no kings nor any central power to resist such intrusions they easily fell victim to all kinds of oppressions. The natural calamities and man made devastations made them to suffer for many hundred years.

These two incidents, *i.e.*, Buddha's journey from Pava to Kusinara and the place where the body was burnt and the cairn was made have been interpolated with some legends, one for the first and many for the second. Cunda is made *Cando*, Kakuttha is made *Kakara* and with a big slab-stone where said to be was an Tibetan inscription, with an addition of a carving of a figure of four armed Visnu, is made the *Letai-dhubuni-ghat* and as such the form of the legend *Chand Sadagar* or *Beula Lakhindar* is given. Fortunately they found that the river Hirannavati was changing its own name, otherwise the legend would have probably taken a different form. This legend is known to all. But how can there be two legends of same historical background and status at such a short distance, one at Dhubri and the other at Hajo. So if one is right the other must be wrong. Peoples' support for Dhubri is strong. Therefore this legend of Hajo must be wrong.

As regards the second¹ in *Kalika-purana* it has been said that Visnu in the form of Hayagriva killed Jarasura and stayed at Manikut hill for the good of all. The same chronicle

¹ Dr. B. K. Kakati, *Purani Kamrupar Dharmar Dhara*, pp. 124-126.

again gives two different accounts of the same legend. Once it has been said that near Biswanath,¹ Jagatpati killed Hayagriva and went to Manikut. Again it has been said that Hayagriva was the eastern gate-keeper of Naraka's capital. Visnu killed him at the time of overrunning Naraka's kingdom. In *Mahabharat* and *Devi-bhagavat* it has been said that Visnu taking the form of Hayagriva killed the demons Madhu and Kaitava. In *Bhagavat-purana* it has been said that Visnu in the form of a fish killed Hayagriva and in earlier times stolen the Vedas. There it has been again said that some Hayasira was identified as the incarnation of Visnu. Keeping aside Naraka from the scene it is impossible to trace when Visnu came here or what Visnu was this.²

Again the chronicle *Joginitantra* presents quite a different account³ on the same legend. Here it has been tried to keep a resemblance with the image of Jagannath of Puri and it has been said that Indradyumna, the king of Orisa dreamt at night that a big tree would be floating along the seashore and he would have to cut it into seven pieces in the morning. Of these, two pieces were brought to Kamarupa of which the image of Hayagriva and Matshyakhya Madhaba were made. Of these chronicles the date⁴ of *Mahabharata* is not known, of *Kalika-purana* and of *Joginitantra* is said to be 10th-11th and 16th-17th century A.D. respectively and of others to quote, I think, not necessary. How can there be so many incidents of one single fact. Whom should we believe. In fact it is a Buddha image,⁵ head broken and mutilated, fitted

¹ Near modern Tezpur.

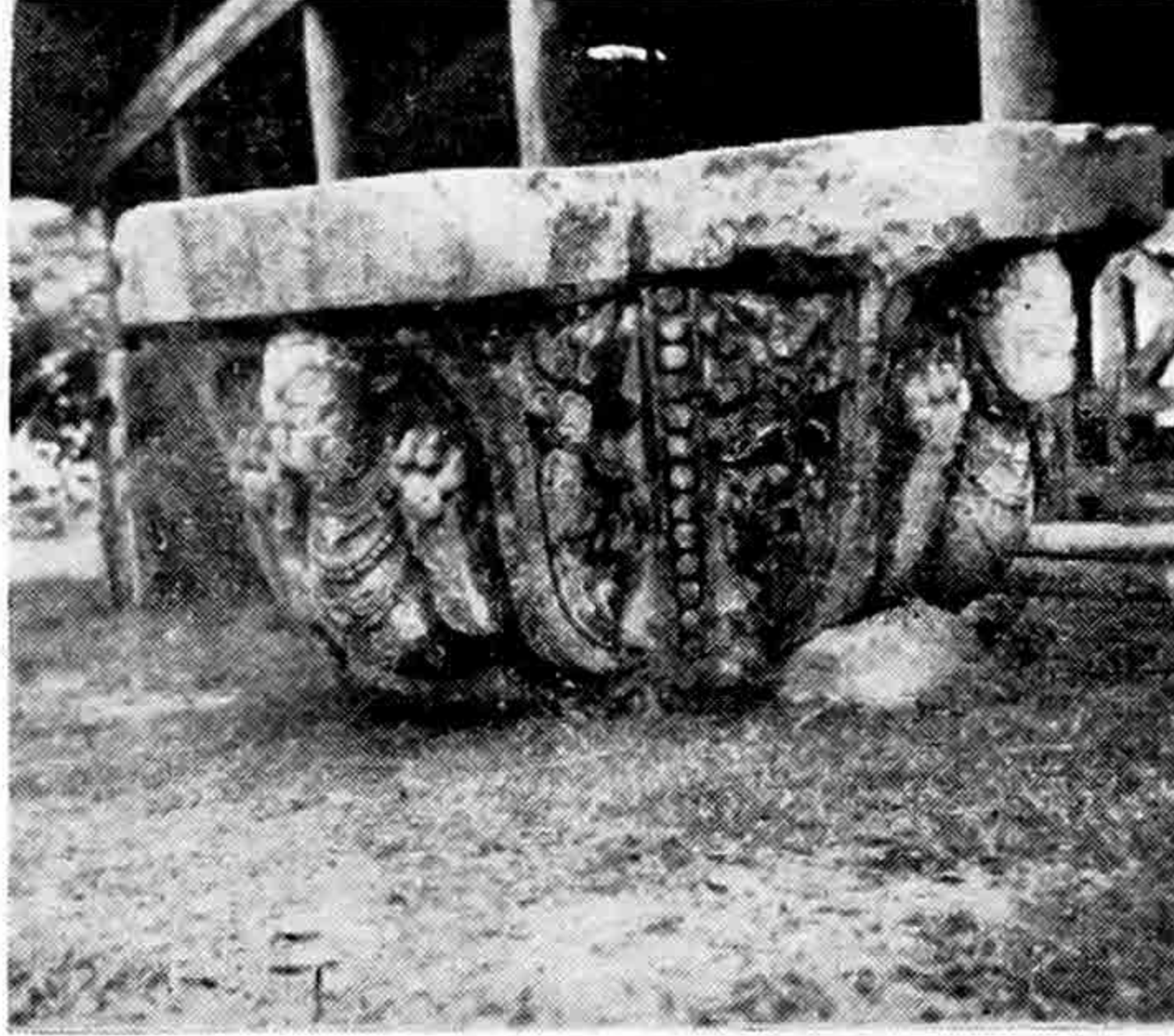
² Dr. B. K. Kakati, *Purani Kamrupar Dharmar Dhara*, p. 125.

