Arunachal Pradesh, as evident from the foregoing chapters, is situated on crossroads of various cultures and race movements. It was subjected to various cultural influences from fairly early times just as other parts of India. Due to difficulties of communication and resultant delay in progress of exploratory and research endeavour the available relics and literature relating to its art and culture are very meagre as compared to the most other states of the country. Nevertheless, whatever little light they throw, the broad trends and inspiration behind the art heritage of the land can be gleaned with reasonable certainty. Different aspects of its cultures have been touched upon by sociologists and linguists in monographs and compendiums. But any amount of comprehensive study of its art and architecture in historical perspective still remains a desideratum. An attempt is here made to fill in the gap to some extent, in so far as the sculptures and paintings and other relics of plastic art are concerned.

Paucity of materials notwithstanding, traits of manufacture and modes of depiction reveal different categories of items which may be classified under two or three broad heads. Two aspects of Buddhist culture, namely, those associated with the Vajrayāna and Theravāda schools have found firm footing in the two regions of the territory, the former in the west and north-west and the latter in the eastern and south-eastern regions. Both of them
represent living traditions. Along the southern borders of the territory adjoining Assam, however, we come across relics of Brahmanical culture, occasionally with a Tāntrika overtone which obviously represents an offshoot of the culture of Assam and Eastern India thriving across its limits.

Buddhist images of the Vajrayāna inspiration have been met with the habitats of the Monpas and Shedukpens of Tawang, Zemithang, Dirang, Rupa, Shergaon, Kalaktang and numerous other places of the West Kameng district. The Membas and Khambas residing in Mechukha, Tuting, Geling, Mankhota and other places in upper parts of East Siang and Dibang valley districts also possess many such specimens which may be encountered in the gompas, monasteries and private chapels.

Majority of the sculptures are stucco figures and bronze and other metal images. Bas-relief figures or engravings in stone tablets are instanced by a few specimens of Mechukha Gompa. Occasionally beautiful gold images are also encountered. The iconography, art motifs and manufacture at once class them with objects of Tibeto-Bhutanese school of Buddhist art. Miniature images, life-size objects and colossal figures, in relief as well as in the round are fashioned with equal dexterity. Almost all these figures are painted in rich colours like golden, yellow, blue and green, a normal feature of the Tibeto-Bhutanese art. The Buddha, Bodhisattvas, celestial Buddhas, Tārās, gods and goddesses, saints of placid and terrific expressions (the latter mood representing them as the protectors of the sacred doctrine), lamas or
preceptors, their associates as well as other numerous beings of the human, animal and vegetal world and mythical creatures are, in the main, identical with the depiction of the similar specimens of Tibeto-Bhutanese cultures. Chörtens or stūpas containing relics of lamas and other objects of reverence are found near gompas or villages and are held in high respect and awe by local population. The bigger ones are variously made of stone or metal, the latter being preserved inside monasteries and placed near the altar. Miniature metal chörten are also found in different gompas and private households. Way of depiction also is based on the same art tradition. Only very few cases some additional figures of local import like those of local lamas or their associates may be noticed. As is quite evident from the foregoing account and also known facts of Tibetan art almost all these images belong to the domain of religious art and hence, strictly speaking, cannot be classed under sculptures in the sense understood in the European tradition. They are living idols and objects of veneration and worship.

The largest collection of these images has been met with in the Tawang Gompa, the biggest and most important one existing in the territory as well as the whole of India.

Constructed by Lote Gyatso, popularly known as Mera Lama, a monk hailing from a Monpa village sometime in the seventeenth century it belongs to the Gelugpa order of Vajrayāna Buddhism.

Paucity of evidence led scholars to ascribe its date of establishment variously to the forties or the eighties of the seventeenth century. However, the available indications of art and historical relics as well as popular and monastic tradition prevailing among the local Monpa inhabitants and Lamas suggest that introduction of Buddhism long preceded the establishment of this gompa which act in itself is a sufficient proof of the extent and intensity of acceptance of the creed in the locality to justify such a stupendous construction. In and around the gompa are found numerous other smaller gompas some of which belong to the Nimaapa and Karmapa orders that are said to predate the Gelugpa. These beliefs were prevalent among the Monpas prior to the advent of the Gelugpa school sometime in the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries, the final triumph of which was signalised by the establishment of the Tawang Gompa. The first encounter was obviously not at all peaceful and the rivalry finally ended in, almost embroiled, subjugation and suppression of the earlier beliefs. Among these, the Nimaapa order, however, still persists in scattered communities and villages and a few gompas situated in far-away places which somehow survived the initial fury of the newcomers. Some are, again, said to have been brought under control of the new order. Some such gompas around Tawang are those at Urgyenling, Sangeling, and Tsorgeling villages of which the former is now under the central authority of the Tawang Gompa. They are said to be much anterior in date even compared to the Kimne Gompa near the Jang village situated to the east of Tawang. The latter is believed to
have been constructed as early as the twelfth century. As yet materials are not available to us to verify such claims apart from the vague evidence of the relics and traditions. One thing, however, may be mentioned in this connection. Padmasambhava, the famous monk (eighth century A.D.) credited with the introduction of mystic form of Buddhism in Tibet, is believed by the Vajrayāṇa Buddhist population of Arunachal to have visited this land and stayed at different sites. Hills and caves where he lived and meditated are said to bear auspicious marks of his existence, such as his footprints, impression of his head, body, shoes or his attributes, marks of his dog etc. on stone and are visited and venerated by the devotees. Though in the present state of our knowledge it is not possible to scrutinise the veracity of these traditions, it is not altogether improbable that in course of his missionary visits he entered Arunachal Pradesh and passed some time there in meditation as is postulated in local legends. Alternatively, if his original homeland Uddiyana is identified with some site in Eastern India, either in Orissa or Assam, the


