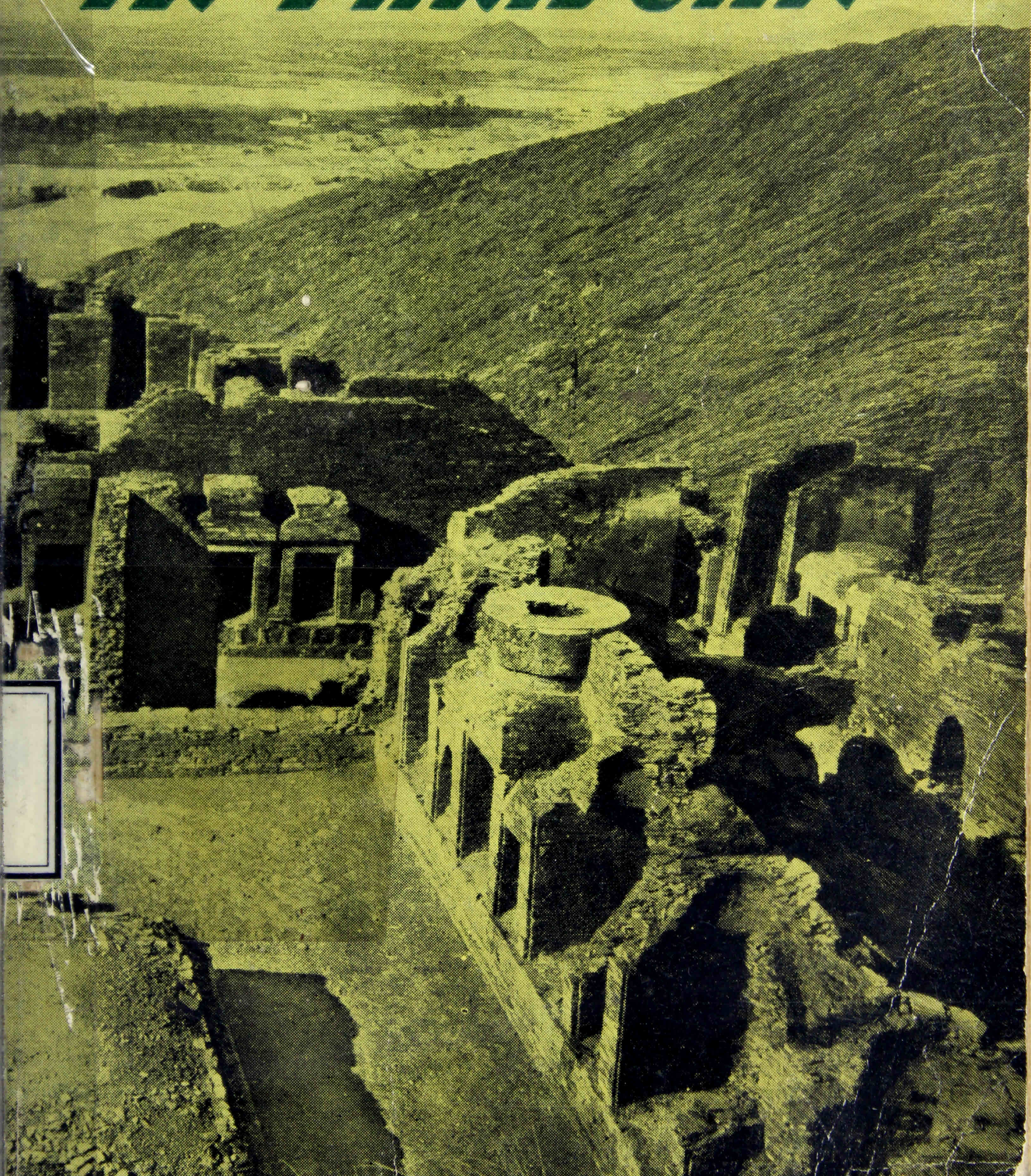
BUDDHISM IN PAKISTAN



BUDDHISM IN PAKISTAN

by

A Pakistani Buddhist

PAKISTAN PUBLICATIONS
P.O. Box No. 183, KARACHI

First Impression	..	.. March, 1954.
Second Impression	..	.. June, 1955.
Third Impression	..	.. November, 1960.
Fourth Impression	..	November, 1963.

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INTRODUCTION

The story of Buddhism is the story of a great revolution with far-reaching consequences. It marks a new stage in the evolution of human culture. It marks a break from the ancient world, from its hoary surroundings, from the depredation of caste system which was dragging the humanity from its high pedestal and finally from a hopeless state of mind labouring under the awe of a never-ending tortuous cycle of births. It was Buddha who told the world for the first time that it was possible for a human being to exert and get free from the clutches of circumstances, of cause and effect and the *Karma*, if he so desired and acted.

The psychic emancipation, offered by the teachings of the New Master, released the hidden forces of human mind which ushered a new era of progress and prosperity extending beyond India to the shores of Japan in the East and Syria in the West. To Heinriech Zimmer and others of his understanding the philosophy of Buddhism may still sound

paradoxical, and many of its enigmas may still remain unsolved by the modern thinkers who have Greece for their guide, but its unprecedented rise and growth of influence merits serious attention.

After a spell of purely monastic seclusion Buddhism emerged with a missionary zeal and gave a new impulse to all walks of life: philosophical, ethical, social, linguistic, literary and religious; and within a few centuries of its advent influenced the entire known world.

The Buddhist Epoch carries a great importance for the historian of the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent. Unlike the pre-historical personages of India such as Rama and Krishna, who are known to us only through myths and keleidoscope of epics, Buddha is a historical figure. He is a man of the known era. He walked about and taught in the Magadha Desha; and the reliquaries containing his ashes and relics (dhatu) are still in existence and form some of the most valuable and proud possessions of the museums today.

The advent of Buddhism was of particular importance for the North-Western regions of Pakistan. The devotees of this religion, within three hundred years of the death of their Tathagatta, made this region a holy place. Buddha, who in his lifetime did not probably come out of the boundaries of Magadha and modern Uttar Pradesh, was by tradition imported to several places in the North-West in order to add to its glory and sanctity. The shrewd monks and their zealous followers could not sit content with a few visits of their lord to their beloved homeland. Many more new places

were consecrated where, according to their mythology, Buddha had lived in his previous existences, or where some of the previous 24 Buddhas had moved the Wheel of the Law.

It is common knowledge that the West Pakistan areas seldom had to share the fate of the rest of the sub-continent. Having formed part of the Persian Achaemenian empire for centuries, these areas went Hellenistic on the conquest of Alexander. Thereafter, having remained Mauryan for some time, they passed into the hands of the Indo-Parthians, Scythians, Yavanas, Kushanas and Huns respectively. These cataclysmic changes, interspersed by eras of peace and progress, wrought a healthy development in the domain of art and helped the people to develop a unique sculpture. This, when applied to depict the Buddhist legend, gave birth to a superb art and made Gandhara a model province for the whole of the Buddhist world.

The beautiful statue of Buddha is the proud production of Gandhara which was accepted and copied in every country where homage was paid to the Lord Buddha. The zeal of the ancient Pakistan for the religion of the Tathagatta can be gauged by the excellence of sculpture, the historical remains and the number of sites which out-number all the Buddhist vestiges in the whole of India.

The Buddhist Gandhara School is the only school of art in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent which, in spite of its legendary and spiritual background, developed on the most natural lines and where accuracy of anatomical details in

engraving was the only criteria of perfection.

The Brahman onslaught destroyed the last vestige of the Buddhist art in India, and when Fahien visited India, he found Kapilavastu a deserted city and Lumbini a forlorn place. But conditions were absolutely different in the North-West where hundreds of monks were still preaching. The province of Sind enjoyed the Buddhist rule till the 7th century A.D., and was overthrown by a clever Brahman named Chach whose son in turn invoked the enmity of the Arab Caliph and lost his kingdom.

The North-Western regions of the sub-continent, which today constitute West Pakistan, seem to have been well advanced in arts and crafts. Milindapanho gives a list of professions according to which even the manufacturers of bows and arrows had to pass through three workshops. The winnowing of grain, as described in Milindapanho (Question of Menander) also indicates a similar divisions of labour. Apart from these, there were settlements of carpenters and metal-smiths. The settlement of carpenters is described to be capable of producing all sorts of furniture and even the sea-going ships. The workers in stone could build houses and hollow a cavity in a crystal to make a cage for a mouse.

Ivory work, weaving, confectionery, jewellery and work on precious metals, pottery, garland-making and head-dressing are depicted as some of the honourable professions. Slaying of animals, tanning, snake-charming, acting, dancing and singing were some of the inferior and even despised

professions.

The Jatakas give a vivid but scanty account of trade and commerce. It was highly developed before Buddha's birth, as anecdotes connected with his life amply illustrate. The overland caravans are sometimes represented as going East and West and across deserts that took days. The desert route mentioned here may be one leading from Magadha through Rajputana to Sind and further north to Gandhara. Drought, famine, wild beasts, robbers and demons are said to be severely besetting these desert routes. Some of these desert routes passed through Rajputana to the port of Bharukacha (Barugaza or Broach), whence the goods were transmitted to Babylon. Jatakas tell of Anathapindikas' caravan travelling to the borders, which probably meant towards Gandhara. From East to West the traffic was largely by river, going up the Ganges to Satajati and up the Jamuna to Kosambi. Further westward the journey was mainly overland till the caravans reached Sind. Sind at that time was a great exporter of pedigree horses. In the north of Sind lay the great highway which connected India with the Central and Western Asia. Another route passed from Magadha to Sagala (Sialkot), Taxila and Peshawar in Gandhara. This great road and its connections are shown in Jatakas as relatively safe in early Buddhistic days, and instances abound of the sons of nobles passing unattended to Takshasila (Taxila) for learning.

It was in this background that Buddhism made its appearance in the wake of Asoka's great empire and turned

the North-Western region into one of its principal centres for many centuries.

MAHAYANA SCHOOL

The religious practices of Bhakti, which were already evident in the teachings of Asoka, were for sometime receiving the support of a new Buddhist philosophy. But the princes of Hellenistic stock, including Menander (Milinda of the Buddhist Texts), could not think of a religion without gods and their effigies; and Buddha, who was so far conspicuous by the absence of his images, now found a place in sculpture. But since his shape was not remembered by the followers, he was represented by the shape of a Greek god. Buddha, thus, came to be revered as a divine being. The belief, that numerous Buddhas (Buddhas of the Past and Buddhas of the Future) assist the devotee in his attempt to attain the Buddhahood latent in him, took a firm root.

They argued that their goal was not Arhathood or Nirvana for themselves. Since they were all sons of the Buddha and had already achieved enlightenment, their duty now was to lead the whole of humanity to salvation.

While the orthodox doctrine was called the "Small Ferry-

Boat" (Hinayana) in which the individual was to cross the stream of life to the shores of Nirvana, the new doctrine came to be known as the "Big Ferry-Boat" or Mahayana in which an enlightened monk ferried all the yearning souls to their release and enlightenment, and finally achieved Tathagattahood as Sidharatha did achieve.

The word Hinayana was unknown in the early Buddhist literature and is not found in the Pali Pitakas. It came into use in the early Buddhist Sanskrit works which mark the advent of a progressive element in the religion. But in the later Mahayana works it was particularly used as a term of disparagement.

Although Mahayana gained wide popularity and spread fast into the North, it was, strictly speaking, the Buddhism of the South for, according to Nalinaksha Dutta, it originated in the South but later on became popular in the North spreading thence to China, Tibet, Nepal, Mongolia and Japan. It was Hinayana, on the other hand, which had a northern origin and spread towards the East over Bengal, Burma and Siam (Thailand) after having been recognised in the time of Asoka.

