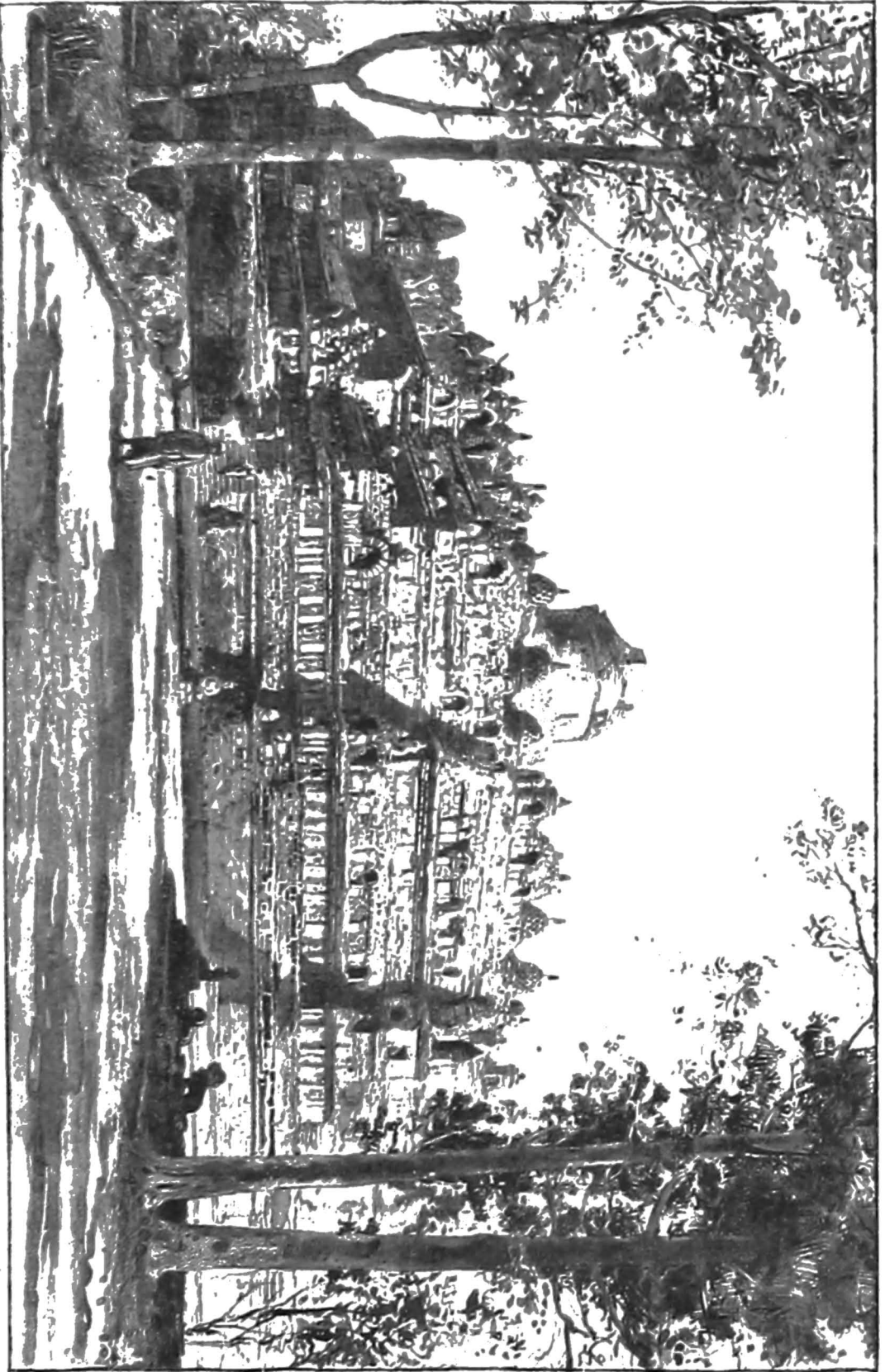


BORO BOEDOR



THE deep portico of the passagrahan commands an angle and two sides of the square temple, and from the mass of blackened and bleached stones the eye finally arranges and follows out the broken lines of the terraced pyramid, covered with such a wealth of ornament as no other one structure in the world presents. The first near view is almost disappointing. In the blur of details it is difficult to realize the vast proportions of this twelve-century-old structure—a pyramid the base platform of which is five hundred feet square, the first terrace walls three hundred feet square, and the final dome one hundred feet in height. Stripped of every kindly relief of vine and moss, every gap and ruined angle visible, there was something garish, raw, and almost disordered at the first glance, almost as jarring as newness, and the hard black-and-white effect of the dark lichens on the gray trachyte made it look like a bad photograph of the pile. The temple stands on a broad platform, and rises first in five square terraces, inclos-



BOIKO BOEDDI, FROM THE PASSAGRAHAN

ing galleries, or processional paths, between their walls, which are covered on each side with bas-relief sculptures. If placed in single line these bas-reliefs would extend for three miles. The terrace walls hold four hundred and thirty-six niches or alcove chapels, where life-size Buddhas sit serene upon lotus cushions. Staircases ascend in straight lines from each of the four sides, passing under stepped or pointed arches the keystones of which are elaborately carved masks, and rows of sockets in the jambs show where wood or metal doors once swung. Above the square terraces are three circular terraces, where seventy-two latticed *dagobas* (reliquaries in the shape of the calyx or bud of the lotus) inclose each a seated image, seventy-two more Buddhas sitting in these inner, upper circles of Nirvana, facing a great dagoba, or final cupola, the exact function or purpose of which as key to the whole structure is still the puzzle of archæologists. This final shrine is fifty feet in diameter, and either covered a relief of Buddha, or a central well where the ashes of priests and princes were deposited, or is a form surviving from the tree-temples of the earliest, primitive East when nature-worship prevailed. The English engineers made an opening in the solid exterior, and found an unfinished statue of Buddha on a platform over a deep well-hole; and its head, half buried in debris, still smiles upon one from the deep cavern. M. Freidrich, in "L'Extrême Orient" (1878), states that this top dagoba was opened in the time of the resident Hartman (1835), and that gold ornaments were found; and it was believed that there were several stories or chambers to this well, which reached to