2. Padmasambhava is said to have visited Tibet in the eighth century from a place called Uddiyana, variously located somewhere in the north-west of India, viz. Swat valley, or at a place in Orissa or Assam, at the request of the Tibetan king Khrisrong-lde-btsan. After he had completely subdued the rival sects of Bon religion which had been posing immense opposition to Buddhism and established on sound basis the Vajrayāṇa Buddhism Padmasambhava is said to have visited other lands and propagated his creed in those places (*The History of Bengal*, I, ed. R.C. Majumdar, Dacca, 1943, pp. 333n, 673). Lopon or Guru Rimpoche, the name by which he is known in Arunachal as also in Tibet, is remembered with extreme devotion by the Vajrayāṇis which is comparable to that expressed towards Buddha himself.
probability of his visit to Arunachal becomes almost a certainty. Since, it would then be quite likely that even before his visit to Tibet he propagated his creed in Arunachal or on way to Tibet he visited Arunachal through which many routes passed from the eastern parts of India mainland across the frontiers into the said land of mystery. But as has already been pointed out at the outset, available evidences do not help us much to clarify the issue any further.

The above discussion will indicate the antiquity of the Buddhist art objects in West Kameng, and Vajrayāna sites of East Siang and Dibang valley districts. Starting from at least the eleventh or the twelfth century or from a still earlier period we have specimens of different ages coming down to recent times. This art heritage in most of its branches is a ling tradition here. The Lamas of different monasteries themselves manufacture the images and other objects. Otherwise, artists trained in Lamaist discipline are occasionally commissioned to do the work. But as is understandable in such cases of religious art, the name of the artist generally is not recorded on the objects. This is the normal practice of Lamaist tradition in Tibet as well. The identity of the artist can, however, be known especially in case of more recent objects, from oral tradition or records of the monasteries.

The objects also do not offer much variety in the mode of depiction in case of sculptures of same object, deity, person or other beings. Such variation is rather strictly forbidden and never
approved of as in the case of Tibetan Buddhist art. The objects cannot be made by the artist according to his whims or imagination. He must meticulously follow the rules laid down in the manuals and learn them by heart under the guidance of very strict Lama teachers. By hard practice he has to master the details and visualise the objects with the seriousness of meditation and work with extreme care to give shape to his ideas which have thoroughly imbued orthodox tradition vigorously condemning the smallest deviation since that amounts to non-conformity with the religious ideals. And most of the objects, which are manufactured with the aim of preparing the devotees for his salvation, cannot afford to digress from the right course. Some latitude is, however, allowed in case of decorative pieces made to adorn drawing rooms or household. This strict observance of rules and conformity with tradition restrains development of new forms and techniques over the ages. This along with the general anonymity of the artist referred to above render any firm dating of the objects extremely difficult. However, some approximation is possible most on the basis of circumstantial evidence such as the relative position of the monasteries, records of their construction and other such documents regarding the gompas, objects, preserved therein, life history of different Lamas, their activities etc. Absolute evidences like development of different art techniques, materials etc., are seldom forthcoming. Inscriptions on images, paintings and chortens, however, occasionally somewhat mitigate the pains of the art historian. Even the application of colours, paints and preparation
of surfaces in case of the murals as well as the miniatures, especially the Thankas, Mandalas etc., honestly follow the strictures set down in ecclesiastical tradition embodied in old scriptures. Abstruseness and mysticism of Lamaist pantheon and the consequent dangers associated with treading on wrong tracts particularly emphasised in monastic tradition have made the position of the Lama or preceptor unassailable and, as a corollary, the obedience to tradition also unquestionable. Same green, blue, white, red, lilac or other pigments, golden paints and dusts are applied in prescribed proportion on the numerous specimens that have crowded religious and monastic institutions, private household and collections over different periods.

As already noted above, the Tawang Monastery possesses the biggest collection of these sculptures and paintings in the entire territory. Next may be mentioned other monasteries of the adjoining regions most of which remain under the guidance and supervision of Tawang. The Urgyanling Gompa is said to be associated with the Sixth Dalai Lama and considerably predates the Tawang Gompa. This as well as the Sangeling and Tsorgeling Gompas belonged originally to the Nirmapa order which came into clashes with the Gelugpas and finally the Urgyanling Gompa was taken over by the Gelugpas of Tawang Gompa after the establishment of the latter institution in view of the former's association with the Sixth Dalai Lama. Many of the objects of the original gompas still remaining in tact in their collections, therefore, naturally go back to fairly early periods. The collections of
Kimne Gompa of C, twelfth century A.D., and the Gorchasm Chorten at Zemithang, almost contemporaneous with the Tawang Gompa, also preserve relics of early art. Gompas and dzongs or forts at Dirang, Kalaktang, Rupa and Shergaon also are notable having significant collections. The Membas and Khambas of the upper parts of East Siang and Dibang valley districts are two other Buddhist communities professing the same creed. Among their religious establishments the gompas at Medukha, Tuting, Geling, Mankhota etc. are known to possess rich treasures of art. All these objects thus may be classified under three major broad heads, viz., the sculptures, paintings and manuscripts.

