CHAPTER II
Sculptural Art of Bengal:
Genesis and Development

I

The sculptural tradition of Bengal\(^1\) goes back to about 2nd century B.C. Among the surviving examples, consisting of images of stone or metal and terracotta and wood carvings, the oldest ones are a few terracotta objects assignable to the 2nd century B.C. (infra, p.82). The earliest sculptures, carved in stone, can hardly be dated beyond the 1st century A.D., whereas the earliest metalworks belong to the 7th century A.D. (infra, p.42). Specimens of wood carvings of the notable antiquity do not go beyond the 11th and 12th century A.D. (infra, pp. 92-97).

The earliest stone sculptures of Bengal, comprising, among others, a small fragment representing the head and bust of Buddha and Bodhisattva discovered at Chandraketugarh in the district of 24 Parganas, West Bengal, and a torso of a divine figure, perhaps of Karttikeya found at Mahāsthāna in the Bogra district, Bangladesh.\(^2\) The head and bust of Buddha-Bodhisattva, although damaged, is characterised by sturdiness and dignified bearing reminiscent of similar features exhibited by the figures of the Kushāṇa period found elsewhere. Likewise the torso from Mahāsthāna, has a stylistic proximity to a Nāga image discovered at Mathurā and is of the same age. Both of them may be dated to the 1st century of the Christian era.

\(^1\) We have taken the term Bengal in its undivided sense.

\(^2\) Both of them are now preserved in the Asutosh Museum, Calcutta.
Chronologically later than them are four sculptures, of which two represent the Sun-god and the one depicts Vishnu. The remaining example is a colossal head, hailing from Dinajpur. The images of Sūrya, discovered at Kumārupur and Niyanatpur in the Rajshahi district, are of the standing type; in both of them the Sun-god is riding on a seven-horsed chariot, between his attendants, Dandi and Pingala, and holding two lotuses by the stalks. The statue of Vishnu found at Hānkrail, Maldah, West Bengal, is a free-standing sculpture, though it looks like a relief; it shows the god with four hands, of which the lower ones, now broken, originally were stretched downward and in his upper left and right ones he carries the conch and a round object (lotus bud?) respectively; he is bedecked with a low kirītāmukuta, scanty jewellery and wears a peculiar loin cloth piece which clings to his legs and curled towards the bottom with a folded end hanging between the legs. All these four sculptures belong to the late phase of the Kushāna art in respect of the general physiognomy and dress and ornaments and belong to the close of the 3rd or the beginning of the 4th century A.D.

Compared to the sculptures of the pre-Gupta epoch, those of the Gupta period, are more adequate in number. But all of them hail from northern and western sectors of Bengal and no image of the Vanga-Samata provenance is known so far. The Gupta art, the logical outcome of the art of the Kushāna period and represented by works of the ateliers at Mathurā and Sārnāth (the
major centre of the period), extended as far as Dah Parvatiya (Tezpur district, Assam) and its Bengal version is well exemplified by a couple of images of Sūrya, one from Kāśīpur (24 Parganas) and the other from Deora (Bogra district, Bangladesh); in both the specimens the Sun-god has been depicted as standing on a pedestal with the representation of a seven-horsed chariot. Stylistically and iconographically both of them are identical. The other notable image, depicting Buddha in the sthāņaka posture, comes from Bihārāil (Rajshahi district, Bangladesh). Apart from the diaphanous robe and the general quality of the modelling, the image is marked by a spirit of calm and serene contemplation present in similar images of the Sāṃśāth school of the Gupta age.

The stone sculptures representing deities like Śiva, Balarāma, and the river-goddess Yamunā, and forming a chronologically compact group, were nearer to heyday of the Gupta art and the term Gupta in its eastern version, both in style and spirit, appears to be an apt classification of this group. Other notable examples, again from the area outside Vanga-Samata, include a gold-plated bronze image of Mājūrī discovered near the ruins of Mahāsthān (Bogra district), and a metal image of Śiva found at Manir Tat (24 Parganas, West Bengal). Both of them may be placed about half a century or so prior to the images of

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1. The Kāśīpur image belongs to the Asutosh Museum and the Deora image to the Rajshahi Museum (Bangladesh).

2. For details of these images, see S.K. Saraswati, *Early Sculpture of Bengal*, pp. 24-25.

Sarvānī and Sūrya discovered at Deulbādī, the earliest sculptural examples hailing from the Vanga-Samatā sector of ancient Bengal (see below) and also the earliest works cast in metal.

The singular evidence of the sculptural activity in this region in the pre-Gupta period or for that matter, even earlier, is constituted by the fragments of a colossal image of the 2nd century B.C. which have been discovered at Siluā (district Noakhali, Bangladesh, included in ancient Samatā). As said above, no sculptures of the pre-Gupta and Gupta periods hailing from the Vanga-Samatā area are as yet known to us.¹ The earliest sculptures of the period under study belong to the reign of Devakhaḍga who ruled in the Vanga-Samatā region towards the end of the 7th century A.D. One of these two octo-alloy images represents Sūrya (fig. 1) and the other the goddess Durgā in her Sarvānī form (fig. 2). Both of them have been found at Deulbādī, Comilla district. Of them the former² shows the Sun-god in the seated posture flanked by Daṇḍī and Pingala (also seated) in a chariot drawn by seven sprightly horses. With open downcast eyes and a benign facial expression, the god wears a plain garment, covering the lower part, the upper part of the body

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¹. ASI, AR 1930-34, I, pp. 38-39. The pedestal of this image bears an inscription in the characters of the 2nd century B.C.

². The image was formerly enshrined in the temple at Chandīmudā near the Lalmai Railway station. Of late it was transferred to the Dhaka Museum, Bangladesh.
Long curly locks of hairs fall on his shoulders and he is proportionately bedecked with ornaments of beaded design. Behind his head is a prominent aureole with a beaded border and each of his attendants, Dandi and Pingala, has also halos separately fashioned but attached to that of his own. The sensitive modelling and the general physiognomy of the central deity affiliate it to the Gupta school of the later phase and seem to place it somewhere between the 7th and 8th century A.D. Icono-plastically it is reminiscent of the standing Sūrya image found at Deorā in the Bogra district which reveal similar features, such as the uncovered body, the bead-designed ornaments and the triple aureoles of beaded borders. The other image is that of Sarvāṇī which shows the eight-armed goddess standing on a lotus pedestal on the back of a couchant lion. A rim, which is partly damaged towards the top in the left, surrounding the deity is characterised by three lotuses which are connected with her head. The goddess is flanked by female attendants, each holding a fly-whisk. It bears an inscription on the pedestal which designates the goddess as Sarvāṇī and states that it was gilt with leaves of gold by Queen Prabhāvatī, the consort of king Devakhaḍga. Cast in low relief, stylistically it comes closer to the Sūrya image with which it has been recovered from the same place, in terms of modelling and physical features, such as benign face and open eyes, and long curly locks of hairs falling on the shoulders. In some respects,

1. Frederick M. Asher, The Art of Eastern India, 300 – 800, pl. 106.
however, the image of Sarvāṇī differs from that of the Sun-god and foreshadows the features of the sculptures of the Pāla age. In spite of the attempt of the artist to invest the image with grace and elegance, there is an undeniable touch of rigidity and erectness. The stela composition and the individual lotus pedestals of the female attendants of the deity are among the other characteristics which mark the sculptures of later days. And thus the figure of Sarvāṇī seems to be later than the image of the Sun-god and may be assigned to the second half of the 7th century A.D.

Of late a number of sculptures have been discovered at Maināmatī, Comilla district, in the heart of ancient Samatata (supra, pp. 12-13). Expectedly they articulate a cognate idiom and belong to the same age. Indeed, they appear to have been the products of what we may call 'Mainamati atelier,' forming a homogeneous group and have some affiliations to the Sarvāṇī image. Of them a figure represents the Dhyāṇih Buddha Akshobhya (fig. 3) which was recovered at Salvan Vihara. It shows some rows of spiral curls of hairs with an ushnīsha and five lotuses attached to the elliptical rim surrounding Akshobhya (three to his head, and two shoulders), a circular mark on his forehead, the uttārāṇya passing over his left chest and covering the left hand and the choti with rounded hem reaching above the ankles. Stylistically this image of Akshobhya seems to have been a product of the school which fashioned the previous one of Sarvāṇī. As in the latter, the rim in the present example has three lotuses attached to the head of the Dhyāṇih Buddha and a touch of rigidity, seen in the Sarvāṇī image,
is also noticeable in the present statuette of Akshobhya. This is also reminiscent of a figure of Buddha found outside Vanga-Samata, in ancient Maghadha. It was found at Kurkihar, Gaya district of Bihar and now on display in the Patna Museum, in which the ushnīsha fixed to the elliptical rim, a circular mark on the forehead, and the open downcast eyes constitute notable characteristics. Stylistically the Maināmatī figure of Akshobhya is later than the Sarvāṇi bronze and earlier than the Kurkihar image of Buddha and may be dated in the first half of the 8th century A.D. A pair of examples of the group, among others, are related to the Sarvāṇi image on the one hand and the Akshobhya statue on the other. Some figures are distinguished by a circular stela topped by an umbrella as instanced by a figure of Dhyānī Buddha Amitābha (fig. 4) and a bronze image of seated Mañjuśrī, the stela in the latter example being rectangular. It is reasonable to believe that the stela-bearing sculptures are later than the above-noted figures which bear the surrounding rim.

