WHEN Buddhism had taken a firm root in China, there arose among the pious Buddhists of the Celestial Empire a burning desire to visit the holy land of their faith and see with their own eyes the spots where the Bhagavat, their blessed teacher, was born, where he had found enlightenment, where he had preached and where he had passed out of this earthly life of pain and sorrow. We have reports of their travels and it is remarkable how faithful and reliable their records are. Fa-Hien visited India in the fourth and Hiuen Tsang in the sixth century of the Christian era.

Song Yun, another Chinese pilgrim and a contemporary of the latter describes in detail a most magnificent pagoda, a kind of Buddhist St. Peter’s, situated in Purushapura, the capital of Emperor Kanishka, and it is stated that it contained some of the remains of Buddha. Some time after the Mohammedan invasion the pagoda and the monastery connected with it were still standing, for Alberuni, the Mohammedan historian, mentions the building as the Kanishka Chaitya.

Moslem rule was hostile to Buddhism, for Mohammedans look upon the use of Buddha statues as idolatrous, and so Buddhist sanctuaries were plundered and destroyed while the stupas fell into ruin.

Since an archeological interest was first awakened, European savants have made a systematic search for the sacred sites of early Buddhism, and the reports of the Chinese pilgrims have proved most valuable guides.

In 1898 Mr. William Peppé investigated a tumulus on the Birdpur estate belonging to the Gibbon and Peppé families, and after having dug a well in the center about 10 feet square and having broken through 18 feet of solid masonry, he came upon a large and heavy stone box, weighing about fourteen hundredweight,
chiseled from one solid piece of sandstone and covered by a closely fitting lid, which, however, was broken into four pieces. Since there is no sandstone near, it must have been carried to its place from a long distance.

Professor Rhys Davids in his article on "Recent Discoveries Concerning the Buddha" (Century Magazine, Vol. LXI, p. 837 ff.) briefly describes the contents of the box in these words: "Inside this massive and costly coffer were three stone urns or vases, a stone box like a jewel-casket, and a crystal bowl, all intact, together with fragments of what had been wooden vessels of the same kind.

The four stone vessels were all of steatite, or soapstone, and had been carefully turned in a lathe, the marks of which were still visible. The bowl of crystal was exquisitely worked, and had a closely fitting lid of the same substance, the handle being carved to represent a fish. The lid lay separately on the floor of the coffer, possibly shaken off by the same earthquake that had broken the solid lid of the coffer itself.

"In the vases were fragments of bone, a quantity of dust and fine ash, several hundred small jewels exquisitely carved in carnelian, shell, amethyst, topaz, garnet, coral, and crystal, and quan-
titles of stars, flowers, and other minute objects in silver and gold. The jewels were as fresh and clear as on the day when they had been deposited in the coffer. The silver was tarnished and dull, the gold still bright.”

One of the steatite urns bore the following inscription in Pali:

“This place of deposit for the remains of Buddha, the August One, is that of the Sākyas, the brethren of the Distinguished One, in association with their sisters and with the wives of their sons.”

CRYSTAL BOWL SURMOUNTED BY A FISH.

The Birdpur estate is situated in the Tarai, a jungle district in the level ground near the foot of the Himalaya mountains. The tumulus lies in English territory about half a mile from No. 44 of the boundary pillars.

The Shakya, a vigorous little nation of republican institutions, were the kinsmen of Buddha, but they were overcome by the neighboring kingdoms, Kosala and Magadha, and their capital, the city Kapilavastu, was destroyed. Its site has been identified with the ruins at Tilauna Kot in Nepal, several miles north of the tope of the
Birdpur estate. It is obvious from Mr. Peppé's discovery that after their defeat the Shakayas lived on and around the present Birdpur estate, and the size of the monument as well as the art displayed in the manufacture of the several vessels and of the jewelry testify not only to a high state of civilization and wealth, but also to a great enthusiasm for their famous kinsman.

It is interesting to meet here in the Shakya tomb of Buddha with an ancient religious symbol, the fish, which has gained a renewed significance in Christianity through the strange coincidence that the Greek word ἸΧΘΥΣ, meaning “fish,” was interpreted as an acrostic of the words “Jesus, Christ, God's Son, [our] Saviour.”