Among the sculptures we come across stucco figures of Buddha, Bodhisattvas and Tārās of peaceful and fearful mood in miniature, life-size and colossal forms in almost all the aforesaid monasteries. Representation of Buddha Sakyamuni, Ratnasambhava, Avalokiteśvara, Maitreya Buddha, Buddha Amitābha, Vajradhara, Vajrasattva, Bodhisattva Vajrapāni, eleven-headed thousand-handed and thousand-eyed Bodhisattva, Hevajra, Manjuśrī, white and green Tārās are also known. The portrayal of these deities clearly betrays the Tibetan iconographic tradition. This is but natural in view of the close contact of Arunachal with Tibet and Bhutan, geographically as well as culturally.¹

Legends also connect Buddhism of Arunachal with Tibet and Bhutan as the major fountain-heads wherefrom it derived its inspiration and sustenance. Waves of missionaries and soldiers penetrated

¹. Iconographically Bhutanese deities are very much similar to the Tibetan ones.
the valleys of Arunachal from across Tibetan and Bhutanese frontiers from time to time with different ends in view occasion­ally at the behest of religious and temporal authorities of those lands or request of local populace. Devotees and monks also sent from Arunachal to those lands in pilgrimage and for learning. Their impact on religio-cultural environ is palpable in the sphere of art as well as in other respects.

Let us now say a few words on these Lamaistic icons. Images of Lopon or Guru Rinpoche or Padmasambhava and Atisa in meditative and other postures are found in numerous monasteries. Figures of other deities like Palden Lhamo are met with in monaster­ies like that of Tawang. Chana Dorje or Bodhisattva Vajrapani is another very common figure. Image of Mera Lama, the refounder Gompa of Tawang/is met with in that monastery as well as in other places. Figures of Sixth Dalai Lama and his mother are found in various gompas. Representation of Tsewang Lhamo, the mother of Sixth Dalai Lama, her husband, her husband, Tashi Tendzin and her brother, Dandrup Rinchen are found on the altar of the family chapel of their descendants at the hamlet of Berkhar, south-east of Tawang. Other deities and personages of local import may be encountered in different monasteries. In most of these cases the Lamas them­selves are the artists, though commissioned artists are also employed. These images are constructed by same technique and materials as noticed in Tibet. The surface of the stucco figures are covered by canvas glued on to it and painted with colours prepared out of minerals and vegetal hues. Gold powders are mixed
in prescribed proportion for making illuminating paints which are applied on parts or the entire body of the images as required. Gold leafs are also cut in strips and employed to beautify the figures. Bright garish colours of yellow, red, white, green and blue hues class them with Tibetan school.

Apart from stucco figures, which perhaps form the majority of objects, metal images are also almost equally numerous. The objects remaining identical the mode of depiction varies depending upon the requirement due to difference in material. Bronze, brass and copper images of big size and miniature represent majority of items. The bronze images are in general made in cire-perdue or lost wax process and are often gilded with gold leaf and powder and painted on the surface. The older images can be recognised by patina as also richness of colour and execution which gradually degenerates due to difficulty of the process and increasing expense and availability of cheap chemical substitutes for old natural materials used for paints and colours. Inscriptions on the back or pedestal of certain specimens as well as the relevant iconography are helpful in identifying the images which closely follow manuals. But as compared to the stucco figures the metal images are mostly works of commissioned professionals and not made by the Lamas themselves, though strict observance of the codes of manuals is imperative here, too, as elsewhere in Lamaist art. Beautiful painted gold images are noticed in reserved collections of important monasteries. Portions of palms and other parts of a large copper image of Buddha destroyed by fire have been noticed at Mechukha
Gompa. Fineness of execution in the case is exemplified by the workmanship of the extant parts. Occasionally the parts of the figures are separately cast and then united together by metal pins.

Wooden images richly painted and coloured with golden paints and adorned with gold leafs or precious stones also require mention indicating the richness of tradition.

Stone tablets bearing engraved and painted bas-relief figures of Rin-chin-mela almost in outlines with short inscriptions have been found at Mechukha. Small votive figures in clay are offered to the gompas by the devotees. But they are of little help in art history since their preservation is quite uncertain.

Dates of the images and figures are not definitely known in most cases though this can roughly be determined depending on circumstantial evidence. Some were contemporaneous with the construction of the gompas themselves, while others were collected later on different occasions. Older relics have also been preserved. Relics of the period posterior to the seventeenth century are obviously more numerous, whereas we come across works of earlier periods in gompas like Urgyanling, Sangeling, Tsorgeling, Kimne etc. although a definite date cannot be postulated in each case in the absence of a thorough study of the materials which are not readily available. An approximate dating can, however, be suggested on the basis of minute differences in mode of manufacture, way of depiction, use of materials, state of preservation as well as comparative study with other relics and records of the monasteries.
and tradition. Many of the works have been directly imported or brought by Lamas and devotees from Tibet and Bhutan, while others were local production. The art of image making and casting is still living tradition among the local Buddhist population.

Painters' skill among the Monpas, Sherdukpons, Nembas and Khambas is vivid to a visitor to their habitats, both in the monastic institutions and gompas and secular households. As it were, the colourful natural environment instilled in them a deep fascination for art. Paintings of different class around in monasteries and households alike. These may be broadly sub-divided into decorative and consecrated works. Decorative paintings also deal with religious objects, but in these some latitude is allowed to the artist as compared to the works meant for religious observances where strict conformity with age-old tradition and codes embodied in manuals must be maintained.