Heinriech Zimmer in his 'Philosophies of India' holds that Mahayana could not be a vulgarization of the religion by any stretch of imagination.

The followers of Mahayana believed that the "Big Ferry-Boat" was capable of carrying all humanity to Buddhahood. According to this teaching, however, the goal is not Arhathood or Nirvana for oneself but rather the position of a

Bodhisattva (an embryo Buddha) who, for the time being, refrains from attaining the goal in order to act as helper of humanity and a saviour to others, seeking salvation. It is in line with this doctrine that Buddha himself is designated as a Bodhisattva in his previous existences.

The Hinayana thinkers had believed in a number of Buddhas but the Mahayana carried the multiplication of the divine beings much farther. They adopted countless Bodhisattva and numerous deities as associates of Buddhas.

The Mahayana philosophy had its roots in the Sarvastivada school of early Buddhism which believed in the reality of all as the name itself denotes. Since this school of thought had prevailed in Gandhara and Kashmir, the Mahayana school was readily accepted in these areas during the time of Menander (Milinda) and Kanishka, and from there spread all over the North-Eastern Asia including China and Japan.

Kanishka was a powerful king of the Kushan dynasty which ruled astride the Himalayas and the Karakoram regions, stretching from Chinese Turkestan in the North to Sind in the South. His capital was Purushapura (modern Peshawar). He convened a famous Council which was a landmark in the history of Buddhism. Taranatha tells us that soon after the Council of Kanishka some Hinayanic monks attained Annutpattika Dharmakshanti and began to deliver Mahayanic discourses.

From this account of Taranatha, it is evident that Mahayanism with its new Doctrine appeared as an institution

soon after Kanishka's Council, i.e., in the first century A.D.

Whatever the dates of its emergence and inception, Mahayana gave Buddhism a wider popularity and a superior art which was copied throughout the Orient without much alterations.

GANDHARA ART

From the life time of Buddha to the days of the great Emperor Asoka Maurya the religion of the Master was confined to the recluse and the mendicant who sought salvation through renunciation of the world and all that bound him to his mundane surroundings. A laity of sympathizers, patrons and people who professed real allegiance to the religion and followed the path of transcendental virtues, had been created by the elders, but still the religion was confined to the few ascetics in a narrow geographical area.

The conversion of Emperor Asoka by the great Buddhist monk Uppagupta, elevated the doctrine of individual spiritual exercises to the position of a popular and widely propagated world religion.

In the 19th or, according to some historians, 21st year of his reign, Asoka summoned a Council to ratify the Order and clear it of some heretical rites, Uppagupta's Kathavatthu, composed at the time of this Council, gives a full

record of the divergence of opinion that existed at the time of the convention. After the Council Asoka launched an ambitious programme of converting the whole of the then-known world to his beloved faith and organized a large missionary force. The names of all those persons who were sent to different places have been preserved. Kashmir and Gandhara formed part of the kingdom of Emperor Asoka, and Madhyantika was sent to preach Buddhism there. This monk, it is said, succeeded in converting the entire area now comprising the North-West Frontier, part of the North Punjab, the Lower Indus Valley and the whole of Kashmir. The foundation was, thus, laid for the creation of one of the novel specimens of art in the Buddhist iconography which was later on copied in all details by the entire Buddhist world.

Gandhara was the region where Hellenism in its eastward course and Buddhism in its westward march came in direct contact and worked out an artistic synthesis.

The region of Gandhara had never been a part of India before the advent of the Mauryans. Its history had been chequered. Befor the invasion of Alexander it was a part of the Persian Empire of the Achaemenians. The adventures of Alexander into this land are said to have been motivated by the desire to occupy every inch of the Persian Empire. After the death of Alexander the Greek challenge evoked a Hindu repercussion and Chandra Gupta Maurya, a ruler of Northern India, incorporated this region for the first and the last time into a Hindu Empire. His grandson Asoka,

however, embraced Buddhism, which became the state-religion of the Mauryan Empire.

After the death of Asoka in 231 B.C., the Empire began to break up, and Gandhara, being one of the distant provinces, was able to assert her independence, but only to fall a prey to the Bactrian Greek invaders from Central Asia. By 250 B.C., the Seleucid Empire had lost its eastern provinces to two succeeding Greek States. Diodotus had established a small kingdom in Bactria and Arsaces in Parthia. Parthians penetrated the sub-continent as far east as the Indus. Bactria, under Demetrius carried arms across the Hindu Kush and annexed the Kabul Valley and Gandhara in 190 B.C. A succession of Hellenic rulers changed the cultural life of Gandhara. The most outstanding of these was Milinda or Menander. According to Strabo this monarch extended his sway even farther East than Alexander had done. He figures as the chief actor of a very important Buddhist romance known as Milindapanho or the Questions of Milinda. According to this Milinda ruled in a city called Sagala, which has been identified as modern Sialkot. As described in the early text of Buddhism, Menander was eloquent, learned and conversant with many arts and sciences.

According to Milindapanho Menander came under the influence of a famous Buddhist sage Nagasena.

This accord of East and West did not, however, endure very long. The pressure of Yueh-chi or the White Huns was hurling tribes and ruling clans from Bactria and neighbour-

ing countries which, one after the other, turned in an ever increasing waves towards the Indus Valley, defeated the existing monarchs and established their own principalities in close succession. Sakas and Pehlavas occupied the North-Western regions of the sub-continent. The Yueh-chi who had driven them from Bactria, soon followed them through the Kabul Valley to Gandhara. The principal tribe of the Kushans and their ruler Kujula Kadphises extended their conquests to Gandhara. The successors of Kadphises conquered the entire Indo-Gangetic plain.

Kanishka, as we have seen, was the greatest and most powerful ruler of the Kushan dynasty. His Empire extended from the borders of China to the frontiers of Gujarat. Under him for the first time in the history, Gandhara ceased to play the role of a frontier province. His capital was Purushapura, the Peshawar of today.

Kanishka, when he became a king, was the follower of some non-Buddhist religion, but like Asoka he was converted to this faith and like Asoka again he had all the zeal of the convert. To settle the affairs of the state he often consulted the holy scriptures of the Buddhist religion and was fond of theological discussions. He was very much dismayed to find vast differences in the opinions of various Buddhist sects. Parsva, one of the Buddhist elders, told him that the differences were due to the fact that the Tathagatta (the Enlightened One) had left the world long ago and that with the passage of time the followers were forgetting the real word of the Master. Each group held its

own views and was intolerant to others. Kanishka, therefore, called his famous Council or Holy Assembly which was attended by five hundred monks and presided over by Vasumitra. After long and arduous discussions all the minor differences were resolved and new commentaries on the three Pitakas were prepared which ran into about 300,000 verses. These commentaries which dealt with all questions great or small, were then engraved on copper plates. Kanishka placed these plates in a stone chest which was deposited in a stupa erected to consecrate and preserve them.

The Council of Kanishka, thus, ended the old quarrels on petty differences but actually, ironically enough, the great schism between the Mahayana and Hinayana schools occurred at about this very time. The Mahayana school, which can be said to have reached its maturity by this time, completed the cleavage by declaring itself a second school of thought.

This, however, is the period when the Buddhist Plastic Art of Gandhara reached its zenith. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to unearth any monuments which can be dated any further back than the advent of the Mauryan dynasty.

The number of monuments belonging to the Mauryan and Sunga dynasties can also be counted on fingers. The stupas of Barhut and Sanchi, the balustrades of the same style exhumed from Amrauli and Mathura, the monolithic pillars of Asoka and the caves he prepared for the use of the mendicants of different religions, if added to the lot, com-

plete our list of all the contributions the Buddhist School of that time had made towards the most popular faith of the period.

The most striking feature of the pre-Gandhara schools is the conspicuous absence of the Man from whose life and former existence they had set themselves to carve in stone and paint in colours. We find them naturally puzzled but industriously carrying out the strange undertaking of representing the life of Buddha without the Buddha. Their effort was to create a feeling of the presence of Buddha whose image could not be represented according to their belief, as he had risen above all attributes and forms. We, thus, invariably find the throne left vacant. At the most, there is a symbol indicating the invisible presence of the Illuminated Soul. Since such a mode of expression had a serious disadvantage for the popular artist, the Buddhist sculptor needed a new turn like the Wheel of the Law in order to enter into the exuberance of the Kushan art.

It seems the minds of the devotees, who now regarded Buddha as the Divine Being, were thirsting for a glimpse of the Buddha, or at least his image. Canonically there was no objection to bringing his shape into the spatial dimensions. The custom had so far withheld them from taking that course. But Mahayana, which had already broken from the past, succeeded in bursting the last barrier between the devotee and the image of the Master, and the only problem for the artist was to determine the figure and features of Buddha. The solution was provided by the Hellenistic

tradition and impulse which had already taken firm roots in Gandhara.

When the image of Buddha was introduced, his followers in Gandhara and the North-Western region of the sub-continent had been intimately in touch with the Hellenistic civilization, and had been greatly impressed by it. The people who were already imbibing awe and inspiration from sculptured stories of Buddha's life, must have been only too happy to see a personification of the Lord in the full Olympian grace and dignity. There is no wonder, therefore, that these statues found their way immediately to all the temples and shrines of the Buddhist world.

It has now been proved beyond doubt that it was in the North-Western part of this sub-continent (now Pakistan) that this unique artistic revolution took place. The Buddha figure of Gandhara, which was inspired by the statuesque beauty of sculptured Apollo, found its way in the course of a few centuries to Tibet, Cambodia, Burma and Thailand. In Japan the figure of the Master was introduced in the 5th century. Chinese images go back to the 4th century. Archaeological missions in Central Asia agree that archetype of the image reached there from Gandhara.

Excavations do not take us far beyond that period of sculpture, but the absolute perfection wrought in the oldest of figures compels us to presume that they had a long history of experiment and development behind them, and we have to conclude that the precursors were made somewhere during the reigns of the Indo-Parthian or Indo-Scythian

kings. Pollas Athene continues to brandish the Paternal Lightning of Zeus on the coins of Menander but her image is surrounded by inscriptions in local dialects. Most probably it was in the reign of Menander that Eastern ideology and Western art arrived at a synthesis to create the Gandhara sculpture.

Whatever the real leanings of Menander, by the large number of stupa ruins and Buddha figures which far outnumber all the material so far excavated in the rest of the sub-continent, it becomes certain that Buddhism was very popular in this area, and the kings, either through personal devotion or by way of respect for public sentiments honoured the religion and built for it.

Within a very short time we find that Gandhara became associated with the lives of Bodhisattva, living there in one incarnation or the other. Areas were allotted to different Jatakas. Some dared even further and imported Buddha, the Sakayamuni, himself and made him walk in the streets of Gandhara. "He", they said, "came there to save the country from several catastrophies". Thus he is said to have come in person to subdue the Nagaraja of the Swat river who used to inundate the whole of the surrounding country once in every twelve months. On the intervention of Buddha he is said to have agreed to restrain his scourge and limit it to once in every twelve years. In another Jataka, he is supposed to have subdued the insatiable agress of smallpox, somewhere in the north of Pushkalavati.

Armed with legend and patronized by the Greek kings

and their Kushan successors, Gandhara became the holy land of Buddhism. Some of the Chinese pilgrims were quite content with visit there without feeling the necessity of going as far down as the Ganges and the Magadha Desha.