A couple of stone images of Avalokiteśvara discovered at Kotila Mura at Maināmatī seem to articulate a different and somewhat unique diction, though they belong to the genre of, and chronologically close to, the above-noted sculpture. One (fig. 5) of them shows

1. Ibid., fig. 143.
2. The sharply bent pose, mannered gestures and ridged treatment of the drapery again connect this Kurkihar image with the contemporary bronze icons of Buddha of the Nalanda school.
3. A.K.M. Shamsul Alam, Mainamati, pl. VIII, fig. c (first row), a (second row).
the deity in a quarter profile and as four-handed and seated with
the left leg folded and the right leg stretched on the seat, the
seated posture being somewhat uncommon. The head of Avalokitesvara
is bent downwards, as if worried for the suffering sentient beings,
presents a significant feature. In the other specimen (fig. 6),
Avalokitesvara is depicted frontally, and as seated in the usual
padmasana. The pedestal of the first example carries the figures of
the devotees. In each of these two reliefs the deity has been shown
as seated on an elevated lotus-seat with long stalk and surrounded by
accessory figures of Bodhisattvas and other deities, all seated on
lotus-seats; joined together by stalks emanating from the central
lotus stalk and this type of lotus-seat is a new feature which suggests
for these figures a date in the second half of the 8th century A.D.
Similar type of lotus-seats appear in four metal images representing
different Buddhist divinities: one representing a four-
armed Tārā, stylistically dated in the 8th century A.D.,¹ and an
eight-armed Tārā,² a two-armed Mañjuśrī³ and a four-armed
Prajñāpāramitā.⁴ However, this manner of portraying the central
figure on an elevated lotus-seat with accessory figures on lotus-seats
seems to have originated at Mainamati and later spread to the
neighbouring regions of Faridpur and later spread to the
neighbouring regions of Faridpur and Chittagong, as evidenced by
four images. Of them three hail from Chittagong district, one of
Ratnasambhava from the temple monastery at Chittagong⁵ and among the

1. Alam, op.cit., pl. IX, fig. c.
3. Ibid., pl. 249.
4. Alam, op.cit., pl. IX, fig. a.
5. Debale Mitra, Bronzes from Bangladesh, fig. 84.
other two one represents three Buddha figures (fig. 7) and the other shows Buddha with two figures, both these figures found at Jhewari, Chittagong district and preserved in the Indian Museum. The fourth one is an image of Ganeśa, discovered at Dhānukā, Faridpur district.

Similar stylistic features of the above-described Sarvāṇi image and the Maināmatī figures are discernible in two images, one of Avalokiteśvara, the other of Manjuśrī, both found at Nālandā. The surrounding rim of the Nālandā images is similar to the Sarvāṇi and Maināmatī figures. A circular mark on the forehead and the rounded hem of the lower garment of the Nālandā Manjuśrī image are reminiscent of the Maināmatī Akshobhya icon (fig. 3). The physiognomical features, including the facial ones of the Nālandā bronzes, compare favourably with those of the metal images (figs. 8, 9), hailing from the Chittagong district, also in ancient Samatāṭa. Whether these Nālandā figures were imported from Chittagong or inspired by the art styles of South-East Bengal or vice versa, it is difficult to ascertain. The discovery of these images in two widely separated regions may perhaps be accounted for by the religions traffic.

The next stage in the stylistic advance is discerned in the appearance of features, such as the arrangement of hair in the

1. Ibid., fig. 47.
2. N.K. Bhattasali, Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum, pl. LV, fig. b.
3. B.N. Mukherji, East Indian Art Styles, fig. 4.
4. S.K. Mitra (ed.), East Indian Bronzes, fig. 89.
jatānukuta fashion, well-rounded and the softly modelled the bodily form, a charming and happy face, upavīta-fashioned uttarīya, simple and heavy ear-ornaments and the almost circular stela. And they may be seen, for example, in an inscribed image of Avalokiteśvara,¹ the characters of the inscription being of the 9th century A.D.

Found in the temple-monastery at Chittagong, this image has a stela of the beaded border with flame-like designs at the intervals and the bead-designed embellishment at the top, which provide their link with the above-noted Maināmati figures. Typologically this Avalokiteśvara image seems to be very close to the products of the Mainamati atelier and it may be compared, for instance, with a statue of the Dhyānī Buddha Amitābha discovered at Mainamati (fig. 4) in respect of the facial expression, the hairs arranged in jatānukuta, well-rounded body, the upavīta-like uttarīya, the beaded border of the stela with the flame-like designs at the intervals and the overall modelling quality. Besides the above-noted figures of Prajñāpāramitā, another four-armed figure of Bhṛikutī Tārā² in varada-mudrā from Mainamati is connected with the Chittagong example. The common features include the hairs arranged in jatānukuta, the overall modelling, single-petalled lotus-seat and the bead-designed embellishment at the top of the stela. The kinship between Avalokiteśvara and Prajñāpāramitā is further spelt out by the upavīta-fashioned uttarīya, a portion of which is gathered on the left shoulder of each of them. An octo-alloy eight-armed metal image

1. Mitra, op. cit., fig. 75.
2. Alam, op. cit., pl. IX, fig. b.
of a female deity,\textsuperscript{1} unearthed at somewhere in the Comilla district and now preserved in the Dhaka Museum,\textsuperscript{2} is affiliated with the above-noted Chittagong specimen on the one hand and the Mainamati Amitābha and the Deulbādi Sarvārī figures on the other. A high chignon on the head of the female deity reminds us of the Sarvārī of the Deulbādi sculpture. The facial features and the soft modelling of the body are similar to those of the deity represented in the sculpture from Chittagong. A circular stela is reminiscent of the statue of Amitābha from Mainamati. On the basis of such stylistic affiliations with the Chittagong figure the Mainamati sculptures and the representation of the eight-armed female deity from the Comilla region may be placed in the first half of the 9th century A.D. On these grounds it may be said that the Avalokitesvara image from Chittagong was either made by an artist of Mainamati staying there or it was imported from that region. Reference to a metal image of a two-armed goddess\textsuperscript{3} found in the temple-monastery

\begin{enumerate}
\item The identification of this image with Sitātapastrā by N.K. Bhattasali (op.cit., pp. 53-54) is incorrect, as it does not tally with the description of the goddess contained in the Sāhanāmālā; it seems to be one of the forms of the goddess Tārā.
\item See p. 46, f.n. 2.
\item According to K.N. Dikshit, it is an image of Tārā. A book is placed on the lotus which held by the goddess and thus Debala Mitra identifies it with the Buddhist goddess Sarasvatī.
\end{enumerate}
at Chittagong\(^1\) may be made in this connection. It is related to the preceding image of Avalokites\(\text{vara}\)\(^2\) in respect of the eyes, the treatment of the body, simple and heavy ornaments, the shape of the stela and the pedestal and these elements indicate that this figure belongs to the same period. It may be compared with a 10th-century metal icon of \(\text{Arya-Tara}\)\(^3\) from Nalanda and now an exhibit in the State Museum, Lucknow. The common features include the open mouth, ear-ornaments and the stela edged by leaf-shaped flames.

As at Mainamati, an atelier developed and was in a flourishing state for about a couple of centuries at Jhewari in the district of Chittagong. Quite a fair number of images (figs. 10-12) have been found at this place and they exhibit a style of their own. They are characterised by three auspicious lines (\textit{trivali}) round the neck, elongated ear-lobes, prominent nipples, the head covered by curls of hairs and \textit{ushnisha}; left chest, shoulder and arm covered by \textit{uttarasanga} with a folded end on his left shoulder. Of them one figure (fig. 11) shows a \textit{yuqmbhr\(\varepsilon\)}. A plus-mark is shown in the two figures (figs. 10, 11). The calm and contemplative facial expression and the soft plastic treatment of the body tend to place these figures in the first half of the 9th century A.D.

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1. Mitra, \textit{op. cit.}, fig. 78.
2. See p. 48, f.n. 1.
3. \textit{Tantrav\(\varepsilon\)na Art: An Album (With Introduction and Notes by S.K. Saras\(\varepsilon\)ati)}, fig. 96.
To this period also belongs an image of Alinganamurti of Śiva, unearthed at Keoār, Dhaka district (fig. 13). In this example the five-faced and six-armed god Śiva is seated with Pārvatī who holds a full-blown lotus in her left hand and her right hand passing round the neck of her consort. In the six hands the god holds the attributes in clockwise manner such as vāra, rosary, arrow, bow, skull-cup (?) and bosom of the goddess. A trident is planted on a lotus to the right of Śiva. It is the only image of Śiva where the god has five faces. A sacred thread is shown to the right side of the god, instead of the left. The god does not wear any ear-ornament. In addition the rounded lips are shown in this specimen. Iconographically this calls for a comparison with a 14th-century image of Hara-Gaurī from Kathmandu, Nepal, in which also the god is depicted as five-headed and six-handed. Another specimen of Śiva-Pārvatī hailing from the nearby area, Raghurāmpur, Dhaka district (fig. 14), is stylistically connected to the Keoār image and in addition to the preceding example from Nepal it bears affinity with a similar image of the 9th century A.D. found at Thaton, Burma and now preserved in the Government Museum, Rangoon.

A further stylistic advancement on images mentioned above, is noticeable in examples hailing from different areas of Vanga-Samastā, one of them coming from Bandarbarazār, Sylhet.