The big monasteries as those at Tawang, Urgyanling, Dirang and Rupa contain beautiful specimens of mural painting in the portals and inside the monasteries. Figures of the parents of Sixth Dalai Lama occur in wall painting in Urgyanling Gompa. Secular kings, religious and legendary figures, animals and floral designs depicted in bright colours as on canvas occupy large part of the walls and ceilings of portals. But the colours used being easily soluble in water the damp climate of the territory causes much damage to the materials in case of older specimens which require regular maintenance and occasional restoration.
Thānkās and Mandalas represent two other important categories of paintings. Thānkās or painted scroll are used for decoration as well as religious purposes. Different religious myths, stories or divinities are painted on canvas. It is stitched on the sides with yellow and red bands of fine silken embroidered or otherwise decorated shining cloth giving the appearance of rainbow around the painting. A wooden stick is inserted inside the him bordering at the top to allow the painting to be rolled up. Sides of the hem are secured by leather strips. Lower border has a double him and is endowed with a so-called door (Than-sgo) or root (rtse-ba, i.e., vīya) of brocade or embroidered silk with motifs of primeval waters like dragon, serpents, lotus, waves or clouds etc. The objects of the painting are variously derived from the life of Buddha or Lamaist pantheon. Solitary representations of a central deity or semi-divine being such as Dhyān Buddha, Bodhisattvas, Tārā, Lokapālas or fierce guardians of the world, saints like Padmasabhava, other Lamas and spiritual heroes are portrayed in association with various other sub-ordinate figures and objects. The painting is veiled with a thin silk cover and occasionally bears on its reverse a short description of the theme and mantras. For ritual purposes it is consecrated after completion and generally used as banners in temples and private chapels.

The Mandalas, on the other hand, are paintings means exclusively for religious purposes intended for preparing the monk
for his final sojourn in the path of salvation. These were not originally meant for public display. The basic idea is to depict how the entire creation emerges from the eternal forces principles. It takes initially a dual form of masculine and feminine principles. All sorts of worldly appearances, cosmos, man, creatures, gods, everything emerge out of interaction of these principles. Again the original order is resumed when the two basic principles reunite and lose identity in each other. The superficial analogy with theories of modern nuclear science and atomic energy in this respect is highly interesting.

The Mandala may be created by demonstrating in the picture how numerous triangles gradually develop one from the other and these cover the entire painting. The devotee is to reduce them ultimately to a single point in his meditation. Again the same conception is portrayed by depiction of a number of divine figures around a central figure forming part of a more centrally placed higher figure representing the Creator or the creative principle. The same theme has found expression in a composite form of apparently curious and abstract figures with numerous heads and hands. These figures are composed of different divinities which together form a Mandala.

Next may be mentioned the painted manuscripts which form objects of high veneration. Broadly these manuscripts are grouped
under two heads: Kanjur (Bkah hgyur) and Tanjur (Bstan hgyur). Several volumes of such works (xylograph copies which were produced on indigenous papers by wooden blocks) are found in among the Buddhists of Arunachal. Books with elongated pages or folios, bearing in average seven or eight lines of writing in black indigenous ink, often with borders and containing illustration of figures of divinities, bearing page or folio numbers, protected by wooden covers and cloth, with serial number and short titles, are a common site in the monasteries and household of the Lamas, dignitaries and literate folk in the villages. Handwritten manuscripts on indigenous paper or tree leaves with illustration in ink or bearing coloured paintings are found in important monasteries as at Mechka, Tawang, Dirang etc. Some of the works, again, contain beautifully illuminated writings. Gold and silver powders are used for writing the letters which preserve the glitter even after centuries. Books and manuscripts of seventeenth and

1. While the former is a general designation applied to the entire body of Buddhist canonical literature, the latter primarily includes the commentaries thereon and also many works on grammar, linguistics, poetics, medicine, astrology and other disciplines. The rich treasures of Sanskrit and Pali literature were translated into Tibetan and Chinese following introduction of Buddhism in those lands. Ultimately majority of the literature was lost to the land of origin due to political vicissitudes and turmoil which plagued it for centuries following the dismemberment of old empires, associated with religious persecution and destruction of old monastic and religious institutions by iconoclast adventurers and orthodox potentates frequently grabbing the political autocracy starting from the eleventh-twelfth centuries A.D. This has further enhanced the importance of these translations. But the intellect of the neo-converts did not rest satisfied solely by simply translating the original texts. Commentaries and occasionally independent works also gradually developed which have been included in the second group of the sacred literature. Secular works, though less in number are also known.
eighteenth centuries may be encountered in these places. Chiefly treasured by the Lamas and local populace are the Prajñāpāramitā manuscripts Tibetan translations of which have been found in different versions.¹ The biggest of these versions, known as Bum (Sanskrit Prajñāpāramitā Śatasāhasrika), is normally supposed to have twelve or thirteen volumes. But at places it is found to comprise sixteen parts which seem to represent same length of work distributed over larger number of volumes. An exemplary set of sixteen parts found in Mechukha Gompa may be mentioned here.

The books written in Tibetan language and script are of an average size 70 x 24 cm with approximately seven or eight lines per page, single volume bearing different number of folios ranging between 232 and 372. The folios and volumes are numbered in Tibetan and the pages bear readers' comments in the margins. Parts of the manuscripts were damaged due to fire as reported by the resident monk.

The manuscripts contain golden letters in some parts and

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¹ The Prajñāpāramitā represents the translation of the original work of the famous Buddhist monk Nāgarjuna who flourished in the second century A.D. He was one of the chief exponents and philosopher of Mahāyāna form of Buddhism. After producing this apocalyptic treatise he attributed it to the Buddha himself and described himself as discovering the work lying hideen among the Nāgas or demigods intended to be preserved there till men became able to understand it. It mostly contains mythical discourses of the Buddha with supernatural beings. It is all speculation and abstraction having little or no historical matter. Bum represents the biggest version of Tibetan translation of this work containing one lakh slokas as is meant by its name which is equivalent of the Sanskrit Prajñāpāramitā Śatasāhasrika. A smaller compendium of eight thousand slokas is called Brgyud-ston-paṇ or Bratongpa, Sanskrit Prajñāpāramitā Astasāhasrika. Still shorter versions of 5000, 700 or 500 slokas etc. are also available.
figures of Dhyaní Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (viz., Sangetsebame, Rinchinme, Vairocana Buddha, Amoghasiddhi Buddha, Ratnasambhava Buddha, Buddha Amitabha etc.) painted in colours and occasionally illuminated.¹