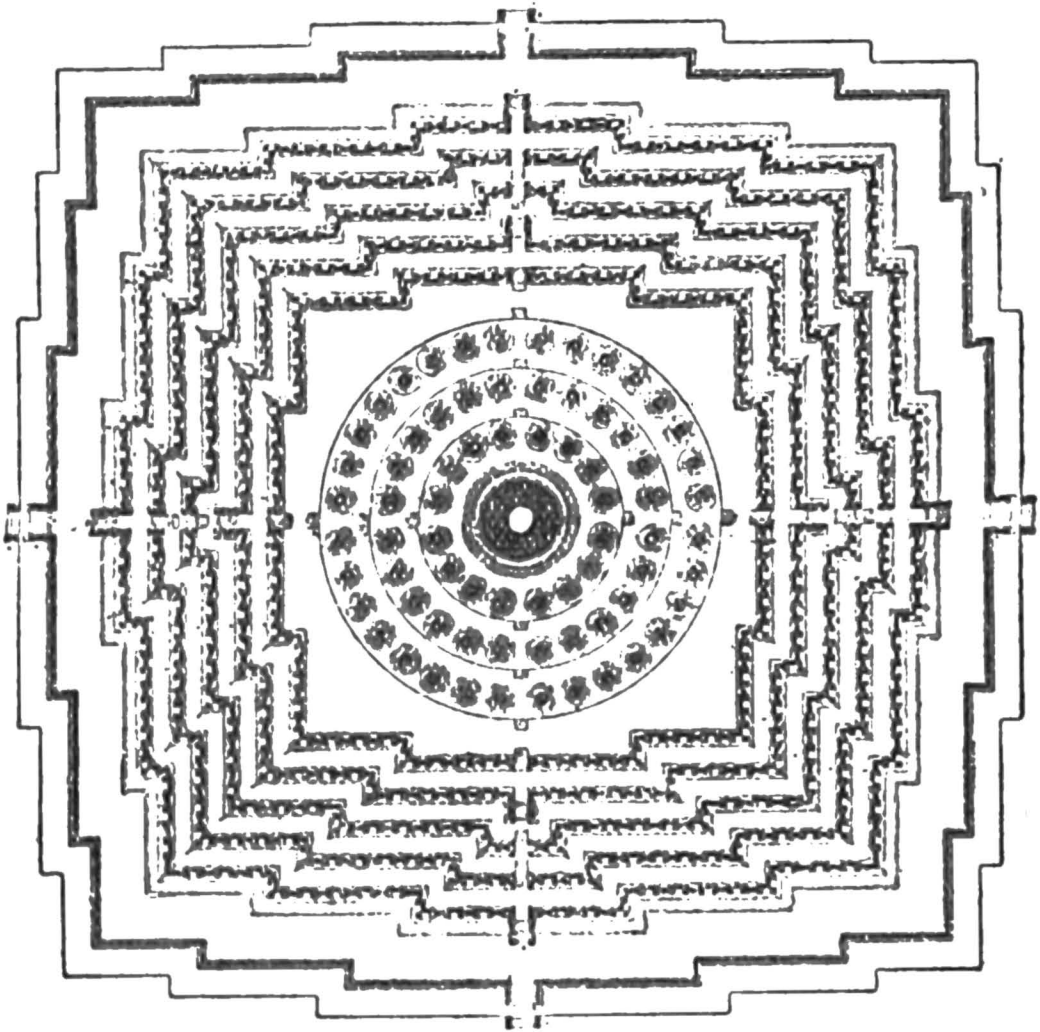
the lowest level of the structure. M. Désiré de Charnay, who spent an afternoon at Boro Boedor in 1878 in studying the resemblance of the pyramid temples of Java to those of Central America, believed this well-hole to be the place of concealment for the priest whose voice used to issue as a mysterious oracle from the statue itself.

A staircase has been constructed to the summit of this dagoba, and from it one looks down upon the whole structure as on a ground-plan drawing, and out over finely cultivated fields and thick palm-groves to the matchless peaks and the nearer hills that inclose this fertile valley of the Boro Boedor—"the very finest view I ever saw," wrote Marianne North.

Three fourths of the terrace chapels and the upper dagobas have crumbled; hundreds of statues are headless, armless, overturned, missing; tees, or finials, are gone from the bell-roofs; terrace walls bulge, lean outward, and have fallen in long stretches; and the circular platforms and the processional paths undulate as if earthquake-waves were at the moment rocking the mass. No cement was used to hold the fitted stones together, and another Hindu peculiarity of construction is the entire absence of a column, a pillar, or an arch. Vegetation wrought great ruin during its buried centuries, but earthquakes and tropical rains are working now a slow but surer ruin that will leave little of Boro Boedor for the next century's wonder-seekers, unless the walls are soon straightened and strongly braced.

All this ruined splendor and wrecked magnificence soon has an overpowering effect on one. He almost hesitates to attempt studying out all the details, the

intricate symbolism and decoration lavished by those Hindus, who, like the Moguls, "built like Titans, but finished like jewelers." One walks around and around the sculptured terraces, where the bas-reliefs portray all the life of Buddha and his disciples,



GROUND-PLAN OF BORO BOEDOR.