³ Dr. B. K. Kakati, *Purani Kamrupar Dharmar Dhara*, p. 126.

⁴ John Dowson, *A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology and Religion, Geography, History and Literature*, pp. 189-90.

⁵ The Brahmins call the object of worship Madhab, the Buddhists call it Mahamuni the great sage. It is in fact simply a colossal image of Buddha in stone and perhaps, of all the idols now occupying the holiest places in temples, the only aboriginal one. Its modern votaries have to conceal mutilation given it a pair of silver goggle-eyes, and a hooked, gilt or silvered nose and the form is concealed from view by cloths and chaplets of flowers; but remove these and there is no doubt of the image having been intended for the "ruler of all, the propitious, the asylum of clemency, the all wise, the lotus-eyed, comprehensive Buddha,"—Capt. E. T. Dalton, *Notes on Assam Temple Ruins*, p. 19.

PLATE XII



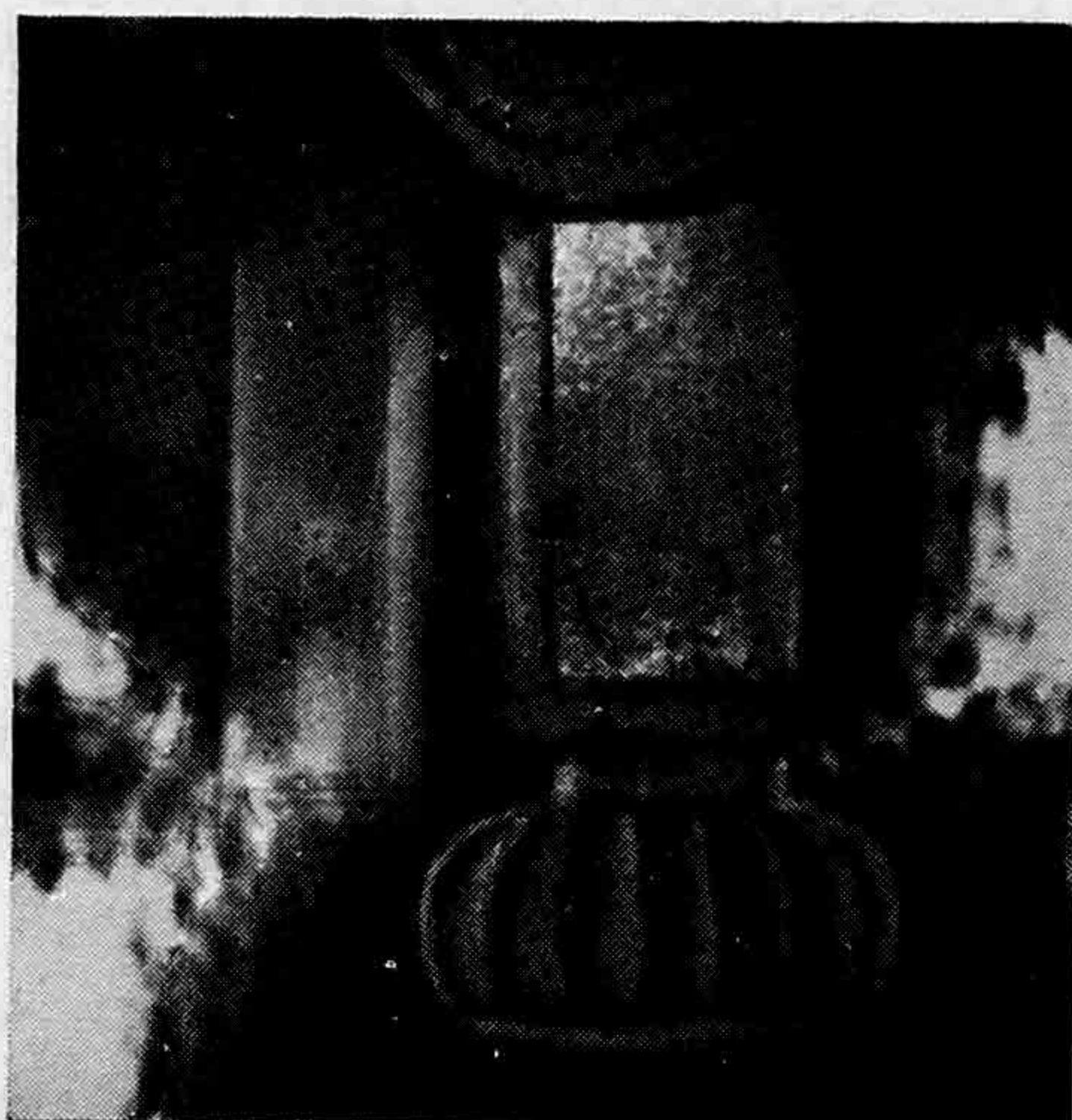
A PART OF THE ASOKA PILLAR

PLATE XIII



ONE OF THE LIONS OF THE ASOKA PILLAR

PLATE XIV



**OTHER PARTS OF THE ASOKA STAMBHA USED AS
SEPARATE PILLARS BY THE MODERN VOTARIES**

PLATE XV



AN IMAGE DEFACED AND MUTILATED

with an artificial horse-head said to be made of a compound of eight articles of which resin is the main, kept tight with a piece of polished wood, which can, on minute observation, be seen from a distance just behind the head of the image, and a white cloak over the body. There is no means to peep into it. Sometimes the artificial part of the image gets damaged and is repaired very secretly working at night. There is a hard secrecy from long past which is enveloping the whole gap, and no body at any time questions why a big white cloth is wrapped over the body of the god. This is a clean forgery of facts. What religion is that where there is a secrecy, harbours such a forgery and make people bow down to the altar which is not true. Is religion a magic ?