Copies of illuminated Gvatengpa are more commonly found in religious institutions and private houses. A specimen of Mechukha of Circa nineteenth century may be referred to here. It contains 310 folios of the size 60 x 14 cms. The copyist has been mentioned as Gelong Rinjin Somba and the date of copying is recorded in Tibetan system as Cakpha TaMo Chuda. Paintings of Buddha, Tārā and two Lamas occur on the inner side of cover page, as well as on the first page. The first three pages contain thirteen lines each while approximately seven lines each occur on the rest of the pages. The entire copy is written in the Tibetan language and script except for last few lines which are in the same script but Sanskrit language. The letters on first three folios are written with silver powder, the rest in black ink.

Copies written almost entirely with gold powder are known from Tawang and Dirang.

Nineteenth-century manuscripts of Thodo, a text to be read after the death of a person or Sangye Taen Bum, i.e., a glossary of the names of Buddha, among others, are also known. The works occasionally contain names of the persons who commissioned the copyists and patronised the authors.

¹ Y. A. Raikar and S. Chatterjee, 'Private Records at Mechukha, Resamun, V, No.1, pp. 43ff.
We may close our discussion on this group of painting with a reference to the above noted stone plaques bearing painted figures of divinities, other images which are mostly painted as well as painted items of religious and private use, specimens of which are known beyond number. These include the vajra, or the thunderbolt, originally an attribute of Indra, used by the Lama priest to dispel ignorance. The priest's bell and miniature metal chortens or stupas occasionally bearing inscriptions are found in private chapels and monasteries alike. Some of the specimens exhibit beautiful execution and are adorned with precious stones and jewels. Pur-bu or the magic dagger of wood crowned by the head of a monastery used during ceremonial to cast spell on the devils summoned may also be referred to in this occasion. The beautiful amulet boxes of silver with repousse and filigree designs the lamps and other objects of religious and daily use also bear the artistic impress of a rich tradition. The painted prayer wheels, sacrificial knives and ritual swords may also be noted in this context. Musical instruments like temple trumpets and colourful monastic dresses and marks used during devil-dances or mystery plays, cymbals, drumsticks and flat wooden drums used during those occasions as also in course of regular prayer as accompaniment with chanting of mantras represent certain notable items. In the case of ordinary devotees the religious devotion is simplified to visit to the gompas, observance of rites under the guidance of the Lamas, chanting of the formula Om mani padme hum while circumambulating the gompa and turning of the prayer wheel. The entire
atmosphere of the monastery is thus endowed with a hangover of an old tradition and a colourful environment marking out the gompas in sharp outline amid the beautiful valleys and snowy mountains sparkling with variegated hues extending to the farthest limit of the vision.

Compared to this school the introduction of Theravāda culture in the south-eastern parts of the territory appears to be rather a much recent phenomenon. It has developed there with the immigration of Tai-Khamtis from their South-East Asian abodes in Burma, Southern China and other adjoining territories.

The Khamti settlements in Chowkham, Namsai and adjoining areas like Hanman, Momong and many other villages abound with monasteries and shrines which as well as their private household collections exhibit treasures of Theravāda art that closely follow the Burmese tradition. Many of the objects are either directly imported from Burma at the time of their original migration or at some later dates. They are also known to manufacture locally similar products. The collections may be classified broadly into stone sculptures, wooden sculptures, metal images, and manuscripts.

Specimens of stone are mainly made of white marble stone commonly used in case of Burmese images. Important monasteries like the one at Chowkham naturally house larger collections. Images of Buddha generally outnumber all other objects. The posture reflects the stereotyped form of late Burmese and South-East Asian School depicting the lord seated in bhūmisparśa mudrā with legs crossed and the right hand in the pose of touching the earth which
refers to the famous incident of Buddha pointing out to earth as witness to his attainment of *sambodhi* or enlightenment when Māra asked him for a proof.

Although occasionally some of the images are fairly graceful the stage of inner consciousness and fineness of execution as witnessed in the classical period of Burmese sculpture is absent. The fingers are of equal length and limbs are somewhat flatly executed although the eyes are often quite expressive and some of the images are adorned with ornaments which are finely made. The garb is generally the robe of the recluse except, as noted on a few, the princely dress also occurs occasionally to depict the stage before his becoming Buddha. The mound on the head represents the residue of his hair cut off at the time of his resigning the princely life. The ear lobes are generally extended up to shoulder. An image of Bodhisattva with head, palms and feet made of white marble stone fitted into golden body with *repoussé* designs adorned with precious jewels wearing similarly made crown is quite attractive. We have other instances of stone Buddha image with wooden pedestal designed into coils of snakes, representing Nāgaraja, hood of which forms cover above the head of the image. Representation of bare headed monks are also encountered.

Wooden lacquered images of Buddha painted in golden colour in the same standardised form of *bhūmisparśamudrā* are found in large number. Some of the Bodhisattva figures bear representation of beautiful ear ornaments and crowns designed like wings of birds.
Figures of other deities like standing Vasumati, the earth goddess, painted all over the body, also form interesting objects of veneration. A figure of Bodhisattva in a shrine somewhat away from Chowkham is found to be crowned with conical cap and has its wide open eyes nicely painted. Many of the wooden images depict the olrd and the pedestal by continuous carving out of the same block of wood. A few again bear coloured glass panes set on different parts.