The whole of the Gandhara province was studded with spacious and beautiful stupas where the Blessed One had, in his previous existences, made a gift of his flesh, his eyes, his head and his limbs; the first to buy back a dove from a hawk and the last to satisfy a famished tigress. Most of these remains have now been wrested from the layers of oblivion, but some still repose under the tumuli which dot the plains and valleys of Gandhara.

Hiuen Tsang saw a thousand monasteries which ornamented as well as sanctified the area when he visited this land. All the Chinese Buddhist pilgrims, who visited the holy places of Buddhism in the 4th century A.D., and after, testify that Kanishka had built the highest pagoda of the country near Peshawar which was his winter capital. With, so to say, the sixth sense of an archaeologist, Foucher located Shahji-ki-Dheri as the probable site to have once been occupied by the great Kanishka temple, and of course, the long and tedious excavations carried on by Marshal and Spooner revealed the base of a large Pagoda, unequalled in length and breadth by any other temple in the whole of the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent. Its centre yielded the gold casket which, according to the Chinese testimony, contained the holy relics of Buddha which were deposited by Kanishka himself. This reliquary has the name Kanishka in dotted

letters and his image in repousse. Buddha is seated above the lid between the two standing divinities. The reliquary is now the proud possession of the Union of Burma.

The Kushan power declined after the death of Vasudeva in 225 A.D., and the history of Gandhara falls into partial obscurity till Fahien comes to tell us much about its surviving grandeur in 400 A.D. He states that seven hundred priests still served the Patrachaitya at Peshawar and the stupa of the eye-gift was adorned with silver and gold.

The stupa of the eye-gift was raised to commemorate the event when the Bodhisattva gave his eye in charity at Pushkalavati (Shehbaz Garhi). But Fahien, as a pious devotee of Buddism, has not been able to see much of its decay which had actually set in this sub-continent. It is evident that under rulers professing Brahmanical faith, orthodox Hinduism must have been much more prominent than Buddhism in the sub-continent he visited. He was, however, an eye-witness of the decay to the Buddhist holy cities of Gaya and Kapilavastu under the Hindu Gupta empire which was then ruled by its greatest scion Chandra Gupta Vikramaditya.

He talks of actual enmity between the Brahmans and Buddhists and records that at Saravas Brahmans attempted to destroy certain Buddhist structures but were miraculously hindered. It seems bad days of Buddhism had set in. Conditions were, however, much better in the North-Western region of Gandhara which was still independent of the Brahmanical rule.

In this period when Gandhara remained independent of the Hindu Gupta Empire, the Buddhist sculpture attained its pinnacle of perfection. Among its most typical expressions are both seated and standing status of Buddha who is usually shown garbed in a smooth tight-fitting robe. This style influenced sculpture in other parts of the sub-continent where similar figures are definitely the descendants of the Gandhara Buddha. After this brief phase of perfection the Buddhist art suffered a rapid and violent decline.

When Son-Yun visited this sub-continent in 520 A.D., he found Gandhara almost in ruins. The region of Gandhara had been ravaged by White Huns two generations before his arrival.

Son-Yun speaks of the Yetha (White Hun) king Mihiragula whom he met in the camp as a person of a very cruel and vindictive nature, practising the most barbarous atrocities, worshipping demons and opposed to the law of Buddha. Nevertheless, he still records the existence at Plou-Sha (Shehbaz Garhi) of beautiful images covered with gold, sufficient to dazzle the eyes. But he was the last man to witness the grandeur of Shehbaz Garhi as on his vindictive return from Kashmir, some fifteen years later, Mihiragula destroyed sixteen hundred of Gandhara's religious establishments, killed two thirds of the inhabitants and reduced the remainder to slavery.

This was the severest blow to the life and culture of Gandhara from which it could never recover. When Hiuen Tsang visited this part of the sub-continent, he found every

Sanghrama and Vihara in ruins, overgrown with wild shrubs and in desolation. The stupas had decayed and the White Huns occupied heretical temples. The jealousy of the orthodox Hindus was militant even during the life time of Harsha. Sasanka, the king of central Bengal, and probably a scion of the Gupta Dynasty, was a worshipper of Siva. Hating Buddhism, he did his best to extract it from the Eastern regions of the sub-continent.

Hieun Tsang bears testimony to the bitter animosity which marked the relations between Puranic Hindus and the Buddhists.

The art which developed in Gandhara and attained its height during the Kushan period, was indebted most of all, to the Greek culture which flourished in Parthia and Bactria. But in Gandhara, instead of becoming survile to the Greek genius, the local artist was inspired to create a standard, a treatment and a style of his own. He used the Greek technique in the sculpture of human form, and idealized in his own way the spiritual possibilities of radiating composure, peace and love. The image of Buddha selected by Foucher as the oldest among the like, forms a very good subject of study if we have to recognize the common features. This was the pattern which has been followed in chiselling thousands of other Buddhas in varying degrees of course. The full force of the Greek mind is conspicuously visible in the grace and simplicity of features and the beautiful treatment of the garment which has all the grandeur of the Greek toga. Buddha here looks more like a Greek

philosopher than an Indian deity, but the artist has not forgotten the points which give the portrait a local colour. The long ear-lobes, the Usnisa covered by hair rising in a graceful knot and the hands in the symbolic position go to prove that the person is the sub-continental Tathagatta.

To the average artist the Blessed One resembled a particular shape and bore many of the 32 major and 80 minor signs of beauty and greatness (Lakshnas); the rest carried the stamp of the individuality of the iconographer. Even within the narrow district of Gandhara the difference of conception prevails. This is very significant in the management of drapery and helps use in tracing the chronological development of this art.

The style changes, but the type remains the same from the Charsada Buddha of the year 72 A.D., to the standing and seated images of the Illuminated One at Takhte Bahi and Sahre Bahlol. There is the same friendly demeanour, the thick foliage tied in the knot over the crown, and the drapery covering both the shoulders. To this type belongs the Buddha of the Kanishka reliquary. Towards the close of the first century we meet a new type: the Scythian Buddha with a moustache. So far the lines do not differ, but some later Buddhas and several youthful Bodhisattvas from Takhte Bahi have a square countenance with long moustache, together with some other heavy Mongolian traits.

In all this statuary the conical rise and the knot of hair has been a matter of greater interest than even the Apollo face of the Buddha figure. For whereas the sculptor had

little or no idea about the correct features of the Illuminated One, the story about his hair was very clear and had continued without any contradiction. Buddha at the time of his great renunciation had severed his hair with his sword and had never worn them afterwards. According to the religious ideals he ought to have appeared bald. Foucher is of the opinion that the artist thought it sufficient to omit the headgear of Buddha and leave him bareheaded not daring, for aesthetic reasons, to deprive the Sublime One of his beautiful hair.

The study of drapery in all these cases is also interesting. It is seldom found in the work of the artists at Barhut and Sanchi, but in Gandhara it became as important a feature as the lines of the face and the contours of the body. Drapery in this school of art becomes free, natural and full of nervous unrest. The seated figure of Buddha at Takhte Bahi has a natural drapery falling easy on the wearer. But when copied in the case of seated Buddhas of the second century, it does not fall but spreads out freely. It is on the contrary gathered up in folds and is finally flattened below without emphasising the extremities. The Buddha from Sahre Bahlol shows an advance over the effigies dug out from the mounds at Taxila but it suffers from the same defects in drapery. It proves a gradual departure from the natural and the realistic. The management of drapery during the 4th century once again improves, even transcending the qualities of the 1st century Gandhara art.

The seated Buddha becomes more graceful when the

drapery, in the latter half of the 1st century, is depicted in a new style. The right shoulder and the right arm is left free and the feet are allowed to protrude out. During the 4th century A.D., when the Buddhist Gandhara art had outlived the 2nd century decadence and was returning to the classical style, the drapery became more Hellenistic with an advantage that the artist could now make the body visible through the gossamer drapery covering the body and falling in natural folds.

Apart from the Buddha figure, the greatest charm of the Buddhist art lies in the Buddha stories speard in hundreds of Bas Reliefs. Every minute in Buddha's life was a sacred memory and a heritage for the follower. Buddha had already lived 550 previous lives. To these can be added the stories of 24 other Buddhas who had preceded Sidharatha Gautama. All the important anecdotes of these lives have been artistically depicted in stone.

In the Bas Relief of these devotional stories the classical tone of correct representation and the introduction of natural human and animal forms are the distinguishing features of the Gandhara Art.

In Gandhara lie the actual foundations of the Art which flourished in the sub-continent from the 5th to the 10th century A.D. It was here that the principle of naturalness was first accepted and the human form perfected in its minute details. It is the introduction of natural surroundings inhabited by natural figures which places the Gandhara art far superior to any other art produced during the

millennium in the entire sub-continent. It was with the perfection of the human form and the love for a realistic expression that scenes of this world and the next, as desscribed in the complicated Mahayanic legends, were made perceptible.

In spite of the fact that all the vestiges of the Gandhara art were scaled down and destroyed by the savage White Huns and later by the followers of Sankara Acharya, the tumuli of this desolation have concealed a great wealth of Bas Reliefs which today fill the museums of Pakistan, India, Germany, France and the United Kingdom.

Charsada and Pushkalavati

Charsada is the most important of the sites so far discovered or excavated in the Gandhara region. As already mentioned, Pushkalavati was one of the oldest centres of ancient civilization. It was an ancient city even for the people of Buddha's time. Before the discovery of the Khyber pass the trade from India to Balkh and Bakhtar (Bactria) was carried through the defile created by the Kabul river. Charsada was the first business centre that greeted the Central Asian caravans heading for this sub-continent and was an equally important centre of export from this country.

Buddhist Jatakas added to its importance by declaring it to be the seat of the Bodhisattva who in his different births gave the gift of his flesh, his eyes and even of his head.

Dr. Wheeler attaches great importance to the present site of Pushkalavati and feels that the remains of this region will yield the missing-link between the Moenjo-Daro

civilization and the historic era of Alexandrian Taxila.

These remains have suffered the most disastrous destruction at the hands of nature. The Swat river which, according to the Jatakas, had obeyed the command of the Blessed One and had stopped its annual scourge, has forgotten the pledge and has cut the regular mound of the remains into four pieces. Its current has already washed away most of what would have been a source of valuable information.

The largest of the four mounds known as the Bala Hisar was partially excavated in 1902-3, but the excavations were not deep enough and have revealed in the upper strata some Sikh and Muslim monuments. But deeper down there still lie buried valuable treasures of information, but it is dwindling day by day by the ravages of the Swat river.

The second highest mound, Mir Ziarat, stands a mile off Bala Hisar. It has also been pierced and tested. The other two tumuli of Platu and Ghazdheri are lower than the other two. Excavations there have already shown some signs of the Buddhist culture, but once the spade of the archaeological expert gets busy, it is expected to extricate information from the pre-Kushan days down to the oldest times.

Takhte Bahi

Takhte Bahi is a strange modern discovery. The Chinese records on which much of our information regarding Buddhist places is based, are singularly silent about it. Even the reasons as to why these prolific pilgrims did not mention the name of such an important Buddhist shrine, are not

yet known to us. The archaeologists have, however, taken out a wealth of ancient Buddhist remains from these mounds. A long range of different sized Buddhas and Bodhisattvas from Takhte Bahi have filled our museums. The main group of buildings stand on a small plateau over five hundred feet above the surrounding plan. The big stupa is a huge building within a large court. It has a cross-court full of votive stupas, a monastic quadrangle, monastic cells and a huge assembly hall. To the south of the quadrangle is another court which was decorated by a line of gigantic Buddhas rising to a height of 16 to 20 feet. The most remarkable in design and arrangement is a group of small shrines surrounding the main stupa court which are alternatively crowned with stupa-like decorations and gabled chaityas. The beauty and grandeur provided by the entire composition is unparalleled in the Buddhist world.