Like others I also at first thought how it could be possible against an established fact of two thousand years. But as soon as I dive deep to the ocean of dearth, gradually I come to know the fact. The reason for not detecting the place earlier may be summarised as follows :

1. Either a portion of the chronicle for Buddha's journey¹ from Vaisali to Pava has been lost or the chronicler intentionally avoided to mention the same for the reasons best known to him.
2. Great earthquake changing the courses of the rivers and particularly of the river Lohitya or Brahmaputra, and the surface of the land. Depredations caused upon the Malla race and upon their religion.
3. Mutilation of the image and interpolation and misrepresentation of the facts.
4. Hwen Thsang's belief of the place under the circumstances mentioned in para 1 in page 7 above and Mr. Cunningham's too much reliance upon the Chinese traveller.

¹ As for the distance I avoid discussion as the same will naturally differ, from what Mr. Cunningham states in his book. *The Ancient Geography of India* in pages 712 and 713

5. Natural seclusion of the place and want of good communication.
6. General neglect and hatred of the Indians to Assam affairs.
7. Want of initiative and research.

In every year the Buddhists from Bhutan, Tibet and the adjoining territories of China come here¹ by thousands, worship the god, and go away. They call the god *Mahamuni*, *i.e.*, the great sage. The process by which the god is shown to these pilgrims is very interesting and mysterious. The whole method adopted is only to cheat these distant strangers.

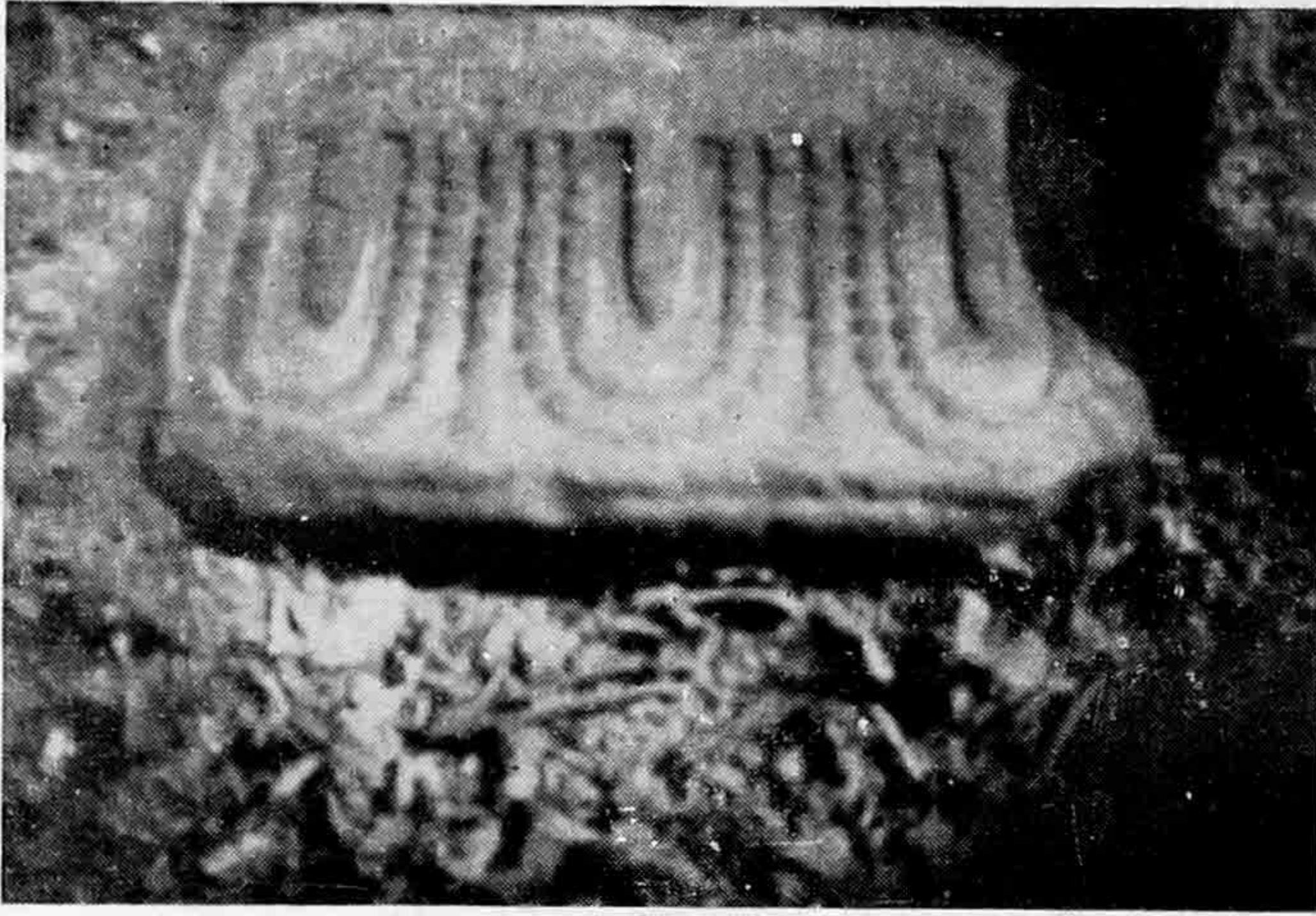
¹ (a) In regard to the site of Buddha's death the Lamas have placed it in Assam.