Metal images are variously made of brass and bronze. Some are even dated in Burmese. Thus a specimen manufactured even less than a century earlier is also known. Miniature bronze images are known to exist in a monastery at Momong. In these images the lead content seems to be in a high proportion. All the aforesaid objects may be variously ascribed to the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

A number of miniature images of Buddha have also been found in the vicinity of a ruined monument representing a stupa of circa eighteenth century A.D. excavated at Vijaynagara in Tirap. The site is believed to represent an old settlement of the Khantis known as Khomong established by them in an early phase of their immigration which was abandoned afterwards.

In course of the excavation about twenty eight Buddha images have come to light as surface finds. ¹ One of them is a

damaged quartz statuette, 14 cms. high, with a thin gold wash. Twenty five small flat alloy images are also known. Lead is said to be the major component in them. Their heads are damaged. They offer two types. The bigger variety having a height of 14 cms, contains a replica of stupa on the reverse of the images and the smaller type bears a pointed vertical column represented at the back. Hornlike protuberance on the crown of the heads tapering to a point bears out resemblance with the images from Burma and Siam. Fragments of a lacquered wooden image and a small clay figurine also occur among the finds. The same sedent "witness attitude" characterises the figures.

Most of the Khanty monasteries have collections of handwritten manuscripts which are written on indigenous papers, palm leaves or metal sheets. Most noteworthy are the illuminated manuscripts of Kammayaca found in more important monasteries as at Chowkham, Momong, etc.

The Kammayaca represents an ecclesiastical literature based on excerpts from the Mahavagga and Cullavagga of the Vinaya Pitaka of the Buddhist canonical literature. It embodies certain set forms of speech to be followed at the time of ordination service, excommunication and holding of a synod or a council. Various manuscripts of this text, written on ivories, palm leaves or copper and brass plates richly lacquered with golden paint having gilt wooden cover are known from Burma, Siam and Sikkim. The letters are written with black resinous gum in square tamarind-seed script.
used in Burmese rituals. The language is, however, Pali. The illuminated variety have the entire pages coloured with red and golden paint with decorative drawings in the space between lines of writing. Manuscripts of both ordinary palm leaves and illuminated metal sheets are available among the Khamtis of Arunachal. Other handwritten works on indigenous papers in Khamti script and language with border paintings may be noticed in some monasteries. Works of various monks, Khamti version of the Mahābhārata and Rāmāyana, almanacs and astrological works, treaties and charters are also known to exist in monasteries and household of the dignitaries and commoners among the Khamtis and the Singphos, another Buddhist tribe arriving into Arunachal Pradesh later than the Khamtis and residing in different parts of Lohit and Tirap districts.

Among other minor works of art of these people may also be noted painted and lacquered masks, used during religious festivals, was equipments like shields, the bells and other ritual objects. They are also like the Monpas and Membas a very artistic people with a rich heritage of art and weaving and the tradition still persists in their habitats in Arunachal and Assam.

We may now come to the school of Brahmanical Māṇḍa and Tāntrika culture. Along the southern part of this union territory adjoining Assam we find a number of old historical sites, now mostly in ruins. Of them Bhīsmakenagara, Mālinīthāna, Itā Fort or Itānagara and Naksāparvata yielded significant relics of art.
The finds of these sites mainly consist of stone sculptures and terracotta objects. These appear to represent an extension of East Indian school of art across the boundaries of Assam in the south in different periods of history perhaps associated with political developments of the region. Unlike the Vajrayāna and Theravāda schools here we come across the relics of an art tradition which is no more surviving within the boundaries of Arunachal, suggesting, as it were, the drying up of its source owing perhaps to political upheavals and natural calamities like earthquakes and flood associated with changes in the course of rivers which is not at all uncommon in this area. Remains of temples and edifices which were once visited by people from far-off places now offer us to have a glimpse into the Brahmanical past of Arunachal.

Most important among these monuments is the temple of Mālinīthāna, which was richly adorned with relief figures and decorative designs all over its lintels, friezes, brackets, entablatures and pilasters. Though all are now practically ruins, a few of the images, made of granite stone, deserve special mention.

The first is the image of Sūrya in white stone. The deity is shown standing in samabhāsma posture on a double petalled lotus wearing boots on feet according to the North Indian tradition and dhoti tied by a girdle. On the torso are depicted the vaṭopavīṭa or sacred thread and necklaces. Head of the image is lost. There are αγαδέας or armlets and βαλαγίας or bracelets on hands in each of which he holds a full-blossomed lotus by stalk.
feet appears the figure of Mahāśvetā, while Rājñī and Nikṣubha holding cāmaras (fly shisks) and towels stand on lotuses on his two sides. Beyond them are shown Usā and Pratyūṣā personifying different aspects of the dawn shooting with bows and arrow to dispel darkness. On the extreme right of the god stands the bearded Pingala with his ink-pot and pen, while on the extreme left is the staff-bearing Dandin representing either Skanda or Yama. The half-formed figure of Aruṇa appears in front of Mahāśvetā on the saptarathana pedestal driving the one-wheeled chariot of seven horses. The taurus-shaped prabhāvalī or stela with pointed peak shows gajasimha at two lower ends above the figures of the attendants over which are depicted leafy designs. Then comes the makara torana (a crocodile-shaped doorway) on either side. Above these are found the gandharvas or hybrid couple playing musical instruments. The figures on the right of the god is lost. Next come the garland bearing vidyādhara couples flying among clouds. At the top there is kirtimukha or a grinning lion face having protruded goggle eyes and fangs with leaves coming out of its mouth.