Sahre Bahlol

Like Takhte Bahi, Sahre Bahlol has also been discovered quite recently after a complete oblivion of some fifteen hundred years. The city was probably founded by Kushan kings and finally reduced to debris by the fire and sword of Mihiragula, the Hun worshipper of Siva. The excavators have dug out more than half a dozen large monasteries, burnt and laid low.

But the destroying fire has proved a wonderful preserver. The fall of the superstructure entombed the lower buildings. Human hands never reached them afterwards. The rows of $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet high Bodhisattvas on both the sides of the great stupa

and the stucco base of the smaller stupa are still in magnificent condition of preservation.

The images both in stucco and stone show a wide range of craftsmanship but all of them have a very high standard of excellence and represent the Gandhara Buddhist art at its best.

Taxila

Our history is, however, most indebted to Taxila for its regular record, depicting the various phases of the Buddhist art and architecture through the ages. It was a rich city when Alexander came and invaded this sub-continent. The king of Taxila offered obedience to the victor and gained his freedom. On the return of Alexander and the defeat of Seleucos, Chandra Gupta became the master of the entire area lying south of the Hindu-Kush . They city revolted against the Maurayas, but was subdued again by Asoka, then still a young prince.

So far Taxila was a non-Buddhist city. As Asoka became a devotee of Buddhism with all the zeal of a convert, the culture of the place assumed a different colour. Soon Taxila (Takshasila of the old) became the greatest Buddhist University of the sub-continent.

The city of the Asokan period is now represented by the Bhir mound which is very close to the present archaeological museum on the southern side of Tamra Nala. The architecture of the city of Bhir mound and its intricate and narrow pathways do not carry us any further in the study of the Buddhist culture during the days of Asoka. It is the tumuli

covering several monasteries strewn all over the surrounding hills and plains, which housed the great and renowned university that commands our attention.

Dharmarajika Stupa

On a plateau above Tamra Nala is a cluster of stupas, monastic cells and other chapels. In the centre stands a very large round stupa probably built by Asoka in 300 B.C. The other smaller stupas and buildings can be traced back to the reigns of Azes and Maues extending over to the 5th century B.C. The large stupa has also undergone large-scale repairs with additions and decorations to the main building, but the most preliminary repairs cannot be dated back to earlier than the 2nd century A.D.

The niches on the eastern side are best preserved and their Kanjure stone decorations form a good subject for study. The main dome is surrounded by a path for procession. Excavations on this side have revealed three floors one upon the other. The first was decorated with bangles, the second covered by glass tiles and the third with black stone slabs. The procession path contained 355 coins of Azes II, Soter Megas, Huvishka, Vasudeva and other kings of Kushan and Sassanian origin, and a few pieces of the Gandhara sculpture. The best of these sculptures is the figure of Bodhisattava standing in Abhaya Mudra (the attitude of protection).

The main stupa is surrounded by many smaller stupas which were constructed during the Saka period. Eleven of these have so far been excavated. The work on these

buildings revealed that they had been subjected to various repairing operations and some of them were even enlarged in subsequent stages. On digging below the surface several of these smaller structures were found to enfold holy relics. These relics are mostly in stupa-like caskets covered by unbrellas and accompanied by beautiful and costly stone and shell beads.

There are eight small chapels on the south-west side. One of these chapels yielded the relics of Lord Buddha with a silver scroll giving details. The relics which consisted of small pieces of bones were kept in a small gold reliquary, which was in turn kept in a casket of steatite stone and was covered by a heavy stone under the surfaces of the floor. The fall of the roof had broken the covering stone and the steatite casket but the gold reliquary and the silver scroll were saved from destruction. The inscription, which is in Kharoshti characters, records that the relics were those of Lord Buddha and were enshrined by Urasaka, a scion of Imtavhria, a Bactrian, in the days of Kanishka, the King of Kings.

Further to the south is the Chaitya Hall built by Kanishka. This hall is remarkable for its octagonal apse, which in all other cases in the whole of India and Pakistan is always round. This is a unique example in design.

In a chapel to the south—south-west the floor is covered with grass tiles of transparent azure. Marshal recalls a Chinese tradition which said that glass was originally introduced into China from the northern region of the Indo-

Pakistan sub-continent. The discovery of glass tiles in this chapel and on the procession path for the main stupa proves that they were originally fixed in the main stupa, and when that procession path was resurfaced, the unbroken tiles were brought to this chapel and put to a further use. The use of glass tiles in the main stupa strengthens the authenticity of the Chinese tradition.

Glen of Giri

About 3½ miles to the south-east of the great Dharmarajika stupa is a range of high hills. The highest of these is crowned by a small fortress which was probably erected by the middle of the 5th century A.D., to offer refuge from Hun invaders to the monks residing in the monsteries of Dharmarajika and many other stupas scattered all over the valley. The hill in turn works as a partition curtain to mark off a few more stupas and monsteries. The Glen of Giri has two stupas and two attached monasteries. One set can be dated back to the Parthian-Kushan era and the other to a later date.

The monasteries are built in a cleft above a spring of excellent water. The area covered by these monasteries is of 62 square feet and the debris now rises to a height of 15 feet.

The monastery of the later date is decorated with stucco. The assembly hall is singularly missing, and it is surmised that while the other portions were built under a huge cliff, the hall was built over the cliff reached by a staircase, parts

of which are still in existence.

Stupa of Kunala

According to Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim, there were four great stupas in Takshasila (Taxila). The first was the stupa of Elapatra, the Dragon King (Naga Rapa) and the second was the stupa marking the place which, the Buddha predicted, would yield four great treasures on the arrival of Maitrya as Buddha. The third stupa marked the place of the sacrifice of head and the fourth commemorated the place where Kunala's eyes were put out.

The stupa of the Naga Raja has been identified with the tank of Hasan Abdal which is now known as the tank of Panja Shah. The second and third stupas have been identified with the ruins on the ridge of Baoti Pind and the Bhallar Stupa crowning the western ridge of the Sarda hill. The Kunala Stupa was eluding the archaeologists for a long time. At long last it was identified by Marshal with the stupa over the ridge of Hathial which commands the whole of the Hare Valley.

The story of Kunala, as recorded by Hiuen Tsang, is very interesting. Kunala was son of the great Buddhist emperor Asoka Maurya. His step-mother Tishya-rakhshita fell in love with him and induced Asoka to send him as his Viceroy to Takshasila. Disappointed in love, she sent orders that the eyes of Prince Kunala may be removed. For these orders she used the seal of the king which she secured when he was asleep. The ministers of Kunala shuddered at the orders and shrank from its execution but the obedient son forced

them to do their job. His eyes were put out and he along with his wife begged his way to the capital Pataliputra where Asoka recognized him by his voice and the strain of his flute, and on knowing the facts put the demonic wife to death. The eyes of Kunala were, however, restored at Bodh Gaya through the good offices of Arhat Ghosha.

The stupa now identified to commemorate this story stands on a rectangular base of 63 feet 9 inches in width and 105 feet in length. Nothing but a fragment of the core of the superstructure has survived but this little portion combined with the 3 terraces gives a fair idea of the time of its erection. A number of architectural pieces of the superstructure which are lying around at the base help one to conclude that the elevation of the dome and drum was strikingly lofty, and that it was a circular tower rising in six or seven tiers. It is also very clear that the terraces and different tiers were decorated with friezes and cornices.

Mohra Muradu

The Buddhist builders of Taxila had a keen eye for the landscape. The selection of Mohra Muradu is an example of this. It lies about a mile to the south-east of Sirsukh. It is a beautiful stupa with high edges, surrounded by dark green shrubs. The stupa has nothing new to offer in style or design. The only remarkable thing about it is the excellent state of preservation in which it has been found by the excavators.

Most of its plaster work and surface decoration with the stone and stucco images have been found in their original

form and unmolested by man or nature. The top of the stupa was cleft by the treasure hunters, but as probably they did not find anything valuable, the ruins were left covered with shrubs and debris.

When excavated, it was found that the whole of the structure upto the top of the dome was covered with images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in close succession one upon the other. The stucco reliefs are coloured, though all the colour has now faded. The slip which was applied over the surfaces before giving a deeper tone, gives an idea of the colour scheme. The face is left white, but the lips, edges of the nostrils, edges and fold of the eyelids, edge of the hair, folds of neck and ear-lobes are picked out in red while the hair itself is coloured grey black.

The art, as seen on the stupa, reaches a very high standard of excellence. The figures, particularly on the bays of the south side of the plinth, have been endowed with life and movement. In the words of Marshal, "this life and movement is specially evident in some of the attendant Bodhisattvas, the swish of whose robes, with the lines delicately contoured beneath them, is wonderfully true and convincing. Delicate, too, and singularly effective are the hovering figures which emerge from the background at the sides of the Buddhas, as if they were emerging from the clouds. Yet another point that arrests the attention is the highly successful manner of portraying the folds of the drapery, the technical treatment of which accords with the best Hellenistic traditions and demonstrates most accurate

observation on the part of the artist".

The diaper style of the walls of the monastery dates them to the close of the 2nd century A.D.

In detail and decoration it is an interesting group of rooms comprising some very large chambers. Its most remarkable discovery is a completely round stupa 12 feet in height, inside a cell. Details of the stupa, its decorations comprising elephants and Atlantas in the lowest tier and seated Buddhas in the upper tiers, are intact. Some of the stucco decorations have retained even the traces of colours—crimson, blue and yellow—which once embellished them. The umbrella has, of course, fallen aside but even that is yet a complete whole and preserves the holes which were used for garlands.

Jaulian

The monastery and the stupa of Jaulian, some three miles east—north-east of Sirkap, represents the Buddhism of the decadent age. The remains are the plinth of a large stupa surrounded by a small wall. The monastery is apparently a double-storeyed building like its parallel in the Mohra Muradu valley. The remains of the upper storey are almost missing. The cells are larger in size and surrounded a very large court in the background. Alongside the big assembly hall is a group of other rooms providing the covered spaces for kitchen, store and a large dining hall with a partitioned apartment for the officer incharge of food-stuffs.

The introduction of refectories in the monasteries is a clear break from the past. The Buddhist Bhikku was ex-

pected to live a very austere life. The cells were meant for his meditation and prayers, and the begging bowl was to suffice all his physical needs. But with the passage of time and the cessation of wealthy patronage of kings and merchants, the monastic life became a luxury. Monasteries began to amass wealth and owned large lands donated by the governments.

STUPAS IN SIND

Sind remained a part of the Buddhist Kingdom even during and after the Hun occupation of Gandhara and the Punjab, but it is curious to note that this province does not have any outstanding remains of the monuments that the religious fervour of the people could have produced. The absence of spacious monasteries or large stupas can be explained by the geographical conditions of the country which do not favour the use of such material for construction work as the slate, Kanjur and steatite stones. The devotees might have erected huge edifices of timber and unbaked brick, and might even have embellished them with gold and silver, but all of them have since perished. We, however, have a large stupa with pointed terracotta Buddhas decorating it. Another stupa at Moenjo-Daro, which formerly crowned the mound covering the citadel of that ancient city, and two more located at Sudherange Dhado in Saidpur and Thulmir Rukun in the Nawabshah district complete the list of existing stupas and monasteries in Sind.

BUDDHISM IN EAST PAKISTAN

Buddhism was once the dominant religion of this sub-continent and has left its mark in the shape of innumerable architectural remains of stupas, monasteries and temples together with a great variety of images in stone and metal. Bengal is known to be the last strong-hold of the faith where, presumably it filtered very early, developed into a hybrid and highly complicated system, unlike the other religions of the sub-continent, and lingered on till it died out from the rest of the sub-continent.