and the history of that great religion—a picture-Bible of Buddhism. All the events in the life of Prince Siddhartha, Gautama Buddha, are followed in turn: his birth and education, his leaving home, his meditation under Gaya's immortal tree, his teaching in the

deer-park, his sitting in judgment, weighing even the birds in his scales, his death and entrance into Nirvana. The every-day life of the seventh and eighth century is pictured, too—temples, palaces, thrones and tombs, ships and houses, all of man's constructions, are portrayed. The life in courts and palaces, in fields and villages, is all seen there. Royal folk in wonderful jewels sit enthroned, with minions offering gifts and burning incense before them, warriors kneeling, and maidens dancing. The peasant plows the rice-fields with the same wooden stick and ungainly buffalo, and carries the rice-sheaves from the harvest-field with the same shoulder-poles, used in all the farther East to-day. Women fill their water-vessels at the tanks and bear them away on their heads as in India now, and scores of bas-reliefs show the unchanging customs of the East that offer sculptors the same models in this century. Half the wonders of that great three-mile-long gallery of sculptures cannot be recalled. Each round disclosed some more wonderful picture, some more eloquent story, told in the coarse trachyte rock furnished by the volcanoes across the valley. Even the humorous fancies of the sculptors are expressed in stone. In one rilievo a splendidly caparisoned state elephant flings its feet in imitation of the dancing-girl near by. Other sportive elephants carry fans and state umbrellas in their trunks; and the marine monsters swimming about the ship that bears the Buddhist missionaries to the isles have such expression and human resemblance as to make one wonder if those primitives did not occasionally pillory an enemy with their chisels, too. In the last gallery, where, in the

progress of the religion, it took on many features of Jainism, or advancing Brahmanism, Buddha is several times represented as the ninth avatar, or incarnation, of Vishnu, still seated on the lotus cushion, and holding a lotus with one of his four hands. Figure after figure wears the Brahmanic cord, or sacrificial thread, over the left shoulder; and all the royal ones sit in what must have been the pose of high fashion at that time—one knee bent under in tailor fashion, the other bent knee raised and held in a loop of the girdle confining the sarong skirt. There is not a grotesque nor a nude figure in the whole three miles of sculptured scenes, and the costumes are a study in themselves; likewise the elaborate jewels which Maia and her maids and the princely ones wear. The trees and flowers are a sufficient study alone; and on my last morning at Boro Boedor I made the whole round at sunrise, looking specially at the wonderful palms, bamboos, frangipani-, mango-, mangosteen-, breadfruit-, pomegranate-, banana-, and bo-trees—every local form being gracefully conventionalized, and, as Fergusson says, “complicated and refined beyond any examples known in India.” It is such special rounds that give one a full idea of what a monumental masterpiece the great Buddhist *vihara* is, what an epitome of all the arts and civilization of the eighth century A. D. those galleries of sculpture hold, and turn one to dreaming of the builders and their times.

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d, No particularly Javanese types of face or figure are presented. All the countenances are Hindu, Hindu-lucasian, and pure Greek; and none of the objects accessories depicted with them are those of an un-

civilized people. All the art and culture, the highest standards of Hindu taste and living, in the tenth century of triumphant Buddhism, are expressed in this sculptured record of the golden age of Java. The Boro Boedor sculptures are finer examples of the Greco-Buddhist art of the times than those of Amravati and Gandahara as one sees them in Indian museums; and the pure Greek countenances show sufficient evidence of Bactrian influences on the Indus, whence the builders came.

Of the more than five hundred statues of Buddha enshrined in niches and latticed dagobas, all, save the one mysterious figure standing in the central or summit dagoba, are seated on lotus cushions. Those of the terrace rows of chapels face outward to the four points of the compass, and those of the three circular platforms face inward to the hidden, mysterious one. All are alike save in the position of the hands, and those of the terrace chapels have four different poses accordingly as they face the cardinal points. As they are conventionally represented, there is Buddha teaching, with his open palm resting on one knee; Buddha learning, with that hand intently closed; Buddha meditating, with both hands open on his knees; Buddha believing and convinced, expounding the lotus law with upraised hand; and Buddha demonstrating and explaining, with thumbs and index-fingers touching. The images in the lotus bells of the circular platform hold the right palm curved like a shell over the fingers of the left hand—the Buddha who has comprehended and sits meditating in stages of Nirvana. It was never intended that worshipers should know the mien of