In conversation some years ago with Lamas and lay Buddhists at Darjeeling I was surprised to hear that Assam contained a most holy place of Buddhists pilgrimage called *Tsam-cho-dum* which it was alleged, next to the great temple at Buddha-Gaya was the most holy spot a Buddhist could visit,—Dr. Waddel, *Lamaisam*, as quoted in the *J.O.R.A.S. Vol. II, p. 39.*

(b) The situation of these temples with reference to the town of Kusha, their site on the further bank of the Hirango, and one of them being to the present day consecrated to the worship of Maha Muni, together with the high degree of reverence paid to the place, by Buddhists, would lead us to infer, with as much certainty as any sort of positive testimony, that one of them was the Choityo adorned with the head ornament near which was the grove of Sal trees (there are plenty of them) where Sakya Muni went to his last sleeping bed, and near which also the rites of cremation were performed.—From Mr. Robinson's MS.—Capt. E. T. Dalton, *Notes on Assam Temple Ruins, p. 20 fn.*

(c) Many of the old Hindu temples have been built on and with the remains of what once were Buddhist shrines. At Hajo, once an important centre of Moghul rule, and opposite Gauhati, six or seven miles from the river, on a wooded hill 300 feet high, stands a remarkable and celebrated temple containing a large image of Buddha six feet high and cut from a solid block of black stone. The figure is in what is known as the "contemplative attitude", and is annually visited still by thousands of both Hindus and Buddhists from all parts of India. This temple is endowed with lands, dancing girls, and benefited priests; as are also the celebrated Kamakhya temples, which are said to have taken the place of ancient Buddhist shrines. Tibetans and Bhootanese believe that Buddha died in Kamarupa, while the learned Hungarian traveller, Csomo

