

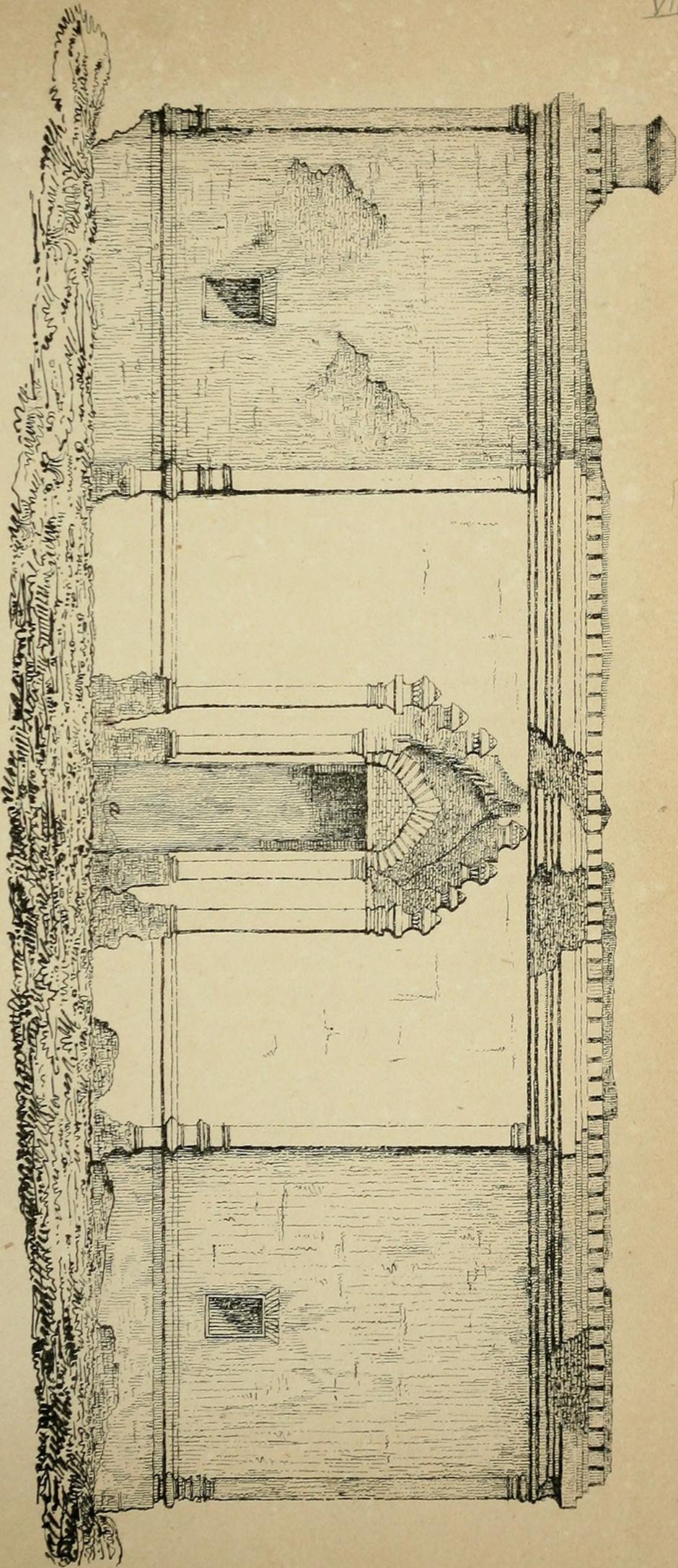
*Remarks upon an ancient Buddhist Monastery at Pu-gân, on the Irrawaddy.—By Lt.-Col. A. PHAYRE, Commissioner of Pegu.*

The ruins of the ancient city of Pu-gân are situated, as is well known, on the left bank of the river Irrawaddy, about three hundred and fifty miles above Rangoon.