(Bangladesh). It represents the Buddhist god Lokanātha (fig. 15). Cast in octo-alloy, the deity is standing in slightly tribhanga pose, holding a lotus with long stalk in the left hand and the right hand in the varada pose. There is a miniature figure of Amitābha on his crown. The curly locks of hairs are falling on the shoulders in an orderly manner. The god wears a sacred thread. The headdress and the ear-ornaments are similar to those of the image of Avalokiteśvara from Chittagong. The new features indicating the development consist of the slim body and the carefully modelled legs, particularly the knees, giving an impression of pliability in spite of their erectness, the fan-shaped ribbon on either side of the head, the diaphanous lower garment clinging to the body like a wet sheet, a short piece of cloth resting on the left shoulder and hanging at the back, and the lotus-throne separated from the back slab. The other noteworthy element is the stela which takes full shape. It has three borders, the edges of the last one being decorated with foliage devices; the middle one of them is plain, while the beaded design embellishes the inside border. All these new stylistic features suggest for this figure a date in the second half of the 9th century A.D.

Another contemporary example is an icon of Tārā¹ found at Sukhābspur, Dhaka district. Made of stone, it represents the two-armed goddess standing in the tribhanga pose and holding a

1. Bhattasali, op. cit., pl. XX.
half-blown lotus in the left hand and the right hand in the varada pose. The fluttering scarves, simple and heavy ornaments and a lotus with long stalk depicted behind the right hand are the new elements which are added to this specimen.

A stone image of Vishnu seated on Garuda (fig. 16) belongs to this period. Discovered near Lakshmankati, Backerganj district, Bangladesh, in ancient Vaṅga (supra, pp. 7-9), it is an extremely interesting iconic example. It depicts the four-armed Vishnu holding in his rear hands two lotus flowers by their stalks on the pericarps of which are seen the miniature seated figures of Gaja-Lakṣmī (right) and Sarasvatī (left) and in his front hands the chakra with Chakrapurusha inside it (right) and the miniature figure of Gadādevī (left). A four-armed seated figure on the crown of the god is reminiscent of the effigy of the parental Buddha which characterises the Buddhist deities of the Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna pantheon. The stylistic features of the sculpture, which are shown in addition, include vanamālā shown, rather unusually, on either side of the shoulders almost touching the back hands and also the unusual manner of holding the chakra by its rim, contemplative face, sensitive bends of slim and slender fingers. The figure is modelled in the round from the armpit to about the hip and this is a new feature. The stela, half-round at the top and bordered with half-lotus designs

in low relief, which is an infrequent feature, is almost identical with that of a couple of Sūrya images, one from Nālandā of about the early 8th century A.D., and the other from Lakshisarai (Monghyr district, Bihar) of the late 8th century A.D. And the latter sculpture, in addition, bears affinity with the Lakshmankāti Vishnu in respect of the figures of flying Vidyadharas on roundish circles appearing at the top of the stela. In respect of sensitive modelling and general features like the vanamāla and upavīta and kirītamukūta the Lakshmankāti sculpture is close to the figure of Lokanātha from Bandarbarad and an image of Vishnu from Agradigun in West Dinajpur and the stela of the latter, in particular, is practically similar to that of the sculpture under discussion. In point of time also the Vishnu image from Lakshmankāti has proximity to them. In any case, on the grounds of these features the image of Vishnu from Lakshmankāti is placed in the second half of the 9th century A.D.

1. Susan L. Huntington, The Pala-Sena School of Sculpture, fig. 126.
2. Ibid., fig. 146.
3. Asher, op.cit., pl. 237.
4. N.K. Bhattasali describes it as 'a very old piece of sculpture' and places it in the pre-Pāla period (op.cit., p. 87). S.K. Saraswati dates it, on stylistic grounds, not earlier than the 9th century A.D. (op.cit., p. 31).
A number of sculptures (figs. 17 - 22) some of which bear the inscriptions in the characters of the second half of the 9th or the first half of the 10th century, A.D., found at Jhewari and one from the Chittagong district which is in a private collection can be grouped according to their art-forms and styles. They are characterised by round-shaped face, broad head, a faint smile, perforated ear-lobes, bow-like eye-brows, broad chest attenuating to a well-modelled waist, sharp features of the face, the body-surface glowing beneath the transparent robes, sensitively modelled fingers, a short pleated cloth with incised rows of squares at intervals hanging from the left shoulder on both sides, cushion-like low pedestal. During this period this type of pedestal is shown in the seated Buddha images found at Jhewari and the image of the same deity preserved in the temple-monastery at Chittagong. An image of Buddha somewhere from the Chittagong district, formerly preserved in the Asutosh Museum (now missing), is closely related to the above-noted two Jhewari images (fig. 17, 18). Stylistically it may be assigned to the same period. Two images of Buddha carrying inscriptions in the characters of the same period differ from the

1. Mitra, op.cit., fig. 94.
2. One figure does not bear a smile (fig. 20).
3. Ibid., fig. 69.
4. Ibid., fig. 85.
5. Ibid., figs. 7, 8.
previous figures in respect of facial features and the shape of the ushnīsha. These two pieces are more or less similar to the above-noted images of the first half of the 9th century A.D. In respect of facial features including eyes and tight lips one figure is related to the surrounding rim-bearing image (fig. 12). The other sculpture resembles the one (fig. 10) in which the deity is seated on a double-petalled lotus, curls of hair and ushnīsha and the oval-shaped face. There are no rows of squares at the intervals of the short pleated cloth which is hanging from the left shoulder of the two figures. In the basis of these similarities with the figures of the first half of the 9th century A.D. these two images may be dated to the same period.

A representation of Gaurī1 carved in black stone, discovered at Ariel, Dhaka district, belongs to the same period, that is, the second half of the 9th century A.D. The sculpture shows the four-handed goddess as standing on a lotus placed on the pañcharatha pedestal which is a new addition. The goddess exhibits rosary and trident in the upper and boon and vase in the lower hands. A linga is shown near the upper right hand. She is flanked by two female attendants. The figure is modelled in the round from the armpit to about the ankles. A horse-shoe-shaped nimbus with a lotus motif is carved behind her head and it is placed inside an elliptical aureole with a pointed centre which serves as the backdrop. This type of aureole and nimbus

1. Bhattasali, op. cit., pl. LXVIII, fig. b.
are met with for the first time.

Mention may be made of a black stone figure of Vajrasattva\(^1\) bearing the well-known Buddhist cread in the proto-Bengali script of the 10th century A.D. discovered at Sukhabāspur. In this example the god is shown as seated with one leg placed upon the other (not locked) on a lotus-seat over a high pedestal. The deity has two hands, holding a vajra in the right hand against his breast and a bell in the left hand on the thigh. The head and the body appear to be bent to the left. The massive form of the body marked by the soft fleshiness and the rounded limbs suggestive of the subdued vigour appear to be some hitherto unnoted features. A piece of cloth, the two ends of which are flying on two sides, passes round the hands and this mode of wearing the scarf is first met in this figure. Another piece of cloth with vertical and horizontal folds is hanging in front over the pedestal which is a new element and this type occurs in the Hārītī figure\(^2\) from Nālandā dated in the reign of Devapāla. These new features tend to place it in the first half of the 10th century A.D. This image bears some affinities with the 10th-century icon of Vajrasattva\(^3\) from Nālandā, now preserved in the Nālandā Museum. Like the Sukhabāspur Vajrasattva deity the Nalanda god is seated

1. Ibid., pl. III, fig. a.
2. Huntington, op. cit., fig. 29.
3. TAA, fig. 157.
on a lotus-seat over a high pedestal. The necklace and the upavīta of the Nālandā figure are of the same design as shown in the Sukhabāspur deity. As in the Sukhabāspur icon, in the Nālandā image, the god wears a bangle in each of his hands and the karandamukuta on the head.

An image of Jambhala,1 carved in black stone, found at Sukhabāspur, seems to have been fashioned in the same period, that is, the first half of the 10th century A.D. It shows the two-armed god as seated in lalitāsana on the lotus-pedestal. A mongoose is held by the left hand and a citron-like object in the right hand, the latter resting on the right knee. The massive form indicative of vigour and strength has been sought to be rendered in terms of roundness. While the face is calm and serene, the body is endowed with the warmth of flesh.

A further development in the sculptural diction is noticeable in examples of the 10th and 11th centuries, A.D., which is fortunately corroborated by some images bearing dates. One of these dated sculptures is a stone image of Ganeśa (fig. 23) found at Mandhuk, Comilla district, now preserved in the Mainamati Museum; it shows the four-armed god on a double-petaled lotus. The pedestal carries an inscription which dates it to the 1st year of Gopāla II (c. 952 - 72 A.D., i.e., in 952 - 53 A.D.). The image is modelled in the round from the head downwards and this is the new feature which has not been met with in the above-mentioned images of the Vaṅga-Samātāta area, though this

1. Bhattasali, op.cit., pl. XI, fig. d.
has been noticed in the sculptures found elsewhere, as for instance, in some images from Bodh-Gaya (Bihar)\(^1\) and Prambua in the Hooghly district\(^2\), both belonging to the early 9th century A.D. The other innovative elements illustrating advancement include the inside border of the stela carved in high relief and the curving lines indicating the cloud motifs of flying Vidyadharas which are already shown in the Lakshmanāṭi and Agradigun images of Vishnu. However, the Ganapati icon under study calls for comparison with an image of the same god found in the Mundesvari Hill, Shahābād district (Bihar)\(^3\). The latter, like its Mandhuk counterpart, shows Ganesa as seated in the mahārājānīlā pose and as wearing the same type of apparel and ornaments, besides the nāgopavīta.