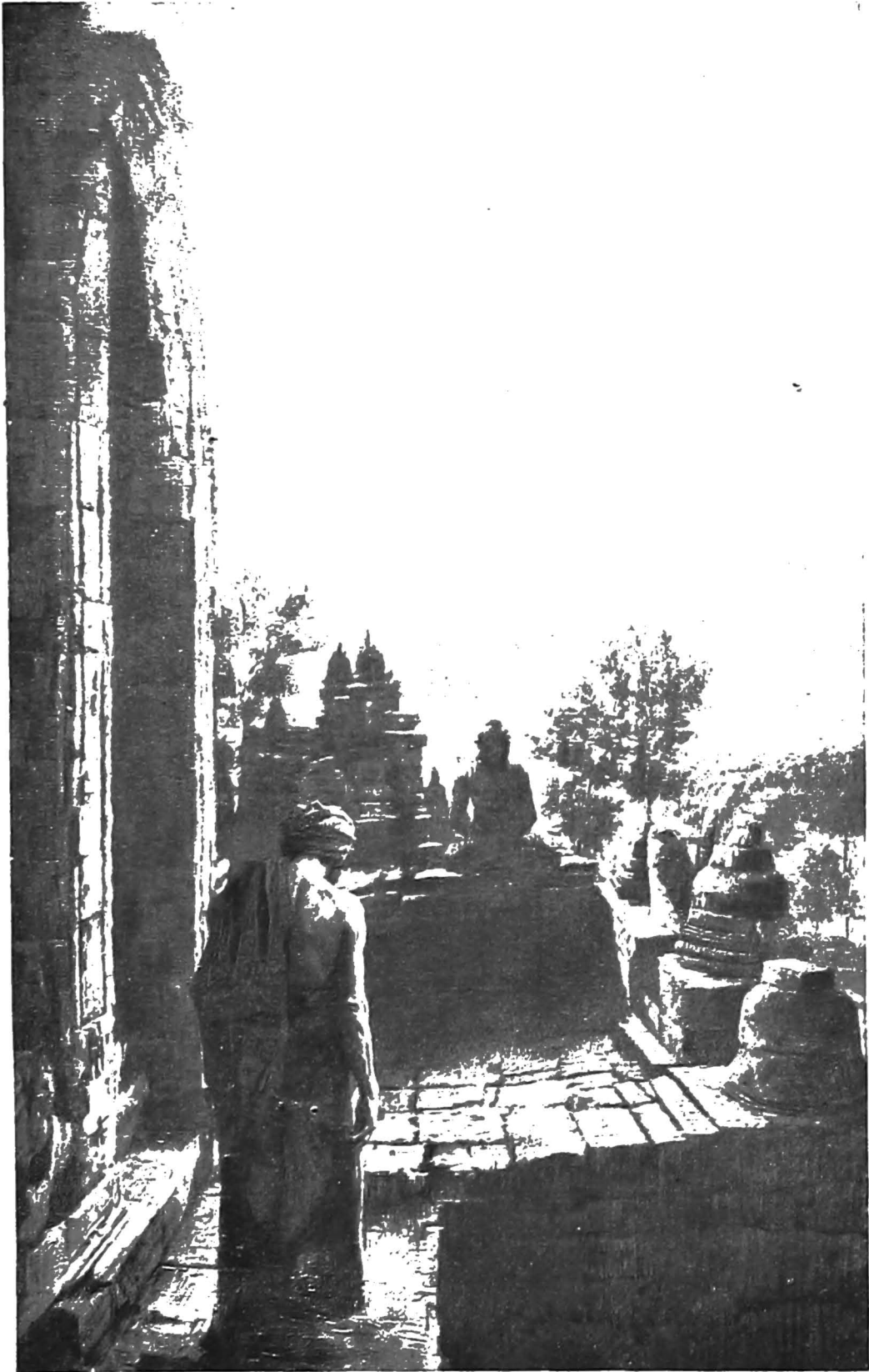
FOUR BAS-RELIEFS FROM BORO BOEDOR.
After Wilson's drawings.

great one in the summit chalice, the serene one who, having attained the supreme end, was left to brood alone, inaccessible, shut out from, beyond all the world. For this reason it is believed that this standing statue was left incomplete, the profane chisel not daring to render every accessory and attribute as with the lesser ones.