In the southern portion of the ruined city, I discovered the remains of an ancient monastery. This was the first building of the kind that I had met with in Burmah, and it is probably in better preservation than any of the ancient Viharas built for Buddhist monks. The nature of the masonry, as compared with that of Pagodas at Pu-gân, the date of building which is known, leads me to believe that the monastery in question was built five or six hundred years ago. The building is constructed entirely of brick.

It is somewhat dilapidated. Still enough remains to show distinctly the nature of the building and its several divisions. The ground plan is shown in the sketch accompanying, and a rough front elevation is added. There was evidently no upper story.

The building consisted of a square of about 80 feet, the outer wall up to the top of its battlemented parapet being about 18 feet above the ground. Each corner had a pilaster supporting a deep cornice which ran all round the outer wall. The outer wall had been plastered, but this protection has now nearly disappeared. The corner pilasters rested on basement mouldings, which appear to have been placed nearly two feet above the ground; the chief entrance was on the eastern face of the building, and here there was a projection of about 15 feet from the main wall, forming a part of the outer room or vestibule. There was a corresponding projection on the opposite face where there was an elevated domed structure, for the reception of an image of Gautama. This was apparently, from what remains, some twelve or fourteen feet higher than the outer wall. Over the entrance door on the eastern side, there had been an ornamental canopy of flamboyant rays in plaster, such as is seen over most of the doors and windows of the temples of Pu-gân. This,



Front Elevation of an ancient **BUDHIST MONASTERY** at PUGAN.

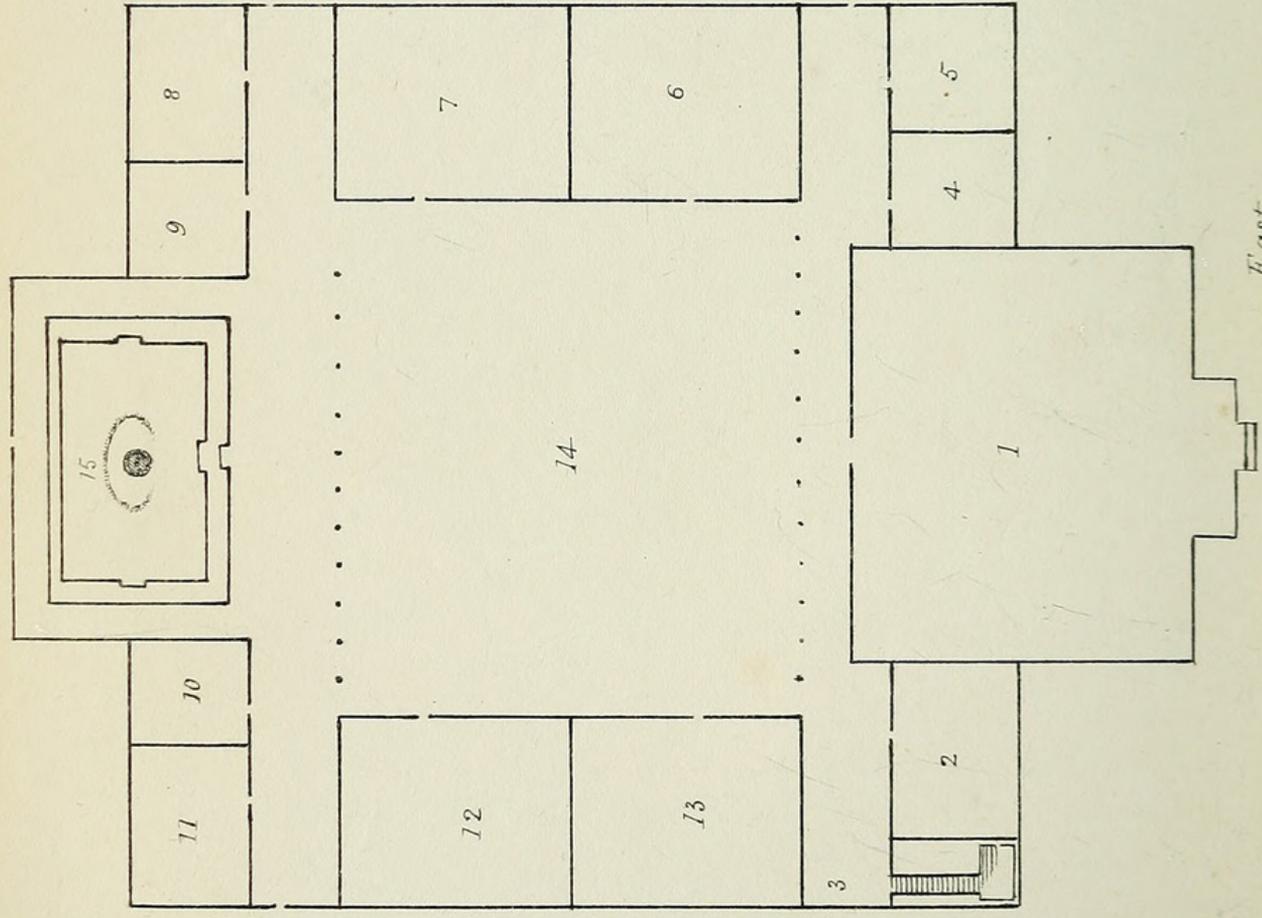
ON TRANSPARENT PAPER AND LITHOED BY H. M. SMITH, SURVEYOR GENERAL'S OFFICE, CALCUTTA, OCTOBER, 1860.