A black stone figure of the Buddhist goddess Tārā (fig. 24) found at Khailkair, Dhaka district, with the Buddhist creed ‘Ye Dhamma’ etc. inscribed on the pedestal in the characters of the 9th–10th century A.D., shows her as seated in sukhāsana on a double-petalled lotus and as holding the characteristic attribute of a lotus with stalk (sanala padma) in the left hand and exhibiting varaṇa-mudrā in the right. Among the features mention may be made of the few locks of hairs ended in ringlets, eye-brows carved in one line which is first

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2. This image is now preserved in the Asutosh Museum.
3. Asher, op.cit., pl. 54.
met in the Jhewari image of the first half of the 9th century A.D. (fig. 11), a long sacred thread and a plain nimbus on a stela the top of which is half-round. In style, it is close to the Vāgīśvarī image (fig. 25) from Nalanda dated in the 1st year of Gopāla II. In both the specimens the respective goddesses have been sensitively modelled. Both of them wear same type of dress and ornaments. They are also seated in the same fashion. The Khailkair Tārā has a beaded collar which appears to be a new addition. On the basis of such resemblances with the dated image of Vāgīśvarī the present figure of Tārā may be assigned to the beginning of the reign of Gopāla II, and it is tempting to suggest that both these sculptures were the handiwork of the same artist.

In this context of a greyish black stone image of Bhrikuti discovered at Bhavanipur, Dhaka district, comes to our mind. Like the preceding figure of Tārā this icon is also stylistically similar to the Vāgīśvarī image from Nalanda. The three-faced and eight-handed goddess, seated on a lotus with legs placed one upon the other, is carrying a sword and a trident in two of the four right hands and thunderbolt, lasso

1. Bhattasali, op.cit., pl. XIX. This image has not been precisely identified. Bhattasali suggests that this figure is close to the icon of Mahāpratisarā in many particulars (op.cit., pp. 54-55).
and hatchet (? ) in the three of the left hands ; the remaining hands are broken. The front face represents a benign expression and prominent teeth are visible in the left and right faces. There is a miniature figure of Dhyānī Buddha Amitābha on the tiara of the goddess. A crawling figure of Ganesa below the seat of the goddess, is flanked by two roaring lions and this happens to be an interesting feature. Further, she wears the same type of ornaments, particularly necklace and the armlets, and her head-dress consisting of a number of tiers is exactly similar to that of Vāgīśvarī in the Nālandā statue. The edges of the partly damaged stela of the image of Bhrikuti are decorated with the flame-like design as in the case of the stela of the icon of Vāgīśvarī. The inside border of the stela, decorated with bead-design in rounded volume, resembles that of the Mandhuk image of Ganesa. In spite of its some similarities with the Nālandā Vāgīśvarī and the Mandhuk Ganesa images of the 1st year of Gopāla II, the icon of Tārā appears to be slightly later than the above images and may be dated towards the end of the reign of Gopāla II on account of its some hitherto- unnoticed features, such as the body with slight flexion and the increasing curves in the contour, flower-designed sari, various ornaments and the saptaratha pedestal.

An image of Vishnu (fig. 26), carved in black stone, and found at Bāghāurā, Comilla district, is dated in the 3rd year of Mahīpāla (c. 977 - 1027 A.D. supra, p. 26) and its stylistic posteriority to the preceding sculptures is supported by the date it bears. In this figure the god is shown as standing
in the samapadasthānaka pose and is holding gada and chakra in the upper hands and śankha in the lower left hand and the lower right hand with lotus carved in the palm shows the varada pose. The deity is flanked by Lakshmi and Sarasvati on two sides. The god wears a benign smile and his face with triangular lips is a bit longish. A horse-shoe-shaped halo, already seen in the Arial Gaurī image in the low relief, has two borders, the inside of which is of the beaded design in rounded volume and this feature is a new addition. The stela is divided into three sections; the middle section contains the rampant horse on either side of the god and though this variety is first met with in this Bengal image, it already made appearance in the Nālandā Buddha\(^1\) of the circa late 7th and 8th-century A.D. and the other images\(^2\) from Bihar belonging to the reign of Devapāla (c. 812 – 50, A.D.). The figures of Lakshmi and Sarasvatī have the separate stales indicated by the incised lines, illustrating a new feature. The separate halos, not the stela, are already shown in the attendants of the Sarvāṇī image from Deulbādi (supra, pp. 43–44). This figure of Vishnu strikingly resembles an earlier icon of the same god from Dāpthū, Bihar (fig. 27), of the late 9th – early 10th century A.D.

1. Huntington, op.cit., fig. 163.
2. Ibid., figs. 29, 30, 31.
Another relief carved in black stone is an image of Ganesa (fig. 28) belonging to next, that is, the 4th year of Mahāpāla comes from Nārāyanpur, Comilla district, a place not far from Mandhuk which has yielded a statue of the same god, (supra, pp. 59), the sculpture depicts Gaṇapati seated in sukhāsana, holding a radish, and a rosary in the upper and lower right hands and an axe in the upper left hand; the sweets to which the trunk of the god is applied are held by the lower left hand. The ornaments worn by the god are more delicate than those of his Mandhuk counterpart and the figure is more massive than that of the Mandhuk sculpture. And it appears to be slightly later than the Mandhuk figure.

Another contemporary example is an image of Buddha of black stone hailing from Ujjāni, Fariḍpur district, now an exhibit in the Dhaka Museum. In this sculpture the god is seated in the vajraparyāvaha pose on a lotus over a low pedestal. The right hand of the deity is in the bhūmisparśa-mudrā and the left with the palm upward is placed on the soles of the feet. A vajra, a padma, human figures, horse, elephant etc. are carved on the pedestal. There is the branching foliage of the Bodhi tree at the top of the stela. Modelled in high relief, this image of Buddha is characterised by the stylised rows of curls of hairs with ushnīṣha at the top covering the head and long pierced ear-lobes touching the shoulders. The vigour of the body is

1. Bhattasali, op. cit. pl. VIII.
revealed in its well rounded form. The uttarīya which leaves the right shoulder and hand bare is fine and diaphanous. Some features of the Baghāūrā Vishnu icon, such as the halo with two borders the inside of which is carved in high relief, the division of the stela and the rampant horse on either side of the god and the two decorated swans above it are shown in this figure and tend to place it in the second half of the 10th century A.D.

To this period belong two bronze images, one of Avalokiteśvara and the other of Maitreya (fig. 29), both found at Jhewari and preserved in the Indian Museum. Both of them are characterised by open eyes bereft of any spiritual expression, prominent auspicious lines round the neck, bulging eye-apples, raised eye-brows, kundalas decorated with a flower-shaped motif, the lotus-pedestal with single rows of downwards petals and a solid stela with a semi-circular top. And these features suggest a date in the second half of the 10th century A.D. Iconographically and stylistically, they are close to a bronze image of Maitreya found at Nālandā and preserved in the local Museum, of which the latter happens to be a replica. In all likelihood this image of

1. Mitra, op. cit., fig. 50.
2. According to Debala Mitra these two images seem to have flanked an image of Buddha in a single composition.
3. EIB, fig. 84.
Maitreya was imported from Jhewari.

Two icons of Vasudhārā belong to the same period, one from Jhewari and preserved in the Indian Museum and the other from the Chittagong area and now on display in the Asutosh Museum. They represent the usual Jhewari style, such as prominent nipples, plus-marked navel and bulging eye-apples. They are characterised by the hairs gathered on the crown and tied by a cord which is arranged crosswise, and by ornaments like an ear-stud in the right ear, a flower-shaped kundala in the left ear, vālaysa and curved armlets. Though the Indian Museum sculpture is better in execution than the Asutosh Museum specimen, these two icons appear to be the works of the same artist.

A brass image of Śiva-Lokesvarā found at Barisal and now on display in the Asutosh Museum, is marked by some distinctive features. Standing on a double-petalled lotus placed on a triratha pedestal, the two-armed god is holding a kapāla in the right hand and a trisūla in the left. On his tiara is a miniature figure of Dhyānī Buddha and there is an unidentified seated figure on the top left corner of the prabhā. Two male

1. Mitra, op. cit., fig. 55.
2. Ibid., fig. 88.
3. J.N. Banerjea, Development of Hindu Iconography, pl. XLVI, fig. 4. Kalyan Kumar Dasgupta expresses doubt as to whether this image can be described as Śiva-Lokesvarā, Buddhism : Early and Late Phases, pp. 103 ff.
attendants and two donors are carved on the pedestal. The body of the god is suggestive of a disciplined vigour. The better execution and some new features such as the śiraśchakra with superposed umbrellas, the well-carved oblong prabhā which is seen in the Avalokiteśvara image¹ from Jhewari, the slender bodily form, the heavily-laden upper eye-lids tend to suggest a somewhat later date for this sculpture; it may be dated in the first half of the 11th century A.D.

The relief of Avalokiteśvara from Jhewari, noted above, seems to have been carved in the same period. The icon is characterised by the slender bodily type which shows the flexion, the pleated garment and the edges of the halo and the prabhā decorated with flame-like designs.