PLATE XVI



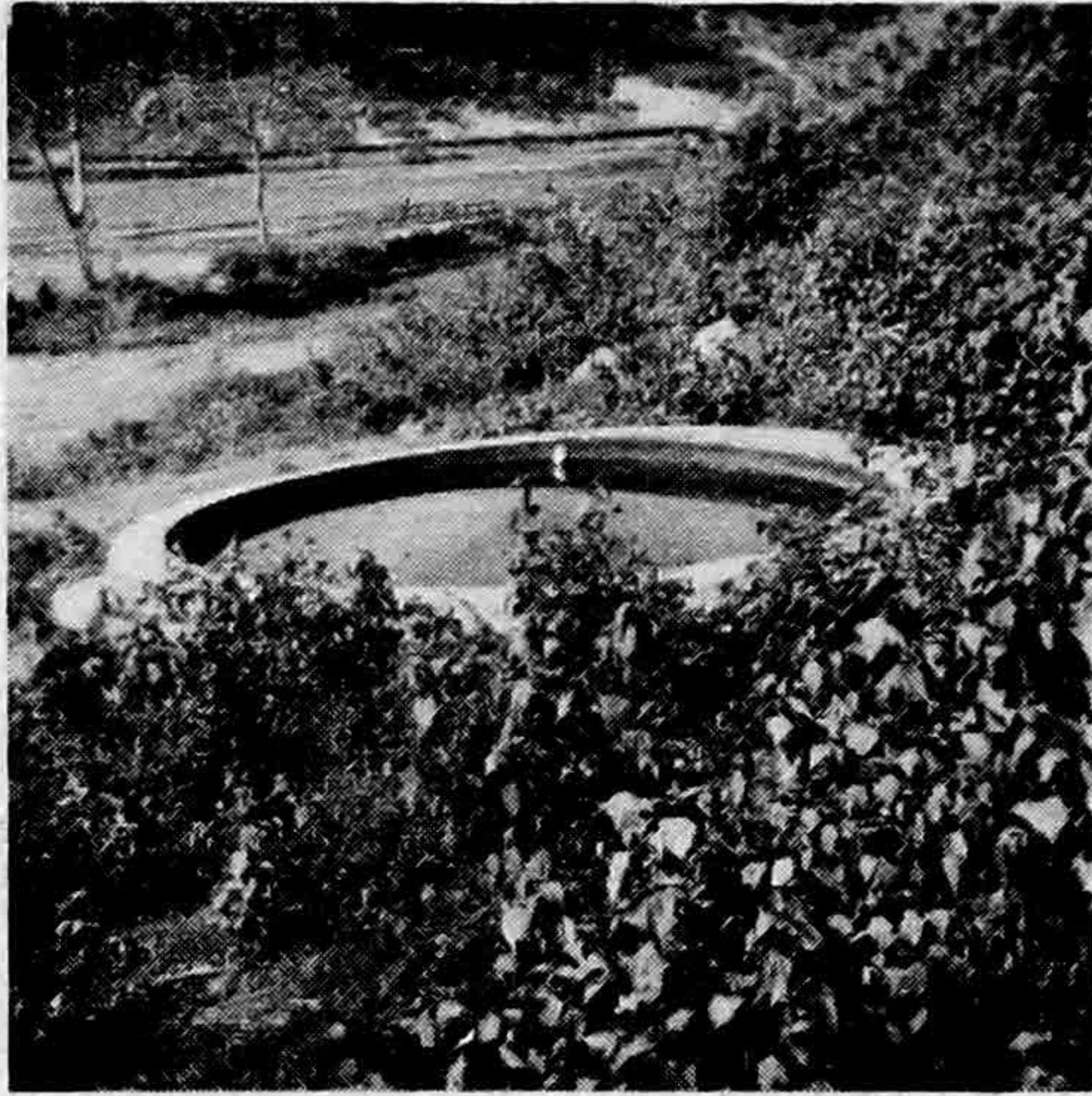
(a)



(b)

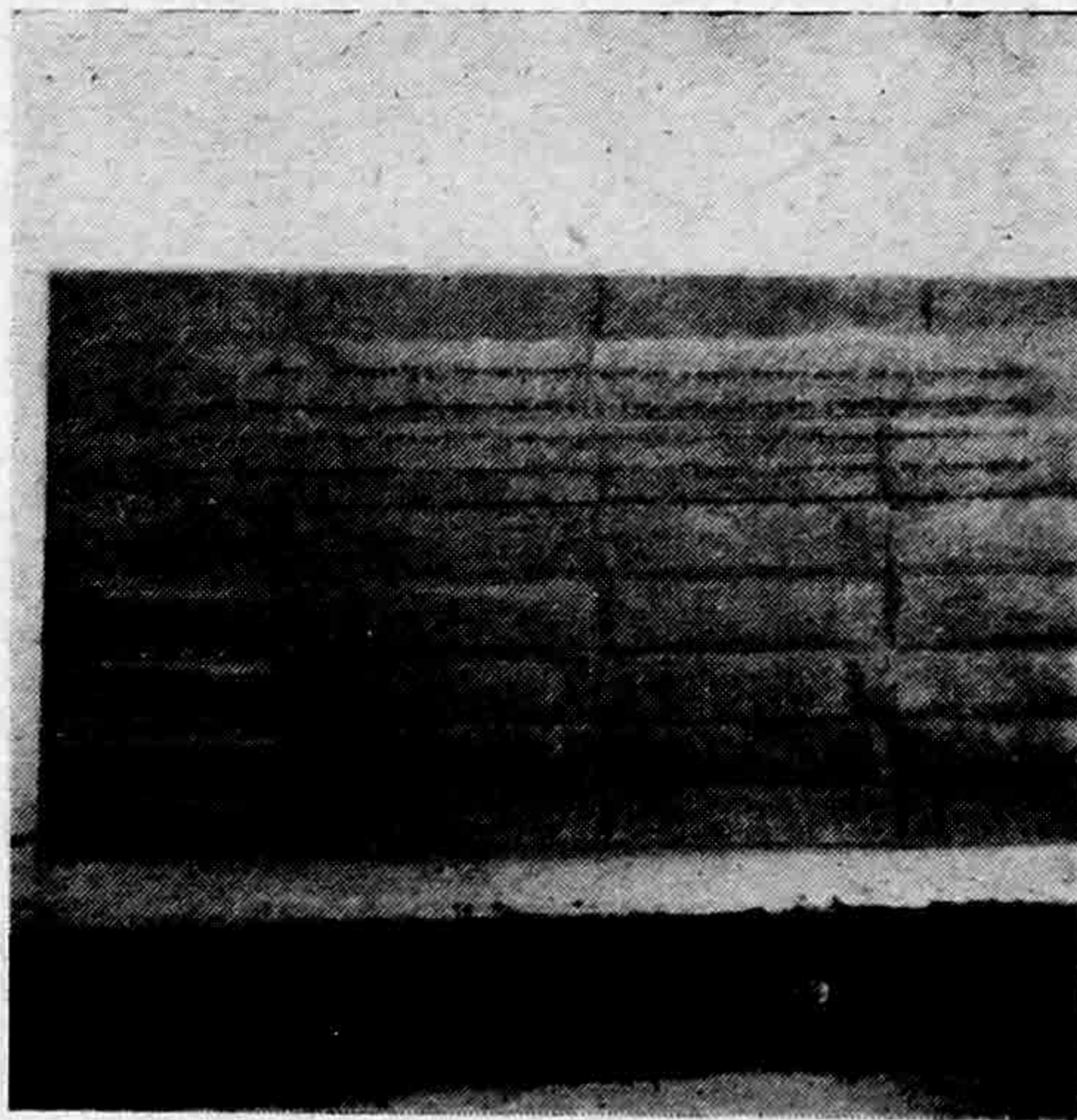
TWO STONE CARVINGS FOUND ON THE FLIGHT
OF STONE STEPS BY THE WEST WHICH WERE
ORIGINAL AND ANCIENT