at PUGAN "Plan of an Ancient Buddhist Monastery"

VI



References.

- 1 Vestibule.
- 2 Library ?
- 3 Steps to Roof.
- 4 to 13. Cells.
- 14 Open Court.
- 15 Raised image of Budha with crypt beneath.

however, is now nearly worn away by the weather. Entering this door-way, you pass at once into the vestibule or outer room, which is about 30 by 25 feet. From this you enter the main enclosure or central court of the monastery, more than 40 feet square, and into which open the principal surrounding cells, which were for the use of the monks. At the west end of this court, and directly fronting the main entrance, is an elevated domed tower, once surmounted by a graduated steeple now in ruins. Within the domed tower, at a height of about fifteen feet above the ground, was a *palleng* or raised throne, for an image of Gautama. This must ordinarily have been worshipped from below. There are no existing steps up to the tower, which probably was reached from the hall by a ladder when necessary. Beneath this throne was a vault below the level of the ground. A small opening and descending passage led down to it. In the vault also were places for images. This represented the cave which Buddhists love to construct, to remind them of places for retirement and devotion. The walls for the interior cells or apartments of the monastery are now not more than 10 or 12 feet high, and this appears to have been their original elevation. The interior walls have not been plastered. No portion of a roof anywhere remains. Each cell has a separate entrance door and window about 18 inches square. These are all formed with flat arches and no timber appears in any part of the building. It is not clear how the cells have been roofed or with what material, but probably with planks. Not a vestige of a tile was visible. The outer wall of the building is pierced to receive stone pipes to carry off the rain water from the roof. These are seen obtruding through the top of the outer wall below the parapet. The great centre room or court of the monastery has also been roofed but probably only with boards laid horizontally. The two dotted lines in the plan show where, from marks at the top of the inner walls of the side cells, two beams had probably rested. In a climate where it seldom rains, planks laid on rafters supported by these, would afford sufficient protection from the weather. This apartment was evidently the great hall of the monastery where the religious discourses and instruction would be conducted. The outer room would be that for the reception of strangers and probably for teaching the scholars, who daily attended for that purpose, as is now



Phayre, Arthur Purves. 1861. "Remarks upon an ancient Buddhist Monastery at Pu-Gân, on the Irrawaddy." *The journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 29(IV), 346–351.

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