The sandstone casket and its contents have been deposited in the Museum at Calcutta, while the bones were distributed by the British government among Buddhist monasteries in Burma, Siam, Ceylon and Japan.¹

Not far from this spot, a few miles toward the northeast on Nepalese ground, hunters had noticed a curious pillar which resembled the pillars set up by Ashoka, “the Buddhist Constantine,” and when Dr. Führer visited the place he was instrumental in causing the government of Nepal to have the pillar dug out. The inscription upon it reads thus:²

“Devānam Piya Piyadassi [epithets of Ashoka] came himself in his twenty-first year and paid reverence here. And he put up a stone pillar, with a stone horse³ on it, on the ground that the Buddha, the Sākya sage was born here. And the village Lumbinī, since the Exalted One was born there, is hereby relieved of its tax of one-eighth share of the produce.”

There is a shrine near by which contains a bas-relief, representing “a recumbent figure of Mahā Mâyā, the Buddha's mother, as just having given birth to the future teacher.”⁴

Here accordingly is the place which was identified in the days of Emperor Ashoka with the garden Lumbini, where according to the Buddhist canon Buddha was born while his mother was on the way to visit her parents.

Buddhism has died out in the country and the shrine is now dedicated to a local deity called “Rummin Dei, the Goddess of Lumbini.” Rhys Davids says:

¹ See Mr. Francis J. Payne’s article in a recent number of The Buddhist Review (Oct., 1909, p. 303).
² We quote again from the article of Prof. Rhys Davids, pp. 840-842.
³ The reading “horse” is doubtful.
⁴ Quoted from the same article, p. 842.
“There, all through the centuries, though the great teacher and his teaching have long been forgotten, the villagers, worshiping they know not what, have retained in their village shrine the evidence of the respect in which the teacher’s mother came, in the third or fourth century of Buddhism, to be held by his later followers.”

Quite recently another discovery has been made which is not less interesting than those just mentioned, for it consists in the unearthing of the famous Kanishka pagoda at Purushapura, the present Peshawur.

Archeologists had searched for the place in vain, but M. Foucher, a French scholar who visited the spot, pointed out two curious mounds as the probable sites of the pagoda and the monastery. Mr. Marshall, chief of the archeological department of India, and his assistant, Dr. Spooner, took the hint, and their excavations were rewarded by a discovery of another tomb of Buddha's remains, situated exactly on the spot where it is located by Hiuen Tsang.

We must remember that according to the “Book of the Great Decease,” Buddha died in Kusināra (Sanskrit, Kushināgara) and after the body had been burned eight parties claimed the remains. We are told that a war would have broken out had not the Brahmin Dona settled the dispute by a division of the relics. Accordingly
eight stupas were built in eight different countries, among which is prominently mentioned the land of the Shakyas, the countrymen of Buddha. Hiuen Tsang describes the stupa which they built over their portion of the remains, and his report, as stated above, has been verified in all its details by M. Peppé's discovery.

We may doubt the details of the division of Buddha's remains as narrated in the "Book of the Great Decease." It is not probable that a distribution would have taken place at once after the cremation of the body, but there is no reason to doubt that with the spread of Buddhism the main representatives of the Buddhist faith cherished a desire to possess the ashes and presumably demanded them, which naturally resulted in a division. If we strip the report of the distribution of the relics of its dramatic setting, we may very well accept the historicity of the event itself, especially as it tallies with the reports of the Chinese pilgrims and has been verified by these recent excavations.

We do not venture to fix the exact date of the Shakya tomb of Buddha, but we may say without fear of contradiction that it appears to be considered prior to, and can certainly not be later than, the reign of King Ashoka. Buddhism had spread soon after the great teacher's death, but under Ashoka it reached its first great ascendancy.

The history of India is a story of constantly repeated invasions. Ashoka, the grandson of Chandragupta, a foreign conqueror, reigned from 272 to 232 B.C. He became a convert to Buddhism and did much to spread this faith which was more liberal and scientific than the popular Brahmanism. The dynasty of Chandragupta decayed under the weak government of Ashoka's grandsons, and their empire broke down under the attacks of Greco-Bactrian invaders.

The Greeks were called in India Yahvanas, which is a corruption of Ionians, but the Yahvana kings also favored the Buddhist faith. One of them, Milinda (about 140-110 B.C.) has been immortalized in a Buddhist canonical book, which relates his discussion with the Buddhist saint and philosopher, Nagasena. The book is entitled Milinda pañha,⁵ i.e., "Questions of King Milinda," Milinda being the Indian equivalent for Menander.⁶

⁵ Translated by Rhys Davids in S. B. of the E., Vol. XXXV.