PLATE XVII



A STONE CUT IN THE SHAPE OF A BEGGING BOWL

PLATE XVIII



THE BHUTANESE RAJADIGI KAS

(The written authority of the Bhutanese)

At the time of leaving the place they keep their articles¹ of *puja, i.e.*, worship with their agent at Hajo who has been paid a remuneration for his services to them. Thus they come and thus they go in an unseen bondage to the place, from an unknown past, with an unequivocal love and friendship with us. Finding much difficulties to come to this place they now said to have copied this holy shrine at their four different places² for their convenience.

The historians say, Bhutias come to the place, but they do not come to see, why they come. Even the Mahabodhi Society who claims to be the leading organisation of its kind in India, managed by able men are not taking it to be their sacred duty to take up the cause nor peeping to the place at any time even after the noise being gaining ground from a few years back.

de Kōros claims that the Saint died in Gauhati "under a pair of Sal trees". The great Chinese traveller Huien Tsiang, had also the same idea; but he records in the early part of the seventh century that, though the people adored the Devas, there seemed to be little faith in the Saint himself, and that no places in which Buddhist priests could assemble appeared to exist. Such disciples as there are, he says, are certainly of a pure faith, but pray more or less secretly. Buddha lived in the sixth century B.C., and on his death, which some assert occurred at Kusinagra in upper Bengal, and others in Assam at Gauhati, the first Buddhist synod was held at Rajagriha in Bengal, the second being held a hundred years later, or about the early part of 400 B.C., in Wesali Lōng—the Buddhist name for Assam; which goes to prove that this religion must in those far off days have had a certain amount of hold on the country reaching as far as the Sadiya district, where Major Hannay states are to be found ruins of temples of undoubted Buddhist origin. The religion deteriorated in the succeeding centuries until it reached the condition in which Huien Tsiang found it—L. W. Shakespear, *History of Upper Assam, Upper Burma and North Eastern Frontier*, pp. 72-73.

¹ See plate XX.

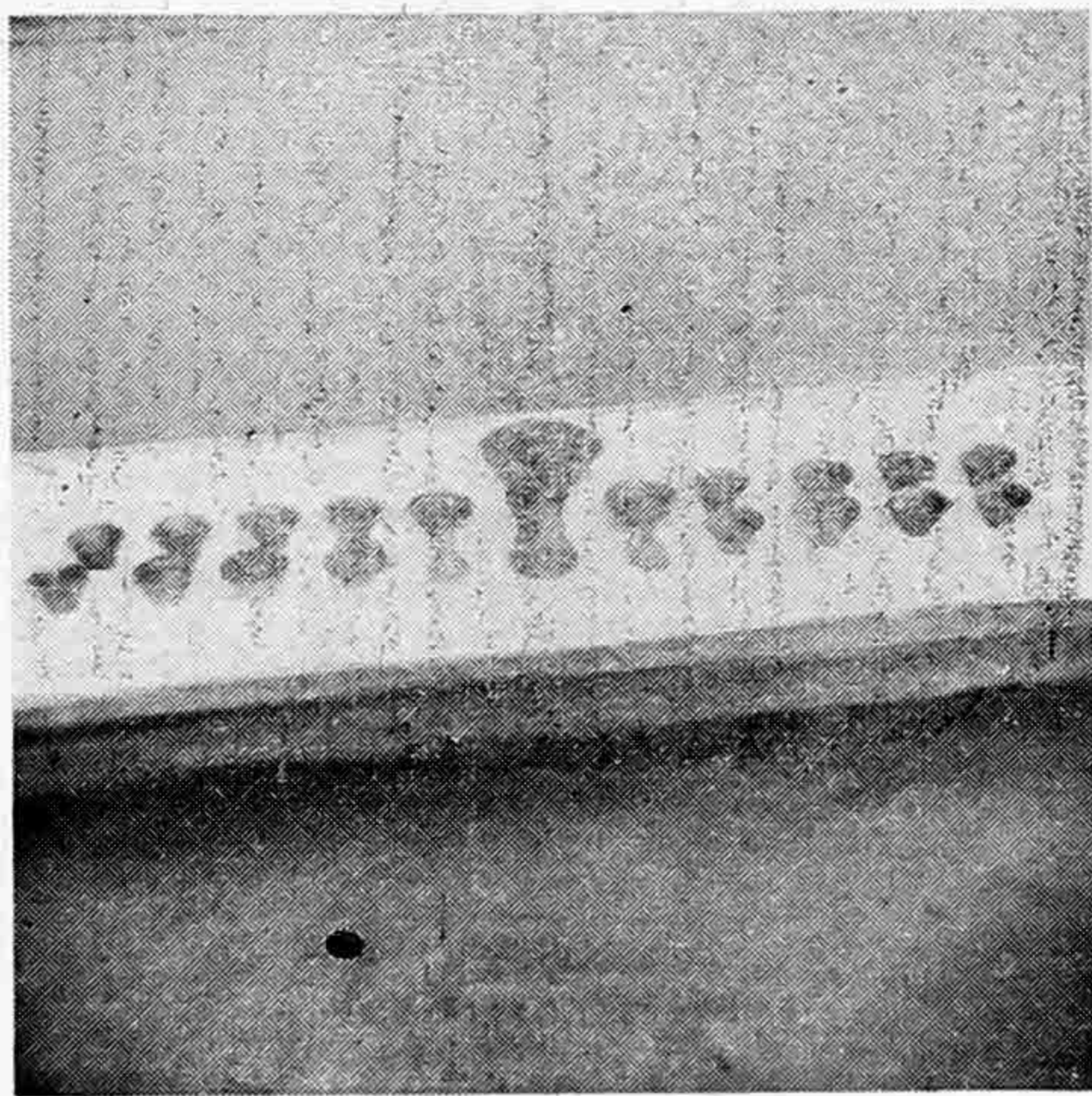
² *Ra-rgyab and Pa-ponkar* near Lasha, *Pur-ma c'cho* near Tashi Jhumpe and *Sal-brag*.—*J.O.R.A.S.*, Vol. II, pp. 40-41.