No definite evidence is available to ascertain when Buddhism first gained its footing in East Pakistan but on the evidence of a Sanskrit passage in the Vinayapitaka, which defines the eastern-most limit of ordination as Pundra Vardhana, it is usually believed that Buddhism had gained its influence in North Bengal even before Asoka's time, since Vinaya text is known to preserve traditions of Pre-Asokan days. However, during the 3rd century B.C., Bengal

was a part of Asoka's empire. It is easy to imagine that under his imperial patronage and great missionary activities this part of the country, doubtless, received the blessings of the faith very early especially in view of its closer proximity to the region of the Master's birth-place. This is also significantly indicated by the traditions about Asoka in Divyavandana and the accounts of the Chinese Pilgrim Yuan Chwang (Hiuen Tsang). The existence of the faith in North Bengal during the 2nd century B.C. is also testified by two votive inscriptions at Sanchi which records the gifts of two inhabitants of Pundravardhana (modern Mahasthan). While the Nagarjunikonda inscription, usually dated to about 2nd|3rd century A.D., mentions Vanga as a flourishing centre of Buddhism, which along with other well-known countries of the empire included in the list, was converted to Buddhism by the masters and fraternities of Ceylonese monks.

The famous Chinese pilgrim Fa-hien visited Bengal in early 5th century A.D. and stayed at Tamralipiti (Tamluk in Midnapur) for two years, "writing his Sutras and drawing pictures of images". We glean from his accounts that in his times there were 22 monasteries in that place and Buddhism was in a flourishing state. His account is amply attested by the Gunaighar Grant of the Gupta period, bearing the date 188 of the Gupta Era (506|507 A.D.) which records grants of land to the Buddhist Avaivarttika Sangha of the Mahayana Sect during the reign of Vainyagupta. This clearly shows that already by the beginning of the 6th

century A.D. even the distant south-eastern region of Bengal was firmly under the influence of Buddhism.

Curiously enough, however, the archaeological evidence of this period is very scanty. The earliest archaeological relic of this period is a beautiful standing image of Buddha in sandstone found at Bihrail in Rajshahi District and another of the same type recently discovered from Vasu Bihara in Bogra district (c. 5th century A.D.). Of a slightly later date is the gold-plated bronze image of Manjusri from Mahasthan, now preserved in the V. R. Museum. To these images may now be added a unique image of Avalokitesvara discovered during excavation of Kotila Mura in the Mainamati Range. This image represents a type familiar to the painted manuscripts from this region, but its treatment is in Gupta style.

However, the impact of Buddhism on Bengal is best reflected in the writings of the Chinese pilgrims of the 7th century A.D. of which the accounts of Yuan Chwang (Hiuen Tsang) are by far the most important. He saw with his own eyes almost all the chief centres of Buddhism in Bengal. He observed in the country of Pun-na-fa-tan-na (Pundravardhana) that "there were 20 Buddhist monasteries and over 300 Brethren who were followed by the Great and Little Vehicles ...20 *li* to the west of the capital was a magnificent Buddhist establishment, the name of which is given in some texts as, po Shih-p'o (Vasuvihara near Mahasthan). In this monastery, which had 'spacious halls and tall-storeyed chambers', were over 700 Brethren, all Mahayanists; they had also

many distinguished monks from 'East India'. Close to it was an Asoka tope at the place where Buddha had preached for 3 months; and near that were the traces of the 4 Buddhas having sat and walked up and down. Not far from this spot was a temple with an image of Kuan-tzu-tsai P'u-sa, which had supernatural exhibitions and was visited by people from far and near. And the country of San-mo-ta-t'a (Samatata) had more than 30 Buddhist monasteries and above 2,000 Brethren, all adherents of the Sthavira School. Near the Capital was an Asoka tope where the Buddha had people from far and near. And the country of San-mo-ta-t'a vestiges of a place for sitting and doing exercise for the Four Buddhas. In a monastery near this spot was a dark-blue Jade image of the Buddha, eight feet high, showing all the distinctive characteristics and exercising marvellous power". (Watters, on Yuan Chwang's Travels p. 184-187).

Although the tradition of Buddha's visit to Bengal as mentioned in the pilgrim's account is echoed in the story of Sumagadha in the Avadana-Kalpalata of Kshemendra (11th century A.D.) no Buddhist Stupa belonging to Asokan time has so far come to light. Some eminent scholars like Cunningham and K. N. Dikshit, however, are inclined to identify the great Po-Shih-P'o Vihara of Yuan Chwang with the ruins of Vasubihara near Mahasthan by inviting a reference to the Pundravadhana country, where a gigantic mound (700′ x 600′ x 30′) seems to be all that remains of what was once magnificent Vihara. None of the Buddhist establishments mentioned by Yuan Chwang in the country

of Samatata (roughly the present boundaries of Tippera and Noakhali districts) has yet been identified although extensive areas on the Mainamati range (Comilla in Tippera District) has been opened up by the Archaeological Department of Pakistan recently. The chances of such identification are by no means remote. K. N. Bhattasali, however, proposes to identify one of the monasteries, mentioned by the Pilgrim, near the Capital of Samatata with the Mahamaya mound near Bad-Kamta in Tippera district, on the assumption that Bad-Kamta (Karmanta-Vasaka of the Ashrafpur copper plate grant) was the Capital of Samatata during Yuan Chwang's time. In the Gunaighar inscription of Vainyagupta (507 A.D.) already alluded to, mention is made of Avalokitesvara-asrama-vihara, which was probably not far from the present Gunaiphar in the Tippera district.

The reputed Nalanda monastery probably came into prominence towards the close of the 5th century A.D. Although situated in distant Magadha (South Bihar) it was not isolated from the religious life of Bengal. There is evidence to show that the patrons of Buddhism, scholars and the kings of Bengal in 6th and 7th centuries A.D., largely contributed towards the development of that institution. The illustrious Silabhadra, the abbot of Nalanda under whom Yuan Chwang studied for a while was originally a scion of the Brahminical royal family of Samatata. After undertaking an extensive tour in various parts of the subcontinent he settled down at Nalanda and became a pupil of Dharmapala and soon "rose to eminence for his profound

comprehension of the principles and subtleties of Buddhism and his fame extended to foreign countries".

Pala Rulers

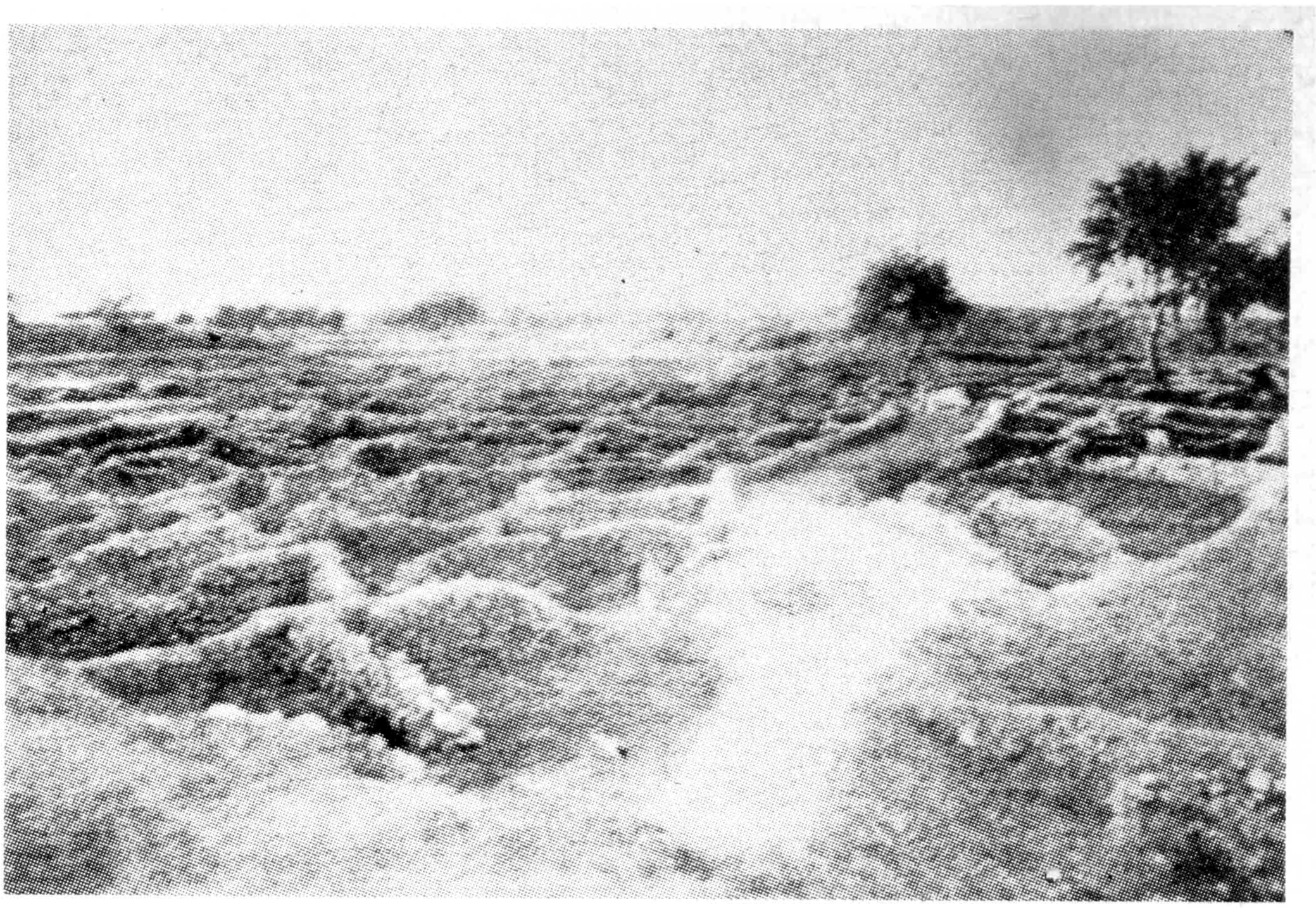
Buddhism received patronage in Bengal, as elsewhere, by the important ruling dynasties like the great Pala rulers (8th to 12th centuries A.D.), the Chandras (c. 10th-11th centuries A.D.) the Khadga Kings (c. 7th-8th centuries A.D.), the Deva kings and the minor ruling Chiefs of Pattikera (c. 11th-13th centuries A.D.). Buddhist remains of the Pala period mostly lie in Varendra while those appertaining to the latter four are in Samatata. Some of the Gupta rulers maintained a thin veneer of religious tolerance as the Gunaighar Grant of Vainyagupta, already referred to above testifies, but there is no direct evidence in favour of other scions of the dynasty.