⁶ Milinda must have enjoyed a long and prosperous reign. He is frequently mentioned by Greek authors under his Greek name, Menander. Plutarch (De Repub. Gér., p. 821) tells the same story of him which is told of Buddha, that after his death several cities wanted to have the body of this righteous king entombed in their own domain, and the dispute was adjusted by a division of the sacred ashes which resulted in the erection of several stupas in different places. Many of his coins are still extant which prove
The Yahvanas were followed by the Indo-Scythian invaders who conquered northwestern India as far as Benares. The best known among them was King Kanishka, who lived at the end of the first or the beginning of the second century of the Christian era. He was a contemporary of the great Buddhist philosopher and saint Ashvaghosha, and was the builder of the great pagoda at Peshawur.

COINS OF KING KANISHKA.

(British Museum.) Both coins show King Kanishka on the obverse and the Buddha on the reverse. The upper coin is of copper, the lower one of gold.*

The religion of King Kanishka in his youth appears to have been either Greek, Persian or Greco-Brahmanic, for his first coins struck at the beginning of his reign bear the images of Greek and that like King Kanishka he was a pagan at the beginning of his reign. They show a palace, a victory, a jumping horse, a dolphin, a two-humped camel, an elephant-goad, a boar, a wheel, a palm-branch, an elephant, an owl and a bull's head. Only one coin appears to be typically Buddhist, for the inscription reads: MAHARAJASA DHARMIKASA MENANDRASA. See Rhys Davids's introduction, loc. cit., pp. xx and xxi.

Hindu deities, e. g., Helios and Selene, personifications of the sun and the moon; but later on he became a fervent supporter of the Buddhist faith, and since then his coins bear the images of Buddha.

King Kanishka belonged to the Sarvastivadin sect of the Hinayana church, and he held a council for the purpose of keeping the doctrine undefiled and drawing up commentaries on the three Pitakas which we are told were engraved on sheets of copper and buried in a stupa.

Whence and how King Kanishka obtained the relics of Buddha so as to have them preserved near his capital is not known, but we may understand that he endeavored to make his capital the center of the faith which he had espoused, and we may be sure that in his time this enormous monastery, and the pagoda standing near by, were considered the central shrines of Buddhism, and take the place of St. Peter's at Rome in Christianity.

Mr. J. H. Marshall, in an article published in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (Oct. 1909) describes the discovery of the Kanishka stupa as follows:

"The structure which Dr. Spooner has unearthed measured 285 feet from side to side, which is nearly 100 feet in excess of any other monument of this class existing in India. In plan it is square, with large projections on the four faces, and with massive circular towers at the corners—a feature that is not found in any other stupa that I know of. The walls of the structure are built of massive rough-dressed stones, diapered between with neat piles of brick instead of the usual slate found in Gandhara buildings, and are ornamented with reliefs of seated Buddha-figures, alternating with Corinthian pilasters in stucco. At some point higher up the walls, there appears to have been a band of enameled tiles, with an inscription in Kharoshthi letters boldly incised upon it. Many of the tiles belonging to this band have been found on the western side of the monument, and it is likely that more may turn up in the as yet unexcavated débris. These tiles, which are covered with a pale blue vitreous enamel, are the first of their kind, I may notice, that have yet been discovered in India.

"I was fortunate in visiting Dr. Spooner's excavations just when the plan of this great stupa had been made out, and urged him to set to work at once and search for the relics which were said to have been enshrined within it, and which Hiuen Thsang tells us, it will be remembered, were the relics of Gautama Buddha himself; for I had hopes that they might have been deposited beneath the foundations of the plinth, which was more or less still
CASKET CONTAINING RELICS FROM KANISHKA'S STUPA.
(Reproduced from a recent number of the London Illustrated News.)
intact, instead of in the superstructure, as is frequently the case. Accordingly, a shaft was marked out in the center of the monument, and was laboriously sunk through the massive walls radiating from the middle of the structure, until the original relic-chamber was at length reached, at a depth of some 20 feet below the surface. Within this chamber, still standing upright in the corner where it had been placed some nineteen centuries ago, Dr. Spooner found a metal casket, and within it the relics, enclosed in a reliquary of rock-crystal. The casket itself is similar to the Greek pyxis in shape, with a height of some 7 inches and a diameter of nearly 5. The lid, which is slightly curved and incised to represent a full-blown lotus, supports three figures in the round; a seated Buddha in the center, and a Bodhisattva on each side. The edge of the lid is further adorned by a frieze, in low relief, of flying geese bearing wreaths in their beaks; while below, on the body of the vase, is an elaborate design, in high relief, of young Erotes' bearing a continuous garland, in the undulations of which are seated Buddha figures and attendant worshipers leaning towards them out of the background. But the chief central figure on the casket is that of the Emperor Kanishka himself, standing erect with a winged celestial being bearing a wreath on either side. The figure of the Emperor is easily recognizable from his coins, but the identity is further proved by the inscriptions on the casket. These are in Kharoshti and are four in number, punctured in dots in the leaves of the lotus on the top and on the background between the geese and other figures on the sides.