PLATE XIX

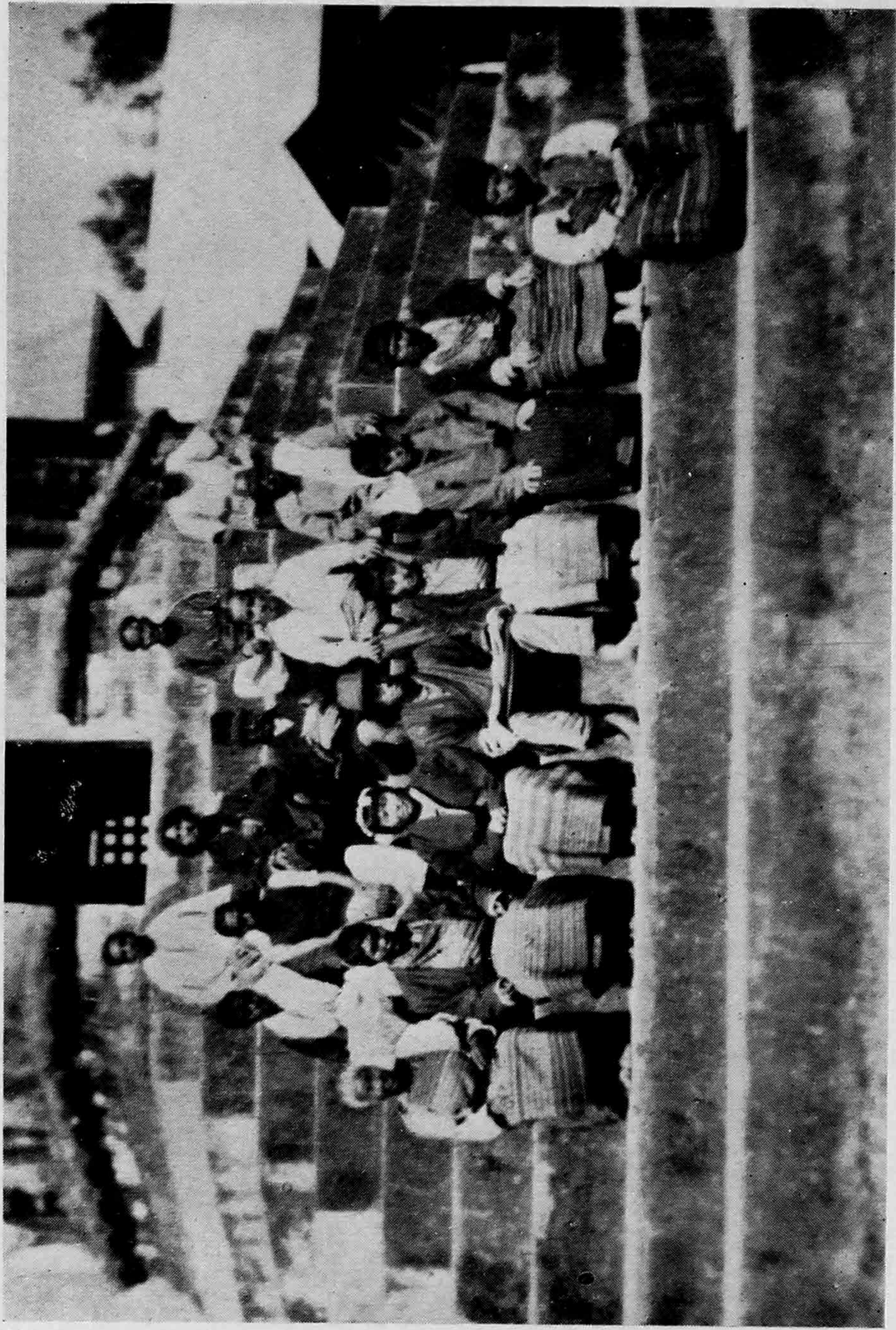


BHUTANESE JANGSU CHAITEN

PLATE XX



**SOME VASES (KARMI) WITH WHICH THE
BHUTANESE WORSHIP**



A GROUP PHOTO OF THE ASSAMESE AND BHUTANESE PILGRIMS TO THE PLACE

PLATE XXII

THE RUINS OF STUPA AT PAVA
(Showing the defect of time)



250/176

CHANDO TEMPLE BRAMHOI

From the painting of E. Tuite Dalton on his