Tantric Cult

Nevertheless the Pala and Chandra rulers of Bengal were ardent Buddhists and under them the masses of the countryside embraced Buddhism of a complex polytheistic kind "which would doubtless have astonished the Master himelf". Under the royal patronage well-organized monasteries in different parts of East Pakistan were established. These monasteries, acting as illuminating centres of education and religion, became the centres of the faith, through which increasing influence was exercised upon the masses. This evangelistic enterprise, however, changed its colour considerably and developed into a new type of Tantric Cult which indeed had a greater appeal for

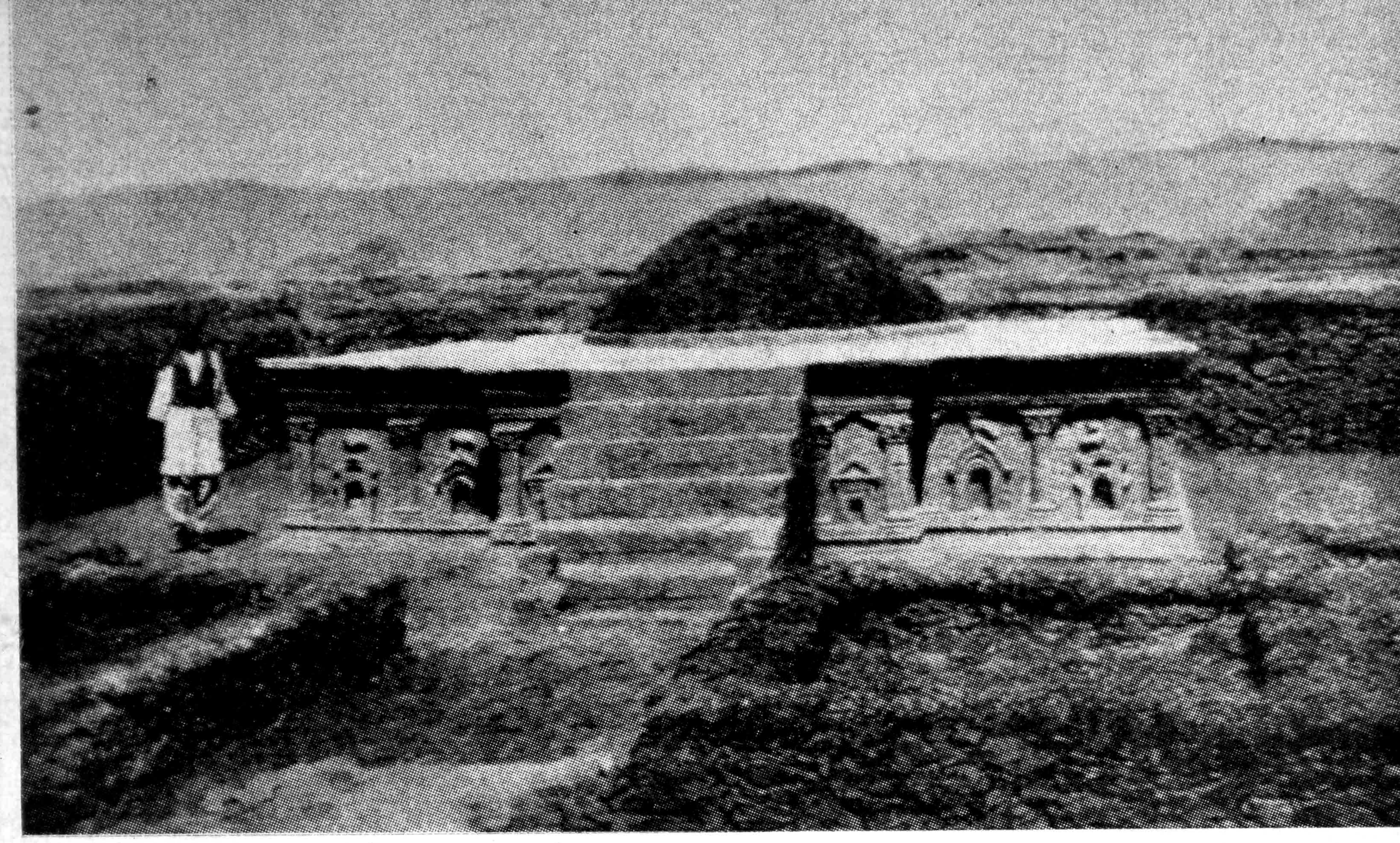
Corbelled niche from Takhte Bahi, District Mardan (1st—5th century A.D.)

Remains of the Monastery Takhte Bahi (c. 1st—5th centu A.D.)



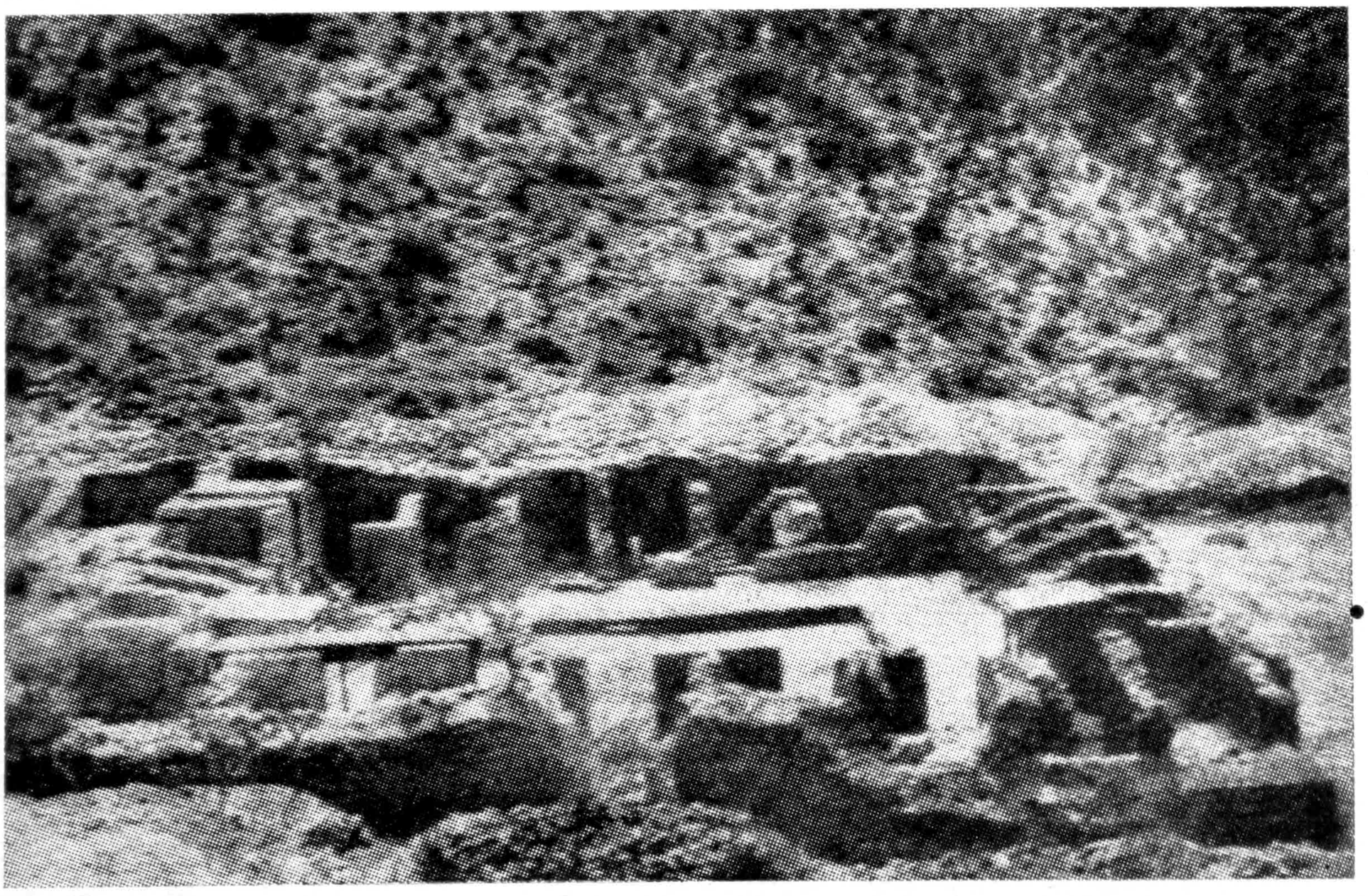
North-Western Section of remains excavated at Bhir Mound

The Palace Block at Sirkap

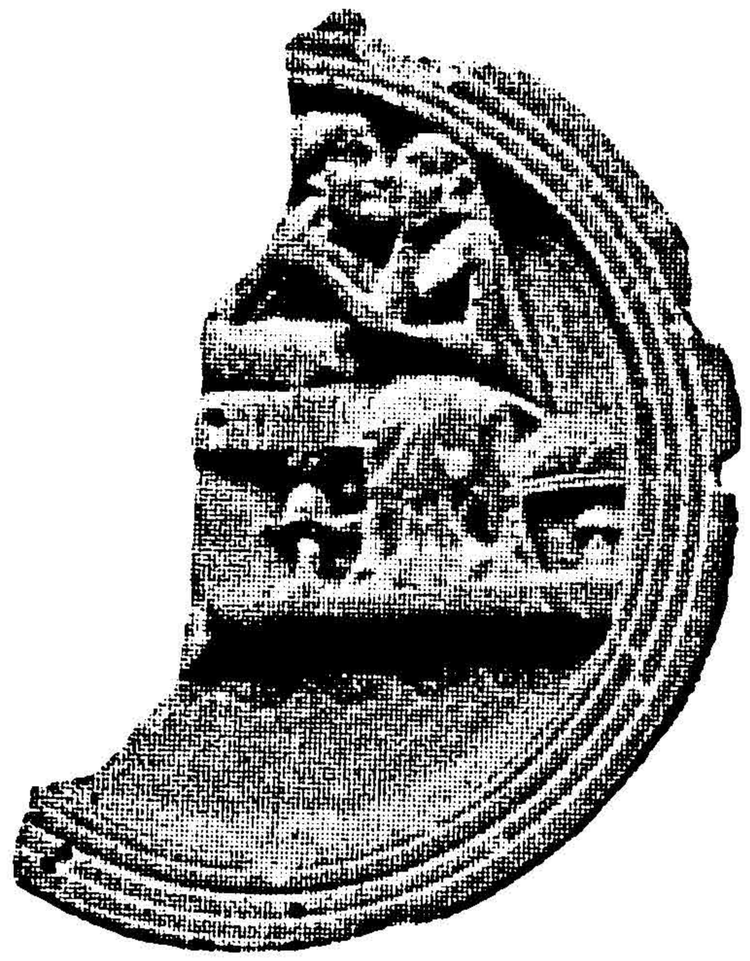


General view of the Double-Headed Eagle Stupa (c. 1st century A.D.)