Humboldt first noted the five different attitudes of the seated figures, and their likeness to the five Dhyani Buddhas of Nepal; and the discovery of a tablet in Sumatra recording the erection of a seven-story vihara to the Dhyani Buddha was proof that the faith that first came pure from the mouth of the Oxus and the Indus must have received later bent through missionaries from the Malay Peninsula and Tibet. The Boro Boedor images have the same lotus cushion and aureole, the same curls of hair, but not the long ears of the Nepal Buddhas, who in the Mongol doctrine had each his own paradise or quarter of the earth. The first Dhyani, who rules the paradise of the Orient, is always represented in the same attitude and pose of the hands as the image in the latticed bells of these upper, circular or Nirvana terraces of Boro Boedor. The images on the east side of Boro Boedor's square terraces correspond to the second Dhyani's conventional pose; those on the south walls, to the third Dhyani; the west-facing ones, to the fourth Dhyani; and the northern ones, to the fifth Dhyani of Nepal.

There are no inscriptions visible anywhere in this mass of picture-writings, no corner-stone or any clue to the exact year of its founding. We know certainly that the third great synod of Buddhists in Asoka's

time, 264 B. C., resolved to spread Buddhism abroad, and that the propaganda begun in Ceylon was carried in every direction, and that Asoka opened seven of the eight original dagobas of India enshrining relics of Buddha's body, and, subdividing, put them in eighty-four thousand vases or precious boxes, that were scattered to the limits of that religious world. Stupas, or dagobas, were built over these holy bits, and all the central dagoba of Boro Boedor is believed to have been the original structure built over some such reliquary, and afterward surrounded by the great sculptured terraces. Fa Hian, the Chinese pilgrim who visited Java in 414 A. D., remarked upon the number of "heretics and Brahmans" living there, and noted that "the law of Buddha is not much known." Native records tell that in 603 A. D. the Prince of Gujerat came, with five thousand followers in one hundred and six ships, and settled at Mataram, where two thousand more men of Gujerat joined him, and a great Buddhist empire succeeded that of the Brahmanic faith. An inscription found in Sumatra, bearing date 656 A. D., gives the name of Maha Raja Adiraja Adityadharma, King of Prathama (Great Java), a worshiper of the five Dhyani Buddhas, who had erected a great seven-storied vihara, evidently this one of Boro Boedor, in their honor. This golden age of the Buddhist empire in Java lasted through the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries. Arts and religion had already entered their decline in the tenth century, when the Prince Dewa Kosoumi sent his daughter and four sons to India to study religion and the arts. The princelings returned with artists, soldiers, and many trophies and products; but



ON THE SECOND TERRACE.