A contemporary octo-alloy statue of Gaurī (fig. 30) found at Sonāraṇg, Dhaka district, portrays the four-armed goddess as standing on a lotus-seat placed on a lotus pedestal which is almost separated from the back slab as in the Lokanātha image from Sylhet (supra, pp. 51 - 52), the goddess Gaurī is holding a rosary and a trident like the branch of a tree with three offshoots in the upper hands; while the lower hands carry a fruit and a vase. An alligator, the vāhana of the goddess, is carved near the lotus pedestal. A flower is carved behind her head. The petrifying tendency in the modelling and the

¹. Mitra, op.cit. fig. 48.
somewhat stiff legs are shown in the new addition. The dating seems to be supported by the type of the stela which is edged by a flame-like design and decorated at the top by an embellishment and is found in many images from North Bengal and some from Kurkihār. During the 12th century A.D. this type of stela was well executed in the Buddha image from Kurkihār and the Vishṇu figure from Sagardighi, Murshidābād district. Further support is obtained from an inscribed Vishṇu (fig. 31) from Mandoi, Rajshahi district, belonging to the 4th year of Vigrahapāla III (c. 1043-70 A.D., i.e. 1046-47 A.D.), which displays affinities with it in respect of the facial expression, the treatment of the body, ornaments and the stela. The image seems to be either an import from North Bengal or the work of an artist of North Bengal who settled in the Dhaka region.

In an icon of Śiva Nātārāja (fig. 32) carved in black stone, found at Palgiri, Comilla district, a few developed features are noticeable. It depicts the god Śiva as dancing on the back of his Vāhana, the bull and thus represents a new iconic type which emerged in the Vanga-Samatata region. In

2. Ibid., figs. 69 - 71.
3. Ibid., fig. 186.
4. Ibid., fig. 282.
5. For details of Bengal Nātārāja images, see Mukulesur Rahman, 'Śiva-Nātārāja', JVRM, 6, pp. 73 ff.
respect of the number of hands these images can be resolved into two varieties; ten-handed and twelve-handed. The ten-handed variety is well represented by the image under study as well as two more examples, one from Shankarbandha, Dhaka district, and another of unknown findspot. The latter image is the solitary bronze version of the theme and is currently in the Amritaghateswar temple in Melakkadambur in the Chidambaram taluk of the South Arcot district, Tamilnadu. Iconographically all of them are almost identical. The Palgiri image shows the god with the urdhvalinga and as displaying in a clockwise manner abhaya, khetaka, pśa, kapāla, danda, trisula, a short staff, vajra and khadga, the normal right hand exhibiting the gajahasta pose. The god wears a long garland, a nāgopavīta and a jewelled waist-girdle. The figures of Gaṅgā and Yamunā who are standing in the tribhanga pose, on either side, flank the god. The seated figures of Gānēśa, Brahmā, Śiva, Visnu and kārttikeya are represented at the top of the stela. Two kneeling devotees, two dancers, and the musicians are carved in the bottom.

1. Bhattasali, op. cit., pl. XLII. The Palgiri image is also on display in the Dhaka Museum.

2. My attention to this sculpture was kindly drawn by Kalyan Kumar Dasgupta. According to him the image might have been acquired by Araiyan Rajaraja, the general of Rajendra-Chola (c.1014-1044 A.D.) and was presented to his master.
The facial expression is benign, though the figure is endowed with the strength and vigour of a dancer adept in the *tandava* mode. The vivacity is further articulated in the figure of the bull which is seen as dancing in the ecstatic joy with one of its rear legs upraised and as looking wistfully up at its master (*devatā-vikshana-tatpara* attitude of the relevant iconographic description of such *Natarāja* figures). The same features, stylistic as well as iconographic, are present in the other example hailing from Śāṅkarabandha, except the stela which is different from that of the specimens from Palgiri and Bhārellā (see below). It has an aureole surrounded by a miniature stela inside. In any case, the Śāṅkarabandha and Palgiri images, particularly the latter, have turned out to be the two best examples of the hieratic art of Vanga-Samatā, or for that matter, of Bengal. Collectively the icons depicting Śiva dancing on bull constituted a distinctive iconic type originating in Vanga-Samatā which later entered the icono-plastic art of the neighbouring countries like Assam, Bihar and Orissa.1

The image of *Natarāja*2 assigned to the 18th year of Ladahachandra (985 - 1010 A.D., supra, p. 31.) from Bhārellā, Comilla district, belongs to the second or the twelve-handed variety, all the right hands of which are broken except the one

2. Bhattasali, op.cit. pl. XLIV.
disposed in the ājali pose above the crown of the god with a left hand. Two left hands and all portions below the knee are broken. One of the remaining left hands holds the tail of a snake which forms a canopy over the head. Iconographically, it is practically identical with the above-noted specimens but it is marked by an amount of petrification in the modelling which has been noticed in the figure of Gauri from Sonārāṅg. This, in addition to other features, such as the eye-brows bending at the outer ends and two beaded collars, distinguish it from the ones described above and tend to place it in a later time-scale, somewhere between 1050 and 1150 A.D. The dating is also supported by the characters of the inscription which its pedestal bears.

Reference may be made to a contemporary lithic example representing the Heramba form of the god Ganaṇapati. Unearthed at Rāmpāl and now housed in the Dhaka Museum, it shows the god with five heads and ten hands sitting on a roaring lion, instead of his usual vāhana, the rat. There are six miniature figures on the top of the stela which seemingly constitute an interesting feature. Thus such figures of Heramba-Ganaṇapati are very rare and thus it is an extremely valuable object of the Bengal repertory. Incidentally, this rare iconic type is represented by a few examples hailing from neighbouring countries like Nepal and  

1. The inscription designates the figure as Narttēvāra.
An image of Sūrya discovered at Kulkuri, Faridpur district, dated in the 12th year of Govinda Chandra (1020 – 55 A.D., supra, pp. 31) shows the god as standing on his car drawn by seven horses and driven by the charioteer Aruna. He is, as usual, in the company of Dandi and Pingala and his two wives and female attendants, Ushā and Pratyushā, the last two being carved on the pedestal. He is also holding his characteristic attributes, the full-blown lotuses. The chest of the god is characterised by a knot of straps, which appears to be a common feature of the Bengal Sūrya images in the later period. The round-shaped face with raised eye-brows of the Jhewari type, the graceful and elegant mannerism, and the somewhat slim bodily form first met with in the above-noted Vishnu image from Bāghaurā, Kārttimukha with floral motifs and Vidyadharas with their consorts are some of the noticeable features of this sculpture. To this type of Sūrya icons also belongs a

1. See my article, 'Ganapati Images of Bengal' in JAIH, XII, pp. 143, 145.
2. Majumdar op. cit., pl. LXX, fig. 169.
3. However, two images, one from Rājair, Faridpur district and another from somewhere in Rāmpāl (Bhattasali, op. cit., pl. LXI, fig. a; pl. LXVI, fig. b), have no armour or the knotted straps on the chest.
Another contemporary example is a representation of Vishnu unearthed at Pākpārā, Dhaka district belonging to the 23rd year of Govindachandra. The figure is similar to the Kulkuri Sūrya image in respect of eyebrows, and other physical features, arrangement and design of the ornaments, decoration of the upper part of the stela. In addition some new features make appearance in this figure, such as the well-decorated swans on the makara-ending horizontal bar which is shown at the level of the shoulders of the god, and rampant leogryphs on elephants on either side of the deity, the leogryphs on elephant being first visible in the Nālandā Buḍḍha image. Though the pair of lotuses depicted behind the hands are first encountered in the Bāghāura Vishnu relief and behind the right hand of the above-noted Sukhabāspur Tārā, the same flowers in this figure are beautifully carved with long stalks springing from the base of the lotus-seat of the main deity and this feature is first met in the Sukhabāspur Tārā icon (stalks absent in the Bāghāura-deity). The figure is distinguished by some features which include the heavily-laden half-closed eyes, a bit longish and sensuous face and prominent knees indicated by round incised lines.

To this period, that is, the first half of the 11th

1. Huntington, op.cit., fig. 217.
2. Ibid., fig. 67.
3. Ibid., fig. 163.
century A.D., also belongs an image of Kalyāṇasundara of Śiva, unearthed at Śaṅkarbandha, near Rāmpāl, now an exhibit in the Dhaka Museum. This sculpture portrays the marriage scene of Śiva and Pārvatī. In this relief, the god is shown as standing behind the goddess. This feature, palpably a regional one, assigns it to a different iconic type, since at Ellora, Elephanta and at other sites, the god stands by the side of Pārvatī. In other respects, however, the example is similar to the images found elsewhere. In the present relief the god carries a trident in the right hand and places the left hand on a raised support without holding any object; the figure of Pārvatī is short having her head reaching up to the top of the abdomen of Śiva; she carries a casket and a metallic round mirror in her hands. The stela has eleven compartments which bear the figures of supernatural beings, gods and demigods, such as the Trinity, the eight guardians of the quarters, the nine planets, a group of eight gods, a group of six bearded men, a group of six ladies with offerings, the musicians etc. An umbrella with a long handle over the head of the couple is held by a man. Another Kalyāṇasundara image, which is smaller than the Śaṅkarbandha icon, discovered somewhere near Rāmpāl, now on display in the Museum of the Vangiya Sahitya Parishat.