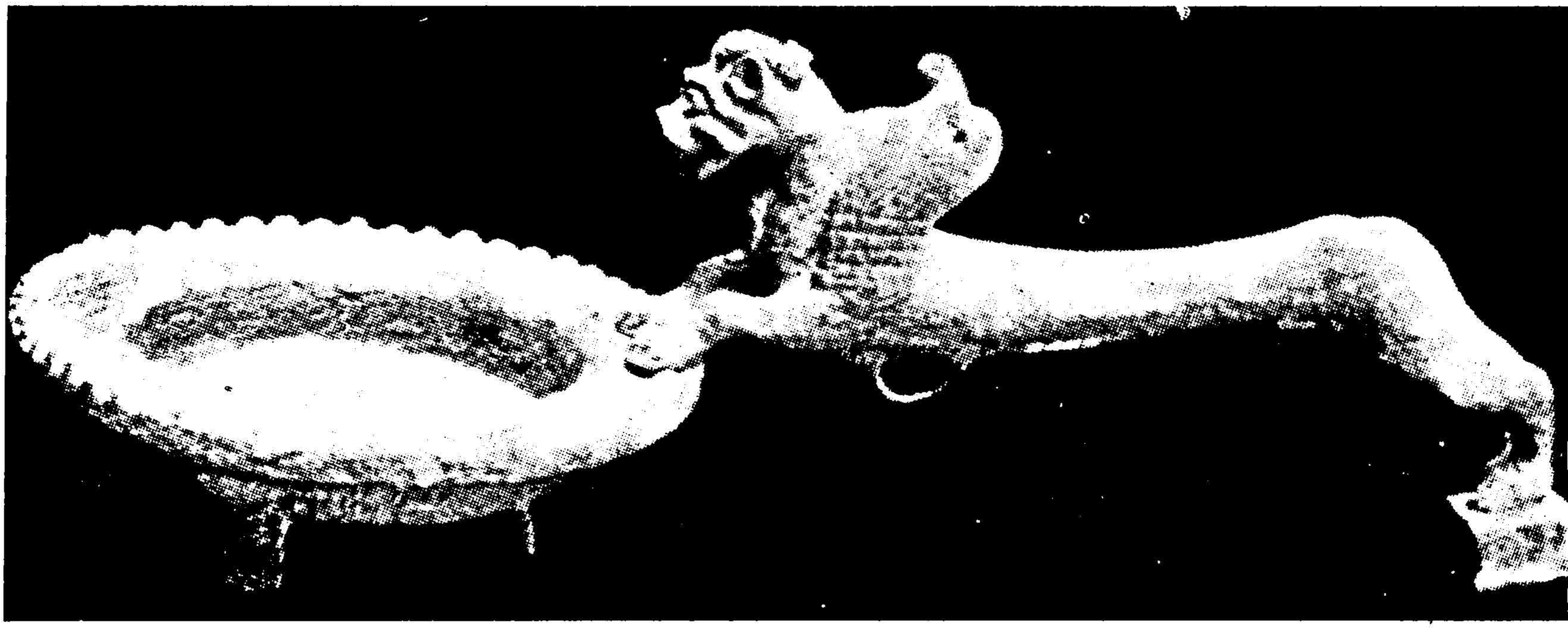
General view of Monastery at Mohra Moradu



Circular toilet-tray of fine grey schist from Sirkap, Taxila (2nd century B.C.)



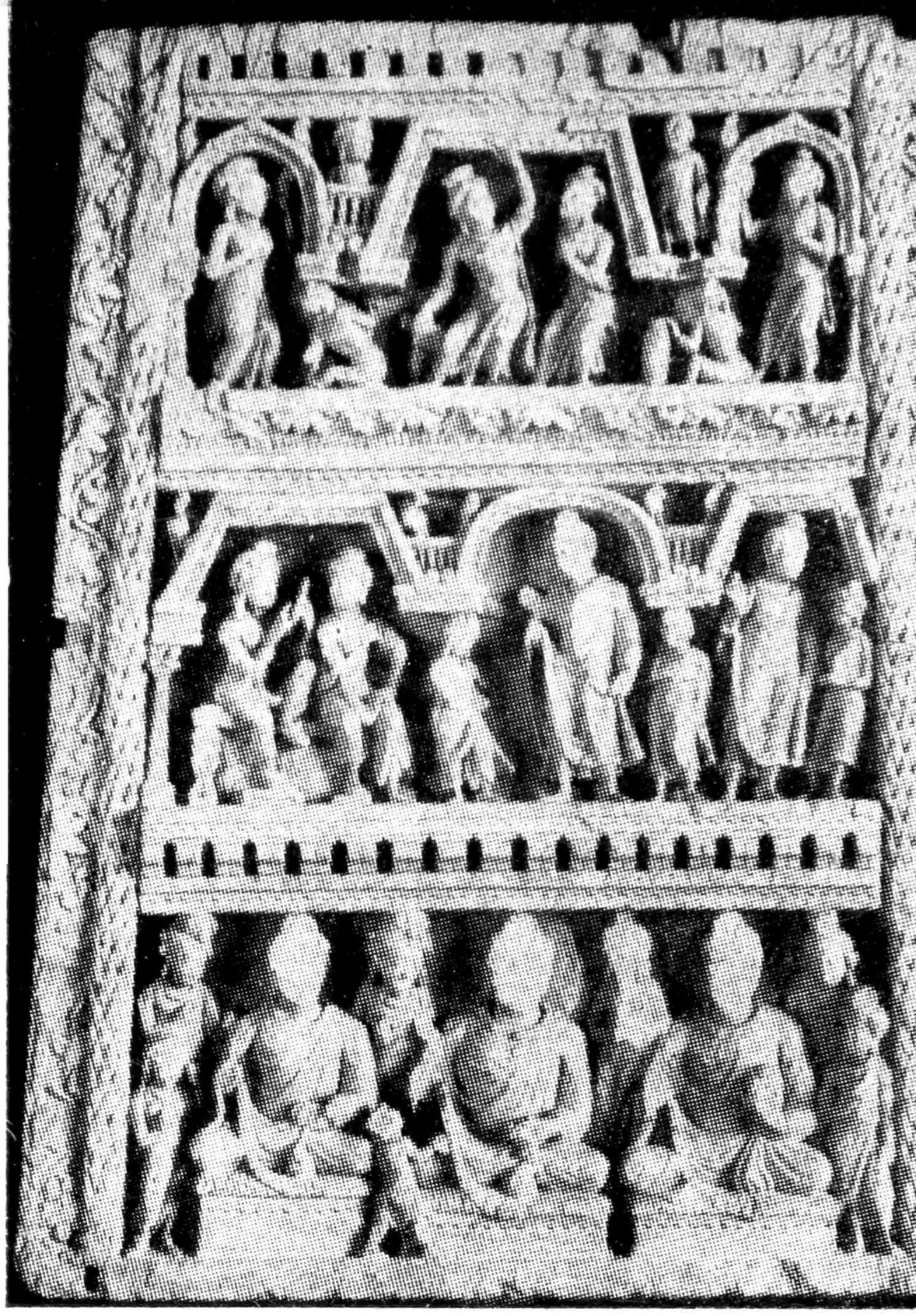
Half of a broken toilet-tray of yellowish brown Steatite from Sirkap, Taxila (1st century A.D.)



Copper incense burner from Sirkap, Taxila

Toilet-tray of grey schist from Sirkap, Taxila (1st century B.C.)

Gandhara stone relief depicting Buddha in the attitude of benediction from Dharmarajika Stupa at Taxila (c. 2nd century A.D.)

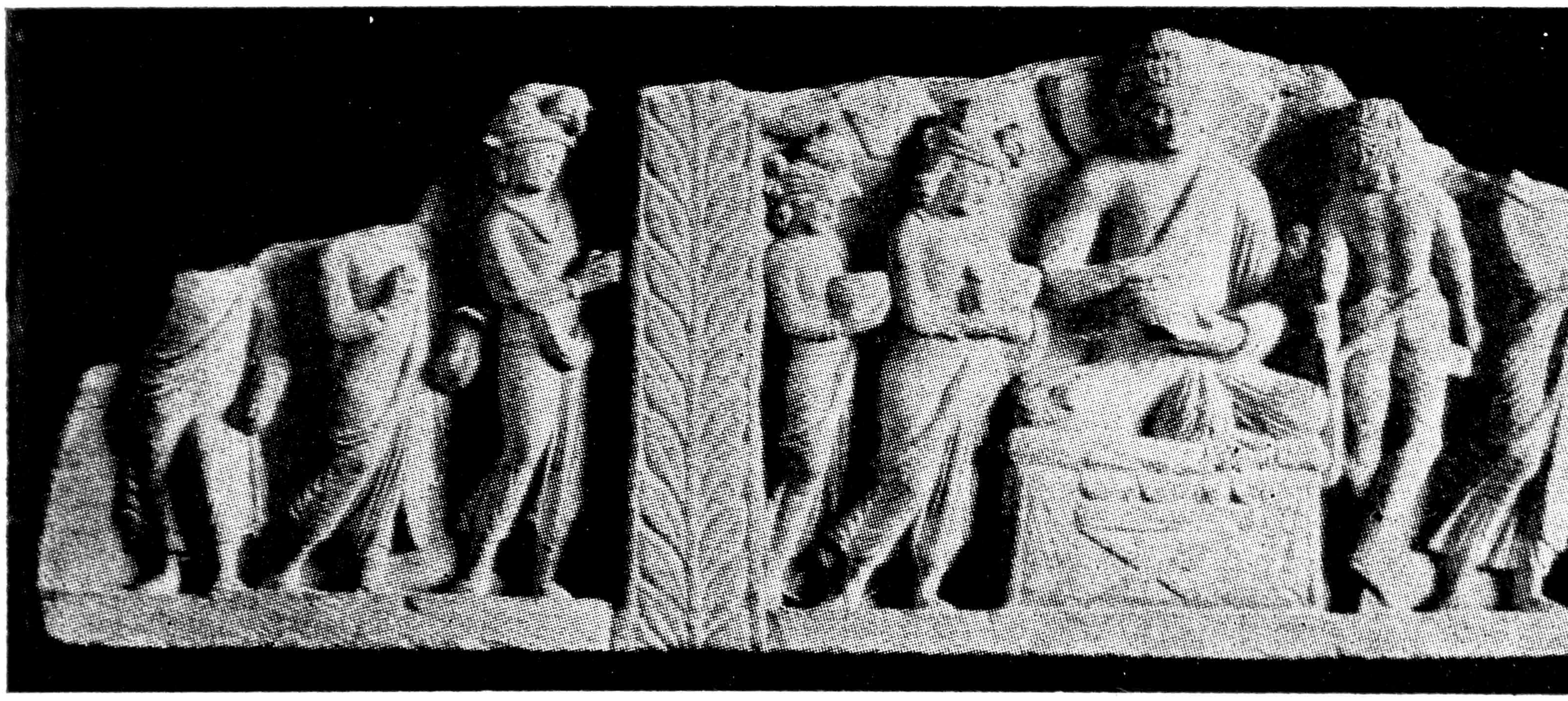


Gandhara stone frieze depicting scenes from Buddha's life. From North-West Frontier Province (c. 2nd century A.D.)

Part of a Gandhara stone frieze depicting an ascetic with a female (Yakshini). (c. 2nd century A.D.)

Gandhara stone image of the Bodhisattva Maitreya from Mohra Moradu, Taxila (c. 2nd century A.D.)

