

Some Remarks upon COL. YULE'S Notes on the Senbyú Pagoda at Mengun

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With reference to the interesting account of the Senbyú Pagoda at Mengun, read at the last meeting of the Royal Asiatic Society, and more particularly with reference to the remarks by Col. Yule on the Buddhas of the Boro Bodor, I would, with the greatest deference to the writer, beg to offer some suggestions derived from personal observation of the manner in which many groups of figures of Buddha (Sákya Muni) are sculptured in Bengal and the North-West Provinces of India.

First, as to the number of times of representation. I may remark that the ceiling of the interior of the great tope or tower of Buddh Gaya is divided into many hundreds of little spaces, in each of which Sakya Muni in his conventional attitude is represented. If I remember rightly, the groundwork is of a pale yellow, whilst the figures are of an uniform ochreous brown. There is, however, no variety of position in the figure, and I believe that Gen. Cunningham ascribes the ceiling to about 1100 A.D. The painting is very much faded, and the ceiling of a much later date than the body of the building.

Secondly, as to the positions of the figures. I have before me a small square memorial stupa from Buddh Gaya, of no great antiquity, but evidently copied from a more ancient one, surmounted by a tapering finial of nine circles, upon the sides of which are depicted in relief, in niches, four of the favourite positions in which that great social reformer is often sculptured, viz., begging, expounding, blessing, and contemplating. To these is often added a recumbent figure of Buddha entering "Nirvana," or annihilation; and often one of Maya, his mother, holding the Sál tree at the time of his birth.

1. On the stone in question. To the East (I say East, although the sides are all precisely the same, because there is an inscription on it beneath the figure, and because the principal sides of every Buddhist erection, as far as I am aware, faced the East; and, thirdly, because Buddha is there represented as blessing), is a sitting figure of Sákya Muni in the act of blessing, both hands being raised before him with joined palms, turning outwards, and the soles of the feet turned upwards, showing the chakra upon them.
2. To the West, or opposite side, Buddha is expounding or demonstrating, with the hands in close proximity, and the soles of both feet still upward, as in the first position.
3. To the North, he is sitting contemplating in the position as described in posture No. 1. of Col. Yule, viz., the left hand lying, palm upwards, open on the right upturned sole; whilst the left hangs down on the right knee, palm inwards.
4. To the South, he is sitting with his hands folded one over the other in his lap, *i.e.* between his heels (or in some other stones that I have seen, on *both the upturned soles*), supporting his begging pot.

I have never heard it contended by any one that these various figures, or rather positions of the same figure, represent different Buddhas, nor do I think it likely that they do so; but that they are merely as I remarked in the commencement, different attitudes of Sákya Muni, in which that of teacher occupies the most prominent place.

The suggestions which I would therefore wish to throw out are—

1. That the numerous figures of Buddha on the Pagoda of Boro Bodor all represent the same person.
2. That the building was erected in honour of Buddha, the teacher, as he sat "Turning the wheel of the Law," or expounding his doctrines, or in the act of blessing.

The attitude No. 1 of Col. Yule would then represent Buddha as in contemplation under the Bo tree.

No. 2 would represent him expounding.

No. 3 would show him as a mendicant, for I find the begging pot to be often omitted, although it is placed in the general representation of Buddha in all Thibet (*vide* Capt. Austin's paper, J. A. S. of Bengal, vol. xxxiii., p. 152).

No. 4 would represent him in the act of blessing, whilst the principal or immured figure is either in the act of teaching or perhaps blessing.

Gen. Cunningham, in his Bhilsa Topes, has shown the conventional method of expressing by the hands the act of teaching, viz., the placing of the first finger of the right hand in a peculiar manner on those of the left, which leads me slightly to doubt the certainty of "both hands raised opposite the breast as in an attitude of teaching" representing that act.

I have also seen standing figures of Buddha—generally with the begging pot, which holds so conspicuous a place in his scanty accessories, and I cannot but believe that the one and the same person is represented in many ways.¹

UPPER NORWOOD, *June* 23, 1869.

¹ So far as my experience goes, the conclusions I have arrived at are entirely in accordance with Mr. Horne's suggestions. At Ajanta, for instance, especially in Cave 19, Buddha is represented in all these four attitudes, and so frequently, but with such similarity of form and emblems, that I hardly think it can be doubted but that one and the same person only is meant to be represented. The same thing occurs at Kenheri and elsewhere in the western caves, yet I never heard it suggested that these figures were intended to represent any other person than the one Sákya Muni.—J. F.