1. Bhattasali, op. cit., pl. XLVII, fig. b. Kalyāṇasundara or Vangiya.
Calcutta, is affiliated with the above specimen from Sahkarbandha. This image is characterised by round-shaped face which is already shown in the Sonārag Gaurī and Kulkurī Sūryā icons as well as the Jhewari images and the triangular lips which are first met with in the Viṣṇu figure from Bāghaurā.

An image of Kalyāṇasundara hailing from Chatingram, Bogra district, now preserved in the Rajshahi Museum belongs to the variety in question, in which, however, the god carries a kartri in his left hand. Besides, the divine groom and the bride are shown in quarter profile.

A figure of Hēruka in black chlorite stone, discovered at Subhapur, Comilla district, housed in the Dhaka Museum, shows some new stylistic features. The god has two hands. His right hand, which is raised, holds the vajra, which is broken away, and the left hand, the khatvānga with the banner and two bells are attached to it. There is a miniature figure of the Dhyānī Buddha Akṣobhya on the tiara of the god. The deity wears an enigmatic smile which claims attention. Decorated with a skull-garland, he is engaged in dancing with the right leg raised and the left leg in the dancing pose. The upper part of the body is uncovered, while the lower part has a short trouser-like garment reaching the knee, a pleated portion of which with frizzle ends hanging in front. Some new features,

1. Majumdar (ed.), op.cit., pl. X, fig. 27.
2. Bhattasali, op.cit., pl. XII.
such as the head-dress, the rhythm of the dance which is well-expressed by the balanced body, show the development and thus suggest a date for this sculpture in the second half of the 11th century A.D. This icon is reminiscent of two figures of the same deity, one found at Nālandā and now belonging to the collection of the Indian Museum¹ and another from Ratnagiri, Orissa. It deserves to be noted that types represented by the images from Subhapur, Nālandā and Orissa spread to south-east Asian countries like Sumatra, as exemplified by an image of Heruka found at Padang Lawas, Central Sumatra.²

To this period also belongs an image of Buddha (fig. 33) carved in black stone discovered at Mahakālī, Dhaka district. The god is seated in dhyanāsana on a double-petaled lotus-seat inside a trefoil arch, the petals of the lotus being beautifully carved. The slim bodily type in the modelling of the preceding ones makes appearance in this figure. There are the representations of rampant leogryph on elephant on the two sides of the deity. The pinnacle of the temple over the trefoil arch with two borders and a number of tiered stages on either side of the arch is the new addition. These architectural representations are first met with in this specimen. It is similar to the Uma-Mahāsvara image from

1. TAA, fig. 173.
2. N.K. Sahu, Buddhism in Orissa, fig. 34.
Thakur-Manda, Manda, Rajshahi (fig. 34), belonging to the circa 11th century A.D. in respect of the two-bordered trefoil arch with a number of tiered stages. The pinnacle of the temple is, however, absent in the Manda figure.

Another contemporary specimen is a rare icon of the Dhyāni Buddha Ratnasambhava of stone hailing from Vikramapura. The god is seated in the vajraparyanka pose inside a trefoil arch with a number of tiered stages capped by an amalaka and stupa finial. The right hand of the deity with a globular object (ratna) on the palm is resting on the right knee and the left hand with the palm upward is placed on his lap. The stylised rows of curls of hairs and ushnīsha with an object which seems to be a ratna, cover the head. The prominent nipples remind us of some of the jhewari images. The figures of Jambhala, Vasudhāra and jewels are carved in the pedestal. This image is related to the Uma-Mahēśvara figure from Manda in respect of trefoil arch with a number of tiered stages capped by an amalaka.

During this period three images, one of Avalokiteśvara with Tārā (fig. 8), the second one of Chunda (fig. 9) and the third one of Siva-Maṇjuśrī (fig. 199).

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1. TAA, fig. 199.
2. Pratapaditya Pal identifies it as Siva-Maṇjuśrī.
3. This belongs to the collection of the late S.K.Saraswati. According to Pratapaditya Pal, the image is to be identified as Sarasvatī and the sakti of the first six-armed male figure (fig. 8) (J.N. Banerjea Volume, pp. 326 ff).
third one of Śāridevi-vasudhārā, all hailing from the Chittagong district, the exact findspots being unknown, are stylistically affiliated with some images from Jhewari included in the same district. Like the Jhewari examples, the present ones are also characterised by the bulging eye-apples, prominent nipples and single-petalled lotus pedestal with downward petals. These images are characterised by prominent auspicious lines round the neck, the last line of which is fashioned like necklace. While the Chundā image is similar to the other two bronzes (fig. 8), it calls for comparison with an 11th-century metal image of vajrapāṇi from Nalanda, now preserved in the Nalanda Museum in terms of modelling and physical features including facial expression, eyes and the last auspicious line at the neck, the other common features being the mukutā and the single-petalled lotus-seat. And thus the Vajrapāṇi image seems to be an import from the Chittagong district. The figure of Śāridevi-vasudhārā, bearing name in the pedestal inscription, is similar to the Chundā figure in respect of the eye-brows, the designs of the edges of the stela and the flower-motif kundalas and the head-dress of the goddess is similar to that of the two above-noted Vasudhārā figures, one from Jhewari and the other from an unknown place of the Chittagong district. Indeed, till these three bronzes have a strong family likeness and may be

1. Mitra, op. cit., fig. 91.
2. TAA, fig. 168.
regarded as the works of the same artist.

A few elements showing the progress of the sculptural style are marked by the black stone figure of Gaurī hailing from Paikpāra. It shows the goddess with four hands, flanked by female attendants, is standing in samapadasthānaka pose on a lotus. She holds boon, rosary, trident and protection. A mongoose-like animal below the lotus pedestal, two devotees and antelopes are represented. The figures of Kinnara and Kinnari instead of the hamsa and the foliage devices decorating the upper part of the stela constitute a new feature and seems to suggest a later date for the Paikpāra icon and tend to place it in the first half of the 12th century A.D.

Another contemporary example is a black stone icon of Vishnu found at Sukhabāspur. In the new addition the eye-brows slightly bending at the outer ends, the knot of the fluttering scarves near the ears and the wavy-folded garment are shown in this figure.

Later developments are articulated in an image of Chandi from Rāmpāl, which have fortunately been corroborated by the date which it bears in the inscription on its pedestal. According to the inscription, it was dedicated in the 3rd year

1. Bhattacharji, _op. cit._, pl. LXVII, fig. a.
2. Ibid., pl. XXVI, fig. a.
3. Ibid., pl. LXIX.
of Lakshmanaśena, (1159-1206 A.D., supra, p. 35) that is, in 1161-62 A.D., the goddess has four hands, holding boon, elephant-goad, lotus and vase. Two elephants are pouring water from the upturned pitchers over the head of the goddess and their trunks hold the pitchers. She is accompanied by two female attendants on her two sides. A springing lion, the vāhana of the deity is carved in the pedestal. The figure is modelled in the round from the neck downwards. Besides the benign facial expression, open eyes and overall gracefulness of the goddess, the figure is endowed with full round lower lip, prominent chin, the very wavy-folded garment with frizzle hem and sumptuous ornaments and these new features suggest the stylistic development.

A black stone figure of Sarasvatī found at Vajrayogini, Dhaka district (fig. 35), seems to belong to the type represented by the Chandī image which has been described above. Seated in sukhasana under a trefoil arch, the four-armed goddess is holding a rosary and a book in the upper hands, while the normal pair of hands are playing on a lyre. The carvings on the pedestal include a number of coils of lotus-stalk among which a swan, and a devotee. In this instance also the goddess is modelled in the round from the neck downwards and wears similar type of garments and jewelleries. The eyes carved in the oblique cut in the corners, a more petrifying tendency of the modelling and the better execution of the arch seem to indicate a slightly later
date for this sculpture. It may be placed towards the end of the 12th century A.D. Incidentally, this figure of Sarasvatī may be compared with a figure of Vishnu¹ from Gosānīvādī, Dhaka district, in respect of style and workmanship.

A representation of Mahāmayā² (fig 36) found at Kagajipādā, Dhaka district, is a notable contemporary example. The goddess has four hands, holding a rosary and a book in the upper hands and the two normal hands are in the dhyāna pose, placed below the breasts. The lower portion of the goddess below the waist shows a well-carved linga in high relief. The image is characterised by a full round face, the eye-brows which are doubly curved at the outer ends and ample breasts. In addition the head-dress, the top of which is carved outside the aureole, and each ear having double ear-ornaments are added in this figure.

1. *Ibid.*, pl. XXVII.
2. The description of this image as that of Mahāmayā and Tripurāsundari (same as Tripurā Bhairavi) by Bhattasali (op.cit., pp. 192-94) and Banerjea (DHI, pp. 493-509, and in HB, p. 452) have appear to be correct. A scholar has described this figure as of Gaurī in her Apiṭākuchi form (D.C. Bhattacharyya, *Iconology of Composite Images*, p.29), but it does not agree with the description of the goddess. Also the evidence on which he has relied is not relevant to the image.
To this period belongs an image of Śiva-ardhanārīśvara discovered at Pārāpā, Dhaka district, now in the Rajshahi Museum. The image is mutilated. Two hands, one at the shoulder and the other at the elbow, and the lower portion of the figure are broken. The figure is modelled in the fully round. The right portion of the body represents the aspect of Śiva, while the left half bears the representation of Pārvatī. The sculpture, though damaged, is capable of conveying the impression of its admirable workmanship and the grace and elegance in its original state of preservation.