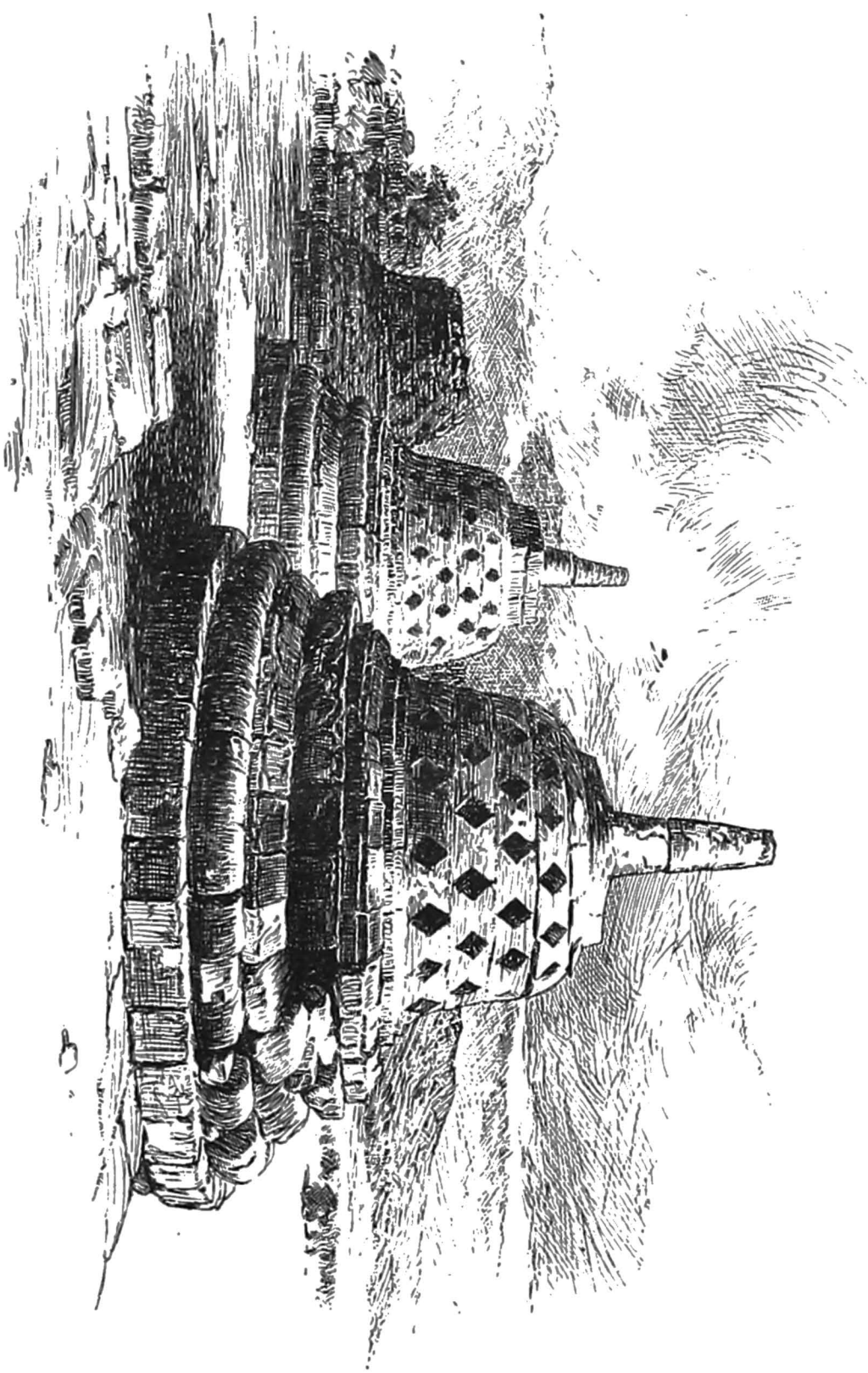
this last fresh importation did not arrest the decay of the faith, and the people, relapsing peaceably into Brahmanism, deserted their old temples. With the Mohammedan conquest of 1475-79 the people in turn forsook the worship of Siva, Durga, and Ganesha, and abandoned their shrines at Brambanam and elsewhere, as they had withdrawn from Boro Boedor and Chandi Sewou.

When the British engineers came to Boro Boedor, in 1814, the inhabitants of the nearest village had no knowledge or traditions of this noblest monument Buddhism ever reared. Ever since their fathers had moved there from another district it had been only a tree-covered hill in the midst of forests. Two hundred coolies worked forty-five days in clearing away vegetation and excavating the buried terraces. Measurements and drawings were made, and twelve plates from them accompany Sir Stamford Raffles's work. After the Dutch recovered possession of Java, their artists and archæologists gave careful study to this monument of earlier civilization and arts. Further excavations showed that the great platform or broad terrace around the temple mass was of later construction than the body of the pyramid, that a flooring nine feet deep had been put entirely around the lower walls, presumably to brace them, and thus covering many inscriptions the meanings of which have not yet been given, not to English readers at least. Dutch scientists devoted many seasons to the study of these ruins, and Herr Brumund's scholarly text, completed and edited by Dr. Leemans of Leyden, accompanies and explains the great folio volumes of four

hundred plates, after Wilsen's drawings, published by the Dutch government in 1874. Since their uncovering the ruins have been kept free from vegetation, but no other care has been taken. In this comparatively short time legends have grown up, local customs have become fixed, and Boro Boedor holds something of the importance it should in its immediate human relations.