"Dr. Spooner translates them as follows:

1. 'For the acceptance of the teachers of the Sarvastivadin sect.'
2. [Illegible, but the name of 'Kanishka' almost certainly occurs.]
3. 'May this pious gift be for the welfare and happiness of all beings.'
4. 'Agisala, the overseer of works at Kanishka's Vihara, in the Sangharama of Mahasena.'

"In the last line the letters forming Kanishka's name are so arranged that half fall on one side and half on the other of the Emperor's figure.

"As to the reliquary inside the metal casket, it is of plain rock-crystal, six-sided and hollowed out at one end to receive the relics, which consist of four fragments of bone packed tightly together.

7 Apparently Kanishka's stupa was not erected on an altogether new site, but on a spot already hallowed by tradition, and the expression Mahasena's sangharama appears to give us the name of the earlier establishment."
The aperture was originally covered by a clay sealing, bearing the impress of what is doubtless the royal signet with the device of an elephant. This sealing had become detached owing to the infiltration of water, but it was found lying beside the reliquary and has been preserved along with the other articles, including a coin of Kanishka which was found close to the relic chamber. That Hiuen Thsang is correct when he tells us that these relics were the relics of Gautama-Buddha himself we have no reason to doubt; indeed, his testimony on this point is confirmed by the size and costly magnificence of the monument enshrining them, which we can hardly believe that Kanishka would have erected in honor of any relics but those of the greatest sanctity. Where the relics were deposited before they found their way to this spot we are not told; but it could not have been a difficult matter for Kanishka to obtain well-authenticated relics from one or other of the famous stupas within his dominions, and it was natural enough that he should wish to sanctify and enrich his capital at Purushapura by transporting them to it."

If we compare the style of art displayed on the casket of Kanishka’s stupa with the Gandhara sculptures we notice at once the kinship that obtains between the two, yet the figures of the Gandhara period are purer Greek and may have been made by native Greek sculptors. Agisala, the artist of Kanishka’s casket, must have been of Greek extraction, for his name is obviously the Indianized Agesilaos, but his art too has been Indianized. Mr. Marshall comments on this point:

“Although the general design and composition are good, the reliefs are manifestly inferior in point of execution to the majority of the Gandhara sculptures, and no one, I think, who examines the casket itself, can fail to perceive that this is simply the result of decadence, and is in no way connected with the difference of materials in which the artist was working. Moreover, the figures of the Buddha on the casket are of the familiar conventional types, and, if we regard the Gandhara school as responsible for these types, it follows that that school must have evolved them before the time of Kanishka; for it is not possible that the evolution and general acceptance of such types should have taken place within the short space of a single reign. My own view is that the Gandhara school is the outcome of an uninterrupted tradition of Indo-Hellenistic art that extended back to the time of the Greek kings of Panjab, and that the successive phases through which that art passed, as it be-
CASKET CONTAINING RELICS FROM KANISHKA'S STUPA.
Side view showing Kanishka's figure below the circle of geese.
(Reproduced from a recent number of The Buddhist Review.)
came more and more Indianized, are clearly distinguishable in the antiquities that have come down to us."

It is difficult for us to form an appropriate conception of the impressive beauty of Buddhist stupas. Rhys Davids in the above-mentioned article describes them thus:
“Placed, as they are on rising ground or on the tops of hills, they still form a striking feature in the landscape of Buddhist countries. In ancient times, covered throughout with white cement, ornamented at the base with pillars and with the well-known Buddhist tee,$^6$ rising like the cross at the summit of the dome of St. Paul's, they must have been objects of surpassing beauty. The dome of St. Paul's as seen from Waterloo Bridge, whence the church itself is hidden from view, and only the beautiful form of the dome is visible against the sky, gives to one who has not seen the Buddhist stupas the idea of what they must really have been like.”

It is truly remarkable how in this case ancient traditions, preserved in writing and afterwards with the downfall of a civilization lost sight of, yea absolutely forgotten, have been verified in most of their details. We have here mentioned only the three most important instances of a discovery of Buddhist relics, but there are more, and all of them aglow with the zeal and devotion of a noble faith—a faith which in spite of many differences is in its ethical maxims so much like Christianity.

$^6$ The top ornament on Buddhist stupas, called tee, is an umbrella which like the baldachin, is an emblem of sovereign power.