Notes on Assam Temple Ruins—1855

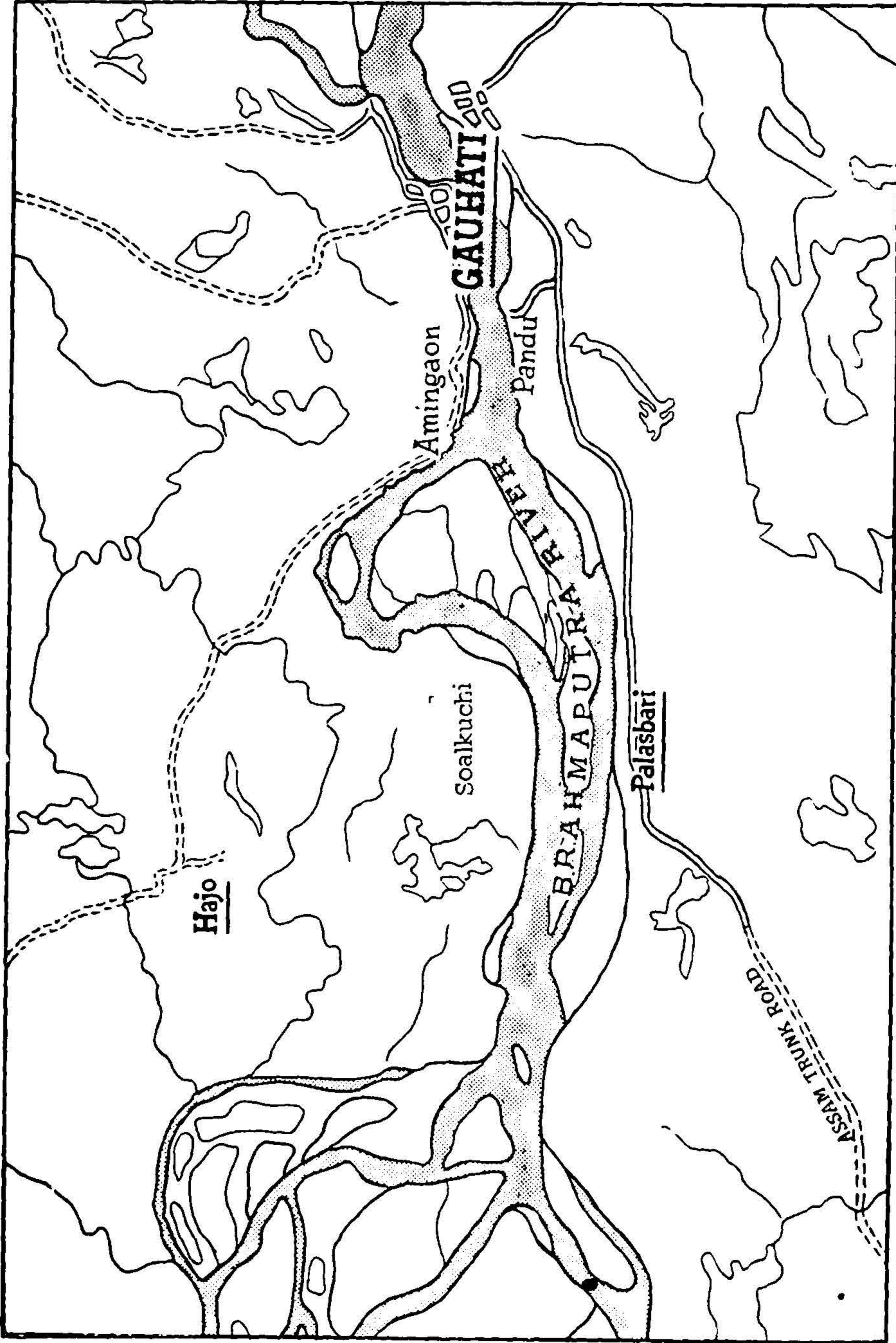
PLATE XXIII



From a photo by Shri B. K. Bhuyan in 1955
(Which the present Votaries hold for the round
chambers of Chando)

PLATE XXIV

Scale: 1 Inch = 4 miles



A MAP OF PRESENT GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF HAJO, THE MEETING PLACE OF BUDDHISM,
VAISNAVISM, SAIVISM, SAKTISM AND MAHAMMEDANISM