The iconographic features and mode of execution suggest a period around the eleventh-twelfth centuries A.D. for the image which bears close stylistic affinities with the Surya images from Sukhabaspur, Dacca, Chapra in Bihar, and Dhātri-Sūrya from Dinajpur of the eleventh century A.D. as well as other images of

1. N.K.Bhattasali, Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum, Dacca, 1929, Pl. LVIII.
2. A.K.Coomaraswamy, History of Indian and Indonesian Art, London, 1927, Fig. 227.
3. J.N.Banerjea, The Development of Early Hindu Iconography, Calcutta, 1956, Pl. XVII, Fig. 3.
Next may be mentioned the relief image of the two-armed god Indra executed in black granite stone. The god is seated in ardhaparyankasana on his elephant mount Airavata. The tusks of the elephant are broken. The deity wears a kirtimukuta, kundalas (ear rings), keyuras (armlets), valayas (wristlets), haras (necklaces) and vasnonavita or sacred thread. He is holding vairā or thunderbolt in his upraised right hand, while his left hand, which might have held ankuṣa, is broken. The third eye appears on the forehead. Among his attendants the figure on his right carries a fly whisk and a towel and that on the left is holding a pot. Floral design forms the border of the stele right up to the top where the kirtimukha motif is elaborately shown. A tree is depicted on the pedestal.

The relief of Karītikeya made of the same material has the deity seated on his mount peacock - the Śikhi Paravāni-in ardhaparyankasana. The outspread tail of the peacock serves as his prabhāvali. The god holds a cock in his left hand. His right hand, which might have had the sakti or spear in it, is broken. The upper part of the stele including the head of the god and kirtimukha is broken. The god wears a number of ornaments on different parts of his body. Below the peacock are shown on two sides two female figures holding chaurs or fly-whisks. They are possibly his two consorts Devasena and Vallī. The figures may be compared with a twelfth-century image of the god hailing

1. V.A. Smith, History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon, 1969 reprint, Pl. 98, Fig. B; The History of Bengal, I, Figs. 76, 165.
from North Bengal and now housed in Indian Museum\(^1\) and also another specimen of a contemporary period found from Dacca the latter revealing closer resemblance in style.\(^2\)

Another relief of the same stone shows the graceful figure of dancing Ganesa. The god wears like the other deities various ornaments, viz., anklets, armlets, wristlets and necklaces. He has also on the torso the \textit{válayajñaparvita} (a snake serving as the sacred thread) and \textit{udarabandha} (a band around the top of the protruding belly). On his head occurs \textit{jata} or matted lock and rows of chain ornaments on the protruding temples. The four-armed god holds \textit{aksamálā} or rosary and \textit{parnāśu} (hatchet) in his right hands. The upper left hand carries a lataśu and the mutilated lower left hand probably carried a pot containing sweetmeats to which the trunk, now partly broken, was applied. The dance movement is suggested by the slightly bent legs of the god and the dancing figures of two attendant musicians one on each side. The figure on the right is playing drum and the one on the left playing cymbals. The rat, the mount of the god, is shown on the \textit{śaptapadā} pedestal as looking up at him and the \textit{kirtimukha} appears at the top of the stele. With this image may be compared two contemporaneous dancing Ganesa figures, one belonging to Khiching, Mayurbhanj district of Orissa\(^3\) and the other found in North Bengal and now on display in the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{History of Bengal, I}, \& Fig. 32.
\item N.K. Bhattasali, \textit{op. cit.}, Pl. LVIII(a).
\item J.N. Banerjea, \textit{op. cit.}, Pl. XV, Fig. 2.
\end{itemize}
Indian Museum. The images of Indra, Kartikeya and Ganesa appear to be somewhat earlier in date than that of Surya which is apparent from their iconography.

Other notable images include a fine figure of Nandin Bull suggesting its findspot being a Saiva shrine, a restored image of Durga and a beautiful head of a female divinity (the last one now untraceable).

A host of other relief figures made of a coarser variety of sandstone on broken pieces of the temples are found to depict deities like Indra, seated Lakṣmī holding lotuses in both hands, Pārvatī, and sages, dvārapālas, lion on elephant motif; two lions with kalasa in between them, lions standing on hind legs with grinning face, monkeys, male and female figures in groups and separate depiction, lotus designs, flying candharvas holding blue lotuses in both hands wearing ornaments and having sacred tīkā mark on the forehead etc. A Śivalinga is also noticed at the site.

An interesting image identifiable with Pārvatī (Śyāmā) or Mahāmāyā is notable as a specimen of syncretistic sculpture of the area. Carved in relief on sandstone the image is badly disfigured. Still, from the remaining portion the broad characteristics can be identified. The figure of the female deity is shown as seated above a Śivalinga in the posture of union with the phallus. The back right hand holds some uncertain objects, while the back left hand is mutilated. The posture of the front hands

1. The History of Bengal, I, Fig. 30.
is not clear in the sculpture. The figure reveals some Tantrika influence and is a plastic representation of the philosophic idea expressed in the dhyāna of Śyāma or Daksinakālikā found in the Tantrasāra, composed during the late medieval period. Herein the goddess is described as being heavy bosomed and in standing position above Mahākāla or Śiva. (The position is termed viparītaraṇa or inverted posture of sexual intercourse.) This sculpture is reminiscent of the image found at Kagajipara, among the ruins of ancient Sena capital in Vikrampur, Dacca. The sculpture shows a four-armed goddess up to waist coming out from Śivalinga. There are a rosary and a manuscript respectively in the back right and left hands with the front hands disposed in the dhyāna mudrā. While it has been identified by R.D. Banerjee as Parvati, signifying a blend of Hindu and Buddhist Tantrism. N.K. Bhattasali describes it as Mahāmāyā on the basis of the Prādhānīkarehasya of the Mārkandeya Purāṇa and Kālika Purāṇa. Iconographically, Mālinīthāna, a specimen, however, is in great conformity with the description of the Tantrasāra and may be described as Śyāma or Daksinakālikā.

