Votive tablet

Place of origin: Pagan (made)

Date: 11th century-12th century (made)

Artist/Maker: Unknown

Materials and Techniques: Terra cotta, deeply impressed from an intaglio mould

Museum number: IM.305-1921

Gallery location: South-East Asia, Room 47a, case 15

Public access description

This clay votive tablet, reportedly found at Tagaung, Pagan, northern Burma (now Myanmar), depicts the Buddha seated beneath the tower of the Mahabodhi temple at Bodh Gaya, in eastern India. He is seated in the lotus pose with his right hand in the gesture of touching or witnessing the earth (bhumi-sparsha mudra), the gesture which more than any other represents the moment of his enlightenment. He is flanked by standing figures of the Dipankara Buddha on the left and of Maitreya Buddha on the right. The branches of the Bodhi tree, under which the Buddha achieved enlightenment, branch out from the central niche. In the upper part of the tablet are a number of small votive stupas (the funeral mound which housed the Buddha’s relics and which became the symbol of his transcendental form and the primary Buddhist monument). At the bottom is the single line of a Buddhist prayer in the devanagari script.

Clay votive tablets of the Buddha, quotes from Buddhist texts, and divine figures represent a significant element of the archaeological record of early Buddhist sites in South East Asia.

Descriptive line

Buddhist votive tablet, terracotta, 11th-12th century, Pagan, Burma.

Physical description

The round-headed intaglio design is impressed within a pointed-arched slab of terracotta. The figure of the Buddha is depicted seated beneath the tower of the Mahabodhi temple at Bodh Gaya, in eastern India. He is in padmasana pose in the Bhumi-sparsha mudra, flanked by standing figures of the Dipankara Buddha on the left and of Maitreya Buddha on the right. Each figure is placed within a trifoliate niche. From the central niche also issue the branches of the Bodhi-tree. In the upper part of the tablet are a number of small votive stupas, and at the bottom is the “Ye dharma hetuprabhava...” or Buddhist prayer in Sanskrit characters. The design is bordered with

The tablet has suffered some damage along its left hand margin

Dimensions

Height: 7.375 in, Width: 5.375 in

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Object history note

Bought from H.C. Fanshawe

Historical context note

Deeply impressed from an intaglio mould. In the style of tablets made at Bodh Gaya in eastern India.

URL

http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O83564/votive-tablet-unknown/