A statue of Viśnu from Deora, Faridpur district, preserved in the Dhaka Museum, displays certain hitherto unnoted presumably late features, such as the heavy-face countenance, the rather stiffened legs with round high mass indicating the knees and a dhoti without hem. A late date for the sculpture is also suggested by a jewelled mukuta consisting of a number of tiers with āmalaka at the top and the waist-girdle containing a chain-like tassel hanging in front and the cutting of the back slab following the outline of the main figure in the peculiar fashion. These features tend to place it in the first half of the 13th century A.D. Similar features are also seen in an image of Viśnu recovered from Sundarban, West Bengal, and

1. Bhattasali, op. cit., pl. LII
2. Ibid., pl. XXVI, fig. b
3. R.D. Banerji, East Indian School of Mediaeval Sculptures, pl. XLIV, fig. c
another statue of the same divinity from Makkatatila, Murshidabad district, the latter having, however, some unusual features like the floral devices covering the whole upper part of the stela and a full-blown lotus with stalk held by the upper right hand of the god, which seem to suggest that it was fashioned after the Deorā image.

II

Not only in stone and metal, but also in the media of terracotta and wood (see below) the people of ancient Bengal expressed their creative impulse. In fact, for its ready availability and easy tractibility clay has been one of the most popular materials for creating objects of art ever since the dawn of civilization. In Bengal the tradition of this terracotta art goes back to the second-first millennium B.C., as evidenced by the find at Pandu Rajar Dhibi (Burdwan district, West Bengal). Besides them, there are a few specimens found at sites like Harinarayanpur (District 24 Parganas), which stylistically come close to those hailing from Jhukur and Jhangar (Baluchistan) of the first millennium B.C. Coming to

1.  Ibid., pl. XLIV, fig. a.
the Maurya period, from when the history of terracotta art becomes clear, we are confronted with a fair number of examples, discovered in course of excavations and explorations at sites like Bangarh (West Dinajpur, West Bengal), Tamluk (Midnapur district, West Bengal) and Chandraketugarh (District 24 Parganas) and they are akin to the materials of the same period, recovered elsewhere, such as Patna, Buxar and Bulandibagh in Bihar, and Mathura, Kausāmbi, and Ahichchhatra in Uttar Pradesh. However, most of these terracottas of ancient Bengal, representing human and animal beings, belong to the type which Kramrisch has designated as 'ageless'. The remaining examples are of the 'time-bound variety' of the classification of Kramrisch. They show the use of the mould in respect of the face and that of the applique technique in making ornaments, head-dresses, trappings and the like.¹ Terracottas of the 'time-bound variety', earliest of which are datable to the Maurya period, have been found from different places, a notable site being Tamluk,² ancient Tāmralipta. One of the finest examples of early Indian terracotta art has been found at this site. Chronologically it belongs to the last lap of the Maurya age or the early part of the Śunga period. It is an

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almost complete plaque and depicts a nearly full-length female figure, except her feet and ankles, with elaborate coiffure and jewellery. The plaque was produced from a mould and its final finishing was done by a scraper or knife. However, the finds of all these well-known sites include a number of terracottas bearing close affinities with the specimens discovered at the extra-Bengal sites, also noted above. Chronologically they belong to the Kushāṇa and Gupta culture-epochs. Among the examples found at other sites mention may be made of a fragmentary terracotta female figure found at Birol (Rajshahi district, Bangladesh), now belonging to the collection of the late S.K. Saraswati, shows that like many other figures of the Kushāṇa period this piece was produced by the mould and its front and back sides were fashioned separately and then joined together. A male figure, found at Tamluk and datable to the Kushāṇa period, exhibits Hellenistic influence in its face. Terracottas of the Gupta period found at different sites of Bengal betray the emotional trend of the eastern version of the contemporary classical idiom. And one of the well-known representative

1. For a detailed description of this piece, see E.H. Johnston, 'A Terracotta Figure at Oxford!; JISQA, X, 1942, pp. 94-102, pl. IX. Also S.K. Saraswati, op.cit., pp. 98-102, fig. 38.
3. Ibid., pp. 105-6.
examples of the genre in a lotus-shaped medallion found at Mahāsthān (Bogra district), now preserved in the Indian Museum. It shows a couple in a homely and intimate atmosphere, probably engaged in a conversation, and their bare-bodied torsos are sensitively modelled. Besides the clay, the other popular plastic medium during this period was stucco (mixture of clay and lime) and the few surviving examples include, among others, two stucco heads, one from Tejnandi (Rajshahi district), now in the Saraswati collection and the other from Rāṅgāmāti (Murshidabad district), now in the possession of the Archaeological Directorate of the Government of West Bengal.

Perhaps the most celebrated site in the domain of the terracotta art of Bengal is Pāhārpur (Rajshahi district), where the colossal brick temple of the vast monastic complex, constructed during the period of Dharmapāla (775-807 A.D., supra, p. 25), is richly decorated by terracotta plaques. These depict the typical dharmachakra and triglyph symbols, divine and semi-divine beings, mythical animals and the episodes of the epics, and more, the everyday life of the contemporary Bengalees pulsating with their joys and sorrows. However, prior to them are the terracottas which have of late been discovered at Maināmatī (see below).

The area of our study has not so far yielded any terracotta which is contemporaneous with the pre-Christian

1. Ibid., fig. 47.
examples coming from the above-noted sites. The earliest
evidence of the terracotta art of Vanga-Samata is furnished
by the plaques which once used to decorate the walls of
different structures, notably the central shrine, of the
extensive monastic complex at Mainamati (Bangladesh), the
establishment being similar in general plan and lay-out to the
movement at Paharpur; the former was constructed about a half
a century earlier than that at Paharpur. Architecturally, the
central shrine of the Mainamati vihara is similar to that at
Paharpur in respect of its cruciform plan, multi-angular
recessed corner and terracotta panel decoration, and together
with its Paharpur counterpart the central shrine at
Mainamati monastery served as the prototype of the Chandri Loro
Jongrang and Chandi Sewu temples in Central Java. However, as
regards the clay sculptures of Mainamati they are similar in
content and style to those of the Paharpur repertoire. As at
Paharpur, human and animal representations are numerically the
largest at Mainamati and the human figures belong practically
to all stations of life—daily wage-earners, peasants, warriors,

1. For a succinct and critical description of these two
monuments, see Gayatri Sen-Majumdar, Buddhism in
Ancient Bengal, pp. 63-72, 125-128.

2. Terracotta plaques and ornamental bricks have been
found in situ in the south-eastern basement wall of
the central shrine at Mainamati.
archers and hunters. Barring the representations of warriors wearing knotted straps and heavy ear-ornaments, the figures are mostly without upper garment, and are dynamic in expression. Semi-divine beings, such as Vidyadhara, Kinnara and Kinnari, are characterised by bulging eyes and not unoften by prominent nipples like their counterparts in the terracottas of Pāhārpur and also in some bronzes from Chittagong, including those from Jhewari. In respect of dress, ornaments, weapons and general physiognomical features too the affinity between the figures of the Maināmatī and those of the Pāhārpur repertories as well as some of the Chittagong bronzes is unmistakably exemplified by short-trouser, dhoti, ear-ornament, armlet and shield and sword. One cannot also afford to miss the half-mocking weird smile and outward-turned lips of some figures of these plaques as well as some bronzes from Maināmatī and Chittagong. The roundish shaped ear-ornaments decorated with a small round object in the centre and the necklace having the same design are shown in the above-noted figures of warriors, hunters and archers from Maināmatī. Similar ear-ornaments are found in the sculpture from Chittagong (fig. 8). In some respects the warriors of Maināmatī art also

1. Cf. Alam, op.cit., pl. XII, fig. a and MASI, 55, pl. LVII, fig. d.
2. BIB, fig. 83; B.N. Mukherji, op.cit., fig. 50.
3. Figs. 7, 9; Mitra, op.cit., figs. 45, 81.
recall their brethren at Bhasu Vihara at Mahāstān (Bogra district). In fact, the figures of the warriors, archers and hunters of Maināmatī have a close kinship with members of the same professions portrayed in the terracotta art of Pāhārpur and also that of Mahāstān. Stylistically and thematically this kinship is quite apparent. For example, a plaque of Maināmatī portraying two deer running and looking at the back is strikingly similar to the one of Pāhārpur. Similarly, a representation of Kīrttimukha from Maināmatī is very similar to a Kīrttimukha from Pāhārpur. Stylistically, the terracottas of Maināmatī may be dated to the first half of the 8th century A.D.