2. N.K. Bhattasali, op. cit., pp. 192ff., Pl. LXIV.
3. R.D. Banerji, Eastern India School of Medieval Sculpture, Delhi, 1933, p. 100; ARAŚI, 1924-25, p. 155, Pl. XL(c).
4. In the Kālika Purāṇa (76, 88f.) Mahāmāyā is said to have been propitiated by Veṇāla and emerged out of Śivalinga which consequently broke into pieces.
A beautifully carved female figure gracefully adorned with ornaments also deserves mention; in it the lady is squatting with the left hand placed on the left side under her abdomen on a pedestal with a depression in the middle resembling a channel, the head is lost. Otherwise, the image is in a much better state of preservation than the previous one.

Compared to the fine granite figures the sandstone images may be of a later date executed a century or two afterwards.

The ruins of Itá Fort, near Itánagara, the present capital of the union territory have furnished nothing more than a few stone reliefs of animal figures and floral motifs in course of excavation like low reliefs of elephant. A stylised metal representation of a lion, probably forming part of a lampstand, of about the fifteenth or the sixteenth century has also come to light from the place as a surface find.

A number of stone pillars bearing relief figures of warriors, sages, ladies with child or goose etc. have been found from Naksáparvata in East Kameng. These appear to be later in date than those of Māliníthána and Itánagara.

Bhismakanagara has so far revealed only some terracotta figures which are known from Itánagara as well. These objects are comparable with the contemporary relics of Assam. Together they reveal a deep influence of the art of Assam in the foothills of Arunachal.
Stray figures have also been noticed occasionally inside forests. For example, a crude relief of a warrior executed on a stone plaque is found lying at Longputsum near Namsang in Tirap district. It is now being worshipped by the local tribal people, namely, the Noctes, as the deity of a salt well.

Known instances of manuscripts of this group are not as numerous as those of the other two. Nevertheless, specimens like the hand-written Assamese matraputhis of considerably late period noticed in the collection of a Nocte chief of Namsang may be referred to in this context.

Instances of pottery and terracotta art have been unearthed at various sites in Arunachal, such as Bhālukapung in West Kameng district, Itā Fort in Lower Subansiri district, Bhīsmakanagara, Rukmininagara and Mud Fort near Tezu in Lohit district and Vijayanagara in Tirap district.

Among these the Bhīsmakanagara, m objects are the most important. Similar specimens have come to light as stray finds from an extensive region from Roing to Tezu. Here we meet with instances of wheel-turned pottery technique of Gangetic basin not practised in this area. Attempt has been made to date the earliest of these objects on the basis of their similarity with the pottery of Ambari in Gauhati found from layer ascribed to the tenth century A.D. Apart from a characteristic variety of large decorative finials of different forms other objects like spouted vessels,
bows, dishes, dish-on-stand, jars, terracotta horse and elephant figurines, plaques with animal and floral designs, roof tiles etc. of both fine and coarse types are noticed.

The finds from Ita Fort are of a coarse type and damaged objects include bowls, pots and spouted vessels.

Among the objects from Vijayanagara may be noted a terracotta Buddha figurine depicted like a toy gamesman. Otherwise, the potsherds here consist of the same varieties of bowls, pots, plates etc.

Several bricks of various sizes and shapes have been found from all these sites. The clay and quality of the Bhismakanagara bricks represent the best variety, while those of the Sivalinga site near Tezu having a metallic sound are the largest in size. These bricks belonging to the above sites representing an extension of the Brahmaputra valley culture are supposed to predate the tile-like variety of the Ahoms.

Coming to the field of folk art and craft as we find it today among the numerous groups of tribal people of the territory the tradition is no less interesting. Almost all the peoples are endowed with a remarkable aesthetic sense and artistic skill. Most of the folk live in extreme hardship, yet they have a mind to appreciate the beauties of the colourful environ in which they live.

In case of tribal art the distinction between craft and pure works of art, however, is not very certain. As has been
pointed by Coomaraswamy, the concept of pure forms of art as
divorced from its utilitarian aspect appears to be out of place
in the sphere of any traditional art and this is most perfectly
true of the art tradition of Arunachal. Here we find people
engaged in production of various artistic objects throughout the
year which are intensely linked with the necessities of their life.
Some of the products are required in everyday secular life, while
others have religious value or use in festivals and ceremonies.

The items naturally vary according to purpose and use.
Most of the tribes are adept in weaving and basketry and are fond
of ornaments which are found in numerous forms, shapes, designs and
colours. Monpa, Adi, Mishmi or Khamti dresses, which are distinct
from one another, offer curious designs. Masks and dresses worn at
the time of festive and war dances among the tribes represent
legendary heroes and mythical beings and demons which are propitiated
or subdued through various rites. Ornaments made of coloured beads,
bones, ivory, precious metals, silver pipes and amulets, bangles,
necklaces, ear and nose ornaments, hair bands, bags, used by both
women and men fold, deo-ghantias (a type of bell), tadok marni (a
kind semi-precious stone), brass vessels etc. used as media of
exchange and bride price reflect the artistic mind of the Arunachal
tribes. The Monpas, Sherdukhpens, Apa-Tanis, Noctes, Wanchos and
Idus are expert in carpentry, smithy and wood-carving and they
manufacture objects with bright colours and characteristic designs.

1. 'A Figure of Speech or a Figure of Thought', Coomaraswamy; 