For more than six centuries the hill-temple was lost to sight, covered with trees and rank vegetation; and when the Englishmen brought the great sculptured monument to light, the gentle, easily superstitious Javanese of the neighborhood regarded these recha—statues and relics of the ancient, unknown cult—with the greatest reverence. They adopted them as tutelary divinities, as it were, indigenous to their own soil. While Wilsen lived there the people brought daily offerings of flowers. The statue on the first circular terrace at the right of the east staircase, and the secluded image at the very summit, were always surrounded with heaps of stemless flowers laid on moss and plantain-leaves. Incense was burned to these recha, and the people daubed them with the yellow powder with which princes formerly painted, and even humble bridegrooms now paint, themselves on festal days, just as Burmese Buddhists daub gold-leaf on their shrines, and, like the Cingalese Buddhists, heap champak and tulse, jasmine, rose, and frangipani flowers, before their altars. When questioned, the people owned that the offerings at Boro Boedor were in fulfilment of a vow or in thanksgiving for some event in their lives—a birth, death, marriage, unexpected good fortune, or recovery from illness. Other

THE LATTICED DAGOBAS ON THE CIRCULAR TERRACES.



worshippers made the rounds of the circular terraces, reaching to touch each image in its latticed bell, and many kept all-night vigils among the dagobas of the Nirvana circles. Less appealing was the custom, that grew up among the Chinese residents of Djokjakarta and its neighborhood, of making the temple the goal of general pilgrimage on the Chinese New Year's day. They made food and incense offerings to the images, and celebrated with fireworks, feasts, and a general May-fair and popular outdoor fête.

After the temple was uncovered the natives considered it a free quarry, and carried off carved stones for door-steps, gate-posts, foundations, and fences. Every visitor, tourist or antiquarian, scientist or relic-hunter, helped himself; and every residency, native prince's garden, and plantation lawn, far and near, is still ornamented with Boro Boedor's sculptures. In the garden of the Magelang Residency, Miss Marianne North found a Chinese artist employed in "restoring" Boro Boedor images, touching up the Hindu countenances with a chisel until their eyes wore the proper Chinese slant. The museum at Batavia has a full collection of recha, and all about the foundation platform of the temple itself, and along the path to the passagrahan, the way is lined with displaced images and fragments, statues, lions, elephants, horses; the *hansa*, or emblematic geese of Buddhism; the *Garouda*, or sacred birds of Vishnu; and giant genii that probably guarded some outer gates of approach. A captain of Dutch hussars told Herr Brumund that, when camping at Boro Boedor during the Javanese war, his men amused themselves by striking off the heads of statues with

single lance- or saber-strokes. Conspicuous heads made fine targets for rifle and pistol practice. Native boys, playing on the terraces while watching cattle, broke off tiny heads and detachable bits of carving, and threw them at one another; and a few such playful shepherds could effect as much ruin as any of the imaginary bands of fanatic Moslems or Brahmans. One can better accept the plain, rural story of the boy herders' destructiveness than those elaborately built up tales of the religious wars, when priests and people, driven to Boro Boedor as their last refuge, retreated, fighting, from terrace to terrace, hurling stones and statues down upon their pursuers, the last heroic believers dying martyrs before the summit dagoba. Fanatic Mohammedans in other countries doubtless would destroy the shrines of a rival, heretic creed; but there is most evidence in the history and character of the Javanese people that they simply left their old shrines, let them alone, and allowed the jungle to claim at its will what no longer had any interest or sacredness for them. To this day the Javanese takes his religion easily, and it is known that at one time Buddhism and Brahmanism flourished in peace side by side, and that conversion from one faith to the other, and back again, and then to Mohammedanism, was peaceful and gradual, and the result of suasion and fashion, and not of force. The old cults faded, lost prestige, and vanished without stress of arms or an inquisition.