Among the stray finds is a crowned figure which probably represents a Deva king or a Bodhisattva. More or less of the same period, the figure has its hairs knotted on the head with a fan-shaped hood and this hair style is reminiscent of a female head from Chandraketugarh, now in the collection of the State Archaeological Gallery, West Bengal, of about the

1. Alam, op.cit., pl. XIII, figs. c, d.
2. MASI, 55, pl. XLVII, fig. a.
3. Alam, op.cit., pl. XIII, fig. a.
4. MASI, 55, pl. XLVII, fig. a.
5. Alam, op.cit., pl. XI, fig. b.
6. S.S. Biswas, Terracotta art of Bengal, pl. LVI, fig. b.
2nd century A.D. Mention may also be made of a half-kneeling male figure, from Maināmatī, of the same period, holding a pot in the left hand, the right hand being broken. The manner in which the hairs are seen falling on the shoulders is reminiscent of the same of a Pāhārpur terracotta example.²

The terracottas of Maināmatī, together with those of Pāhārpur and Mahāsthān, bear eloquent testimony to the skill of the unknown Bengalee artists of bygone days. Comparatively the Maināmatī examples have been claimed to be superior to those of Pāhārpur in richness of details and artistic perfection, in spite of their bad preservation.³ Incidentally, the terracotta finds from Bhasu Vihara at Mahāsthān, which include a half-man and half-fish, a half-man and half-flower motif and a panel depicting an archer aiming at an elephant with a cobra behind him in striking pose, appear to be somewhat different from the Pāhārpur-Maināmatī series in general character, refinement, style and workmanship, probably because they may be somewhat later in date.⁴

That clay was also used in making independent sculptures, particularly in the Vanga region (roughly the

1. EIB, fig. 102.
2. MASI, 55, pl. XL, fig. c-2.
4. BL, I, 1, 1975, p. 15, pl. VI, figs. 3, 4 ; pl. VII, fig. 5.
present-day Dhaka division, supra, pp. 4-7) is evidenced by finds from some sites of the same. A few such aesthetically notable examples represent Buddha and Bodhisattva and the Brahmanical god Śiva in his Bhairava form, all belonging to the collection of the Dhaka Museum. Most of these Buddhist figures, hailing from Sabbar, near the Dhaka town, are shown as seated in the vajraparyanka pose within niches. The right hand of each figure is disposed in the bhūmisparśa-mudrā and the left hand is placed on the soles of the feet. The body of the Master, is slender and face a bit elongated. Unlike Buddha, Bodhisattva is depicted as seated in different poses, such as, the rājalilāsana and the lalitāsana poses. He places his right hand on his right knee and holds a lotus with long stalk in his left hand. His aureole is indicated by incised line and he is flanked by two stupas carved on two sides. Stylistically all these Buddha-Bodhisattva figures may be dated in the first half of the 9th century A.D.

A miniature representation of Vatuka Bhairava (fig.37), carved in burnt clay and discovered at Raghurāmpur, shows the four-armed deity as of stocky build; he wears a skull-garland and stands in a slightly tribhanga pose on the lotus pedestal, holding a sword in the upper right hand, a staff (the upper part broken), and a kapāla in the upper and lower left hands,

2. Ibid., pl. X, fig. b.
the remaining right hand being broken. In consonance with the iconographic prescription the deity is characterised by a flabby belly, round and rolling eyes and an enigmatic smile. The ribbon on either side of the head, simple and heavy ornaments and particularly the stela composition, which is slightly pointed at the top, suggest a date for this sculpture in the second half of the 9th century A.D. The present image reminds us of a figure of Bhairava (?) (fig. 38), found at Abhâyapur, Monghyr district, which is almost identical with the former in respect of modelling, dress and ornaments and general physiognomical features. It is also reminiscent of a 17th-century Nepalese image of Mahâkâla found at Archaeological Garden, Lalitpur, Nepal.

Two identical statues of Buddha later than the aforesaid figures from Sabhar, have been found at Raghurâmpur. Each of them carries the Buddhist creed inscribed on the pedestal in the characters of the 11th century A.D. The upper part of the stela is broken. In this relief the Master is shown as seated in the vairaparyanka on a double-petalled lotus-seat; his right hand displays bhûmisparśa and the left hand is placed on his lap. A high ushnîsha appears on the head. A trefoil arch, under which the god is seated, is surmounted by a sikhara, while two impressive stupas are seen

1. Ernst and Rose Leonore Waldschmidt, Nepal: Art Treasures from the Himalayas, fig. 25.
on his two sides. The representations of Buddha are graceful, but also somewhat petrified like most of the 11th-century figural sculptures, and this date is supported by the characters of the accompanying inscriptions. En passant, it is aesthetically close to the black stone figure of Buddha from Mahākālī (fig. 33) also of the same period.

III

Extant examples of Indian wood carving of antiquity are few in number and most of them rarely go beyond the 17th century A.D. 1 Significantly, some of the oldest and best wood carvings hail from the ancient Vanga-Samatata region and are now preserved in the Dhaka Museum. 2 About a decade ago was


2. The specimens under study have been discovered in the Dhaka district, the old Vanga region. Specimens from Comilla and its neighbourhood are now on display in Gurushaday Museum at Joka (24 Parganas); but they are late, belonging to the 18th-19th century A.D.
discovered a beautiful figure of Surasundari at North Kazi Qasba, Dhaka. Placed within a niche, this celestial nymph is shown as standing in the *tribhanga* with legs crossed and as having her right hand with a parrot perched on it and the left placed on her waist. "Her well-rounded bosoms, attenuated waist and charming face seem to typify the ideal feminine beauty of India and though a descendant of the dainties of the Mathurā railing pillars is more attractive in her being less voluptuous than the latter'. 1 Among other specimens are a pair of pillars, 2 an image of Garuḍa and a couple of representations of Vishnu. The pillars discovered at Rāmpāl, bear carvings on their top, middle and base and chronologically they are close to the above-noted figure of Surasundari. One (pillar no.1) of these pillar carvings (first-face) represents a goddess as fighting with a demon with a short sword in her right hand. 3 The second face of the same shows a dejected prince sitting under a tree, placing his bow and arrow in neglect on the ground; two dwarfish Gaṇas are shown at the bottom; sculpturally, the figure of the prince represents the

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1. Dr. Dasgupta has drawn my attention to this remarkable example and has kindly allowed me to consult the manuscript of his forthcoming work *Wood Carvings of Eastern India*.

2. Bhattacharji, *op. cit.*, pls. LXXVII, LXXVIII.

3. Ibid., p. 273.
slender bodily type. The third face bears the figure of a double-humped camel, while the fourth face depicts an emaciated ascetic copulating with a deer, the scene being reminiscent of similar ones of prasumaithuna which one meets at Khajuraho and elsewhere. The ascetic has the beard and a chignon at the back and here also the figures of Gānas are visible at the bottom. This ascetic seems to belong to the type of the hermits depicted in two Pāhārpur terracottas\(^1\) in respect of the facial features, the hair style and the general physiognomical features. As regards the other pillar (pillar no. 2), its first face bears a well-carved Kārttimukha on its base,\(^2\) the second face depicts a dancing female figure. The dancing figure is similar to the one represented on a Pāhārpur terracotta,\(^3\) the common features including the head bent to the right, the hair style, the poses of the right hand and the legs, one fold of the lower garment hanging in front and the scarf passing round the hands and hanging on two sides, and the design of the necklace. The third face represents two ladies as attempting to shoot at birds with the string-side of the bow turned towards them, while some foliage is depicted on the fourth face. In addition to these pillars is to be mentioned a wooden lintel hailing from the neighbouring village at Mātesavar in Vikrāmapura. It carries on

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1. *Masi*, 55, pl. XXVI, fig. a; pl. XLVIII, fig. e.
it the conventional familiar design of a pair of cobras intertwined and raising their hoods. Though carved in low relief, the execution is fine and precise, the scales of the cobras still being distinguishable. The design is also met with on the door-frames of the period.  

Among other objects, mention may be made of an image of Garuḍa found at Raghurāmpur (fig. 39). It shows the divine bird as kneeling on a double-petalled lotus pedestal, and though his hands are broken, it seems that they were disposed in the añjali pose. The hairs arranged in ringlets are spread behind, assuming the character of a halo. The bulging eyes, benign face and general physiognomy tend to relate it with the contemporary figures of Garuḍa in stone, as for example, the stone image of Garuḍa (fig. 40) from Nagail, Manda, Rajshahi district. Both of them have some common features, other than the physical ones, such as the beaded collar, the mukuta and the ringlet-type of hairs. It is also more or less similar to another figure in stone hailing from Chowrakasba, Rajshahi district and now on display in the Indian Museum.

A sandalwood image of Vishṇu (now damaged), discovered at Krishnapur, Comilla district, represents the

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2. Huntington, op.cit., fig. 245.
3. Bhattasali, op.cit., pl. XXVII.
four-armed god as standing in samapadasthānaka pose on double-petalled lotus; adorned with a sacred thread and a vanamālā, the deity holds a padma and a śankha in the normal pair of hands and a gadā in the upper right hand and a chakra in the upper left by the rim in the style as seen in the icons hailing from Lakshmankāti (supra, p. 53) and some sites of Bihar; Lakshmi and Sarasvatī are standing on two sides, each also on a double-petalled lotus. There is a Kirttimukha at the top and below it are a pair of flying Vidyadhāras with garlands. On the pedestal are carved a couple of dancing figures flanking the figure of the half-kneeling Garuḍa. There is a corpulent figure sitting cross-legged with arms folded on the right corner of the bottom; he is most probably the donor of the sculpture. Stylistically it may be assigned to the second half of the 11th century A.D.

Another image of Viṣṇu, represented on a capital has been found at Sonāraṅg. It shows the four-handed god as seated in dhyānasana under a trefoil arch, the latter being supported by two pillars. While the lower hands are placed on his lap, the upper ones the outlines of which are now visible, as betrayed by the fine needle-work-like carving, hold some indistinct objects. There are two flying figures on two sides of the god and two flying figures flank the arch. In spite of the appreciable quality of the workmanship, the figure is

1. Ibid., pl. LXXIV.
somewhat petrified in expression. The piece may be placed
towards the end of the 11th or the beginning of the 12th
century A.D.