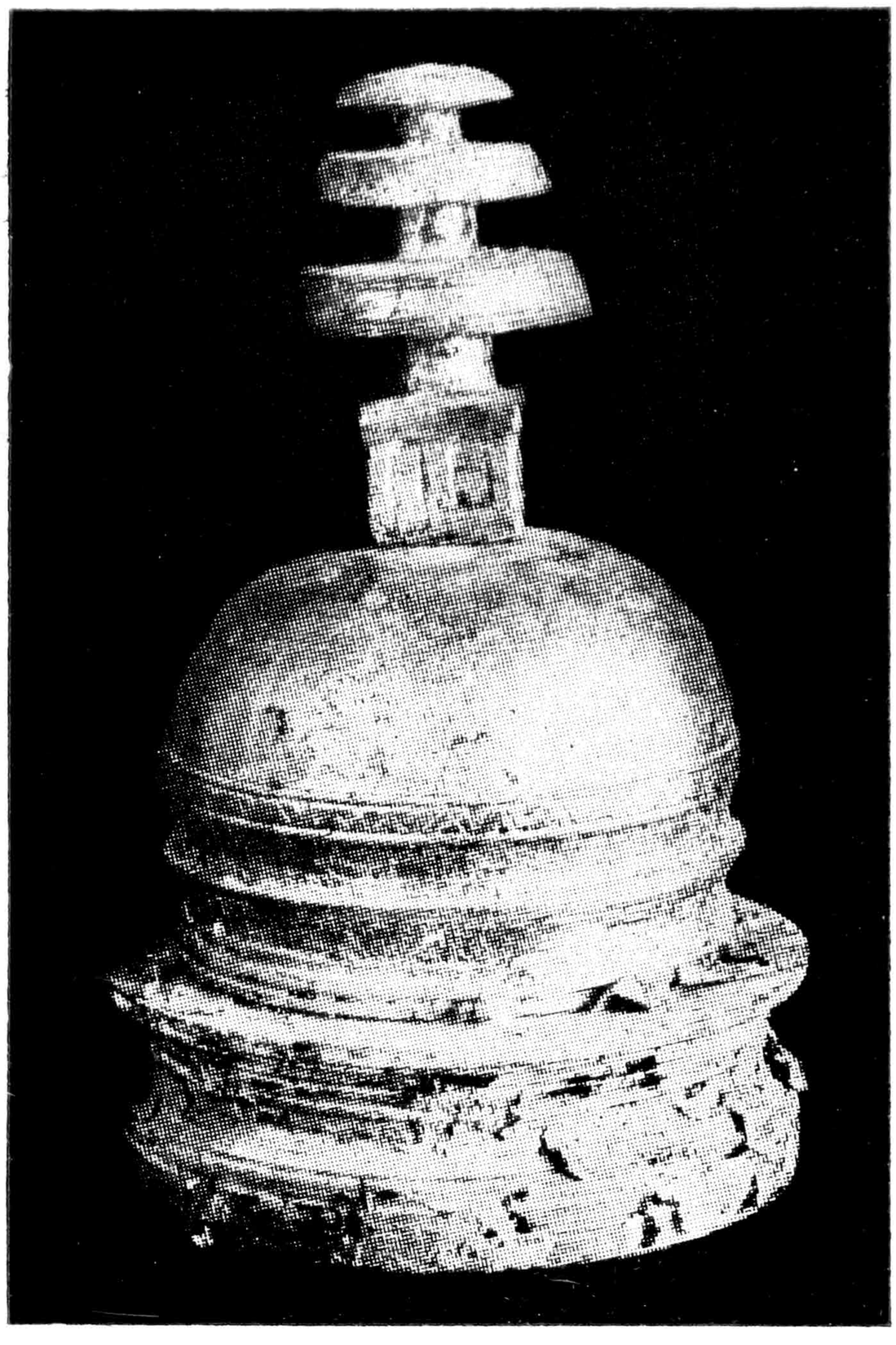
Bust of the Sleeping Musician in stone. From Dharmarajika Stupa, Taxila (2nd century A.D.)



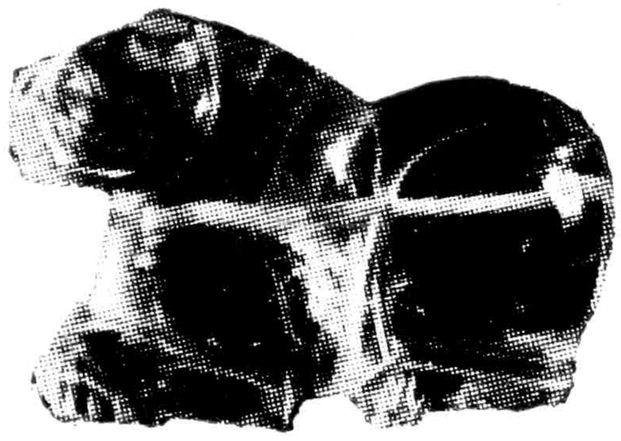
Gandhara stone frieze depicting a scene from Buddha's life. From North-West Frontier Province (c. 2nd century A.D.)

General view of Kunala Stupa from North-West at Taxila, showing a smaller stupa immured in its core

General view of the Dharmarajika Stupa at Taxila

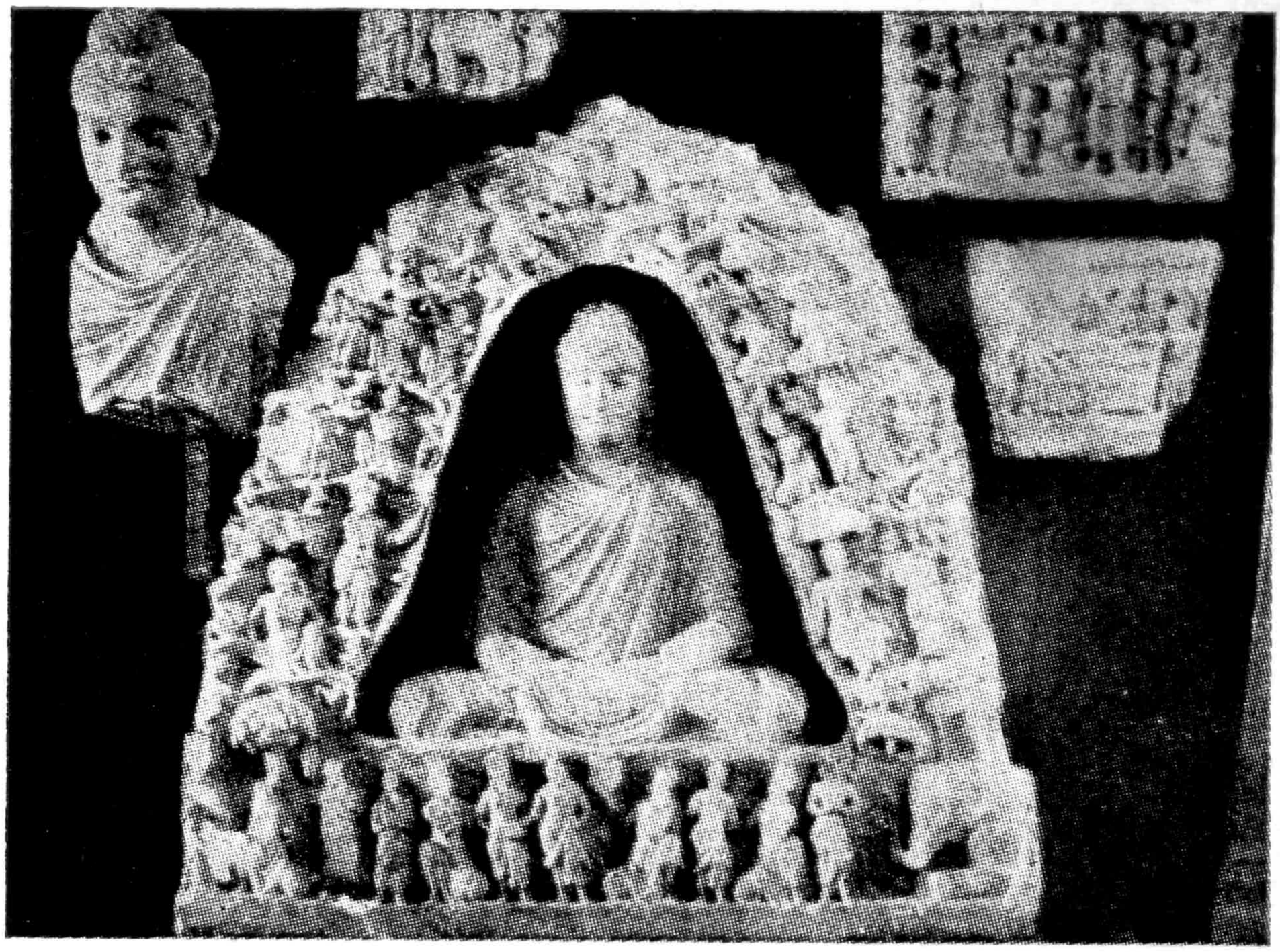


Stupa-shaped casket covered with gold leaf, from Stupa A. I. at Kalawan, Taxila, (c. 1st century A.D.)

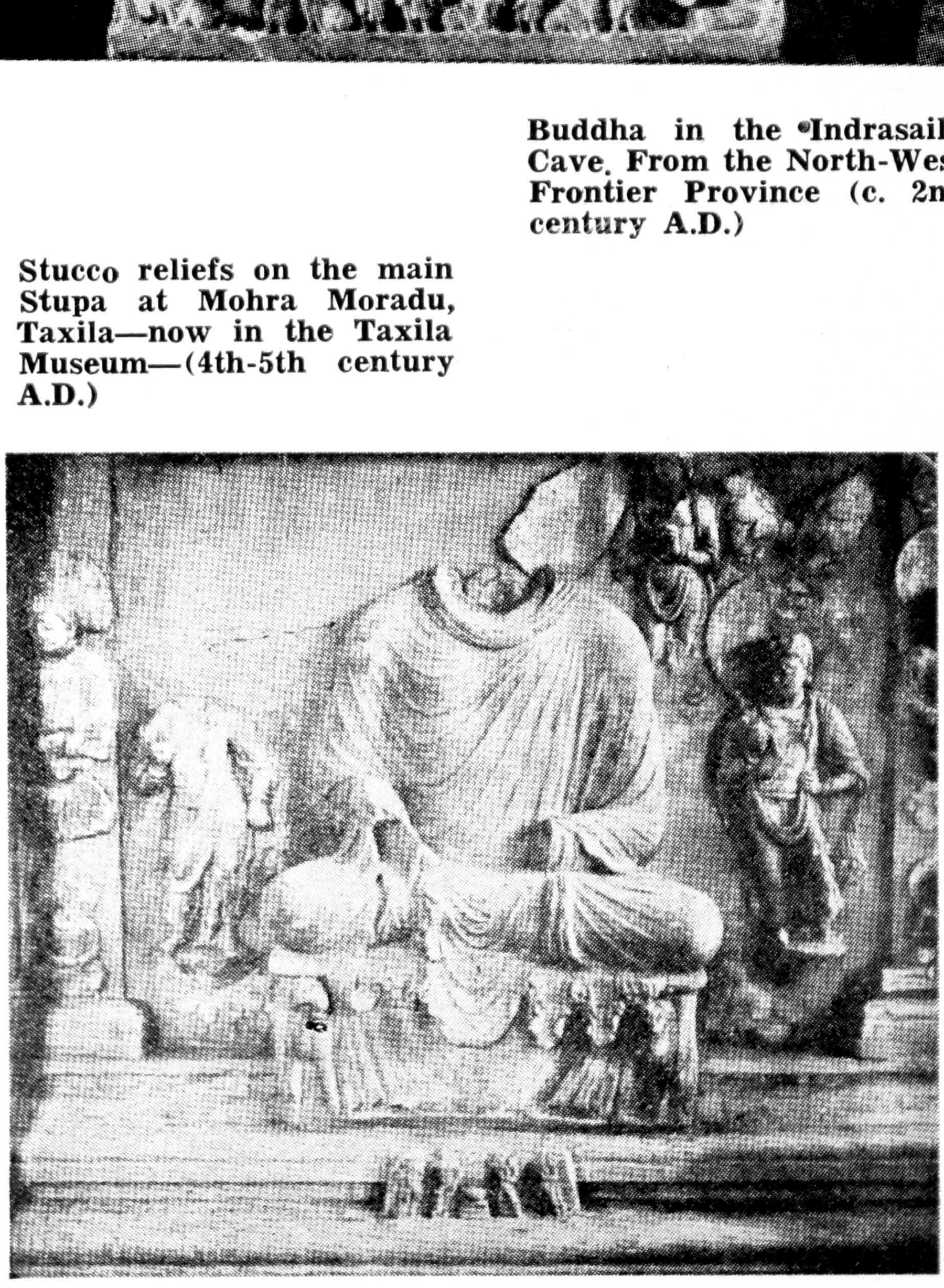


Crystal Lion from Stupa N. 7 at Dharmarajika, Taxila (c. 1st century A.D.)

Toilet-tray of grey schist from Sirkap, Taxila (1st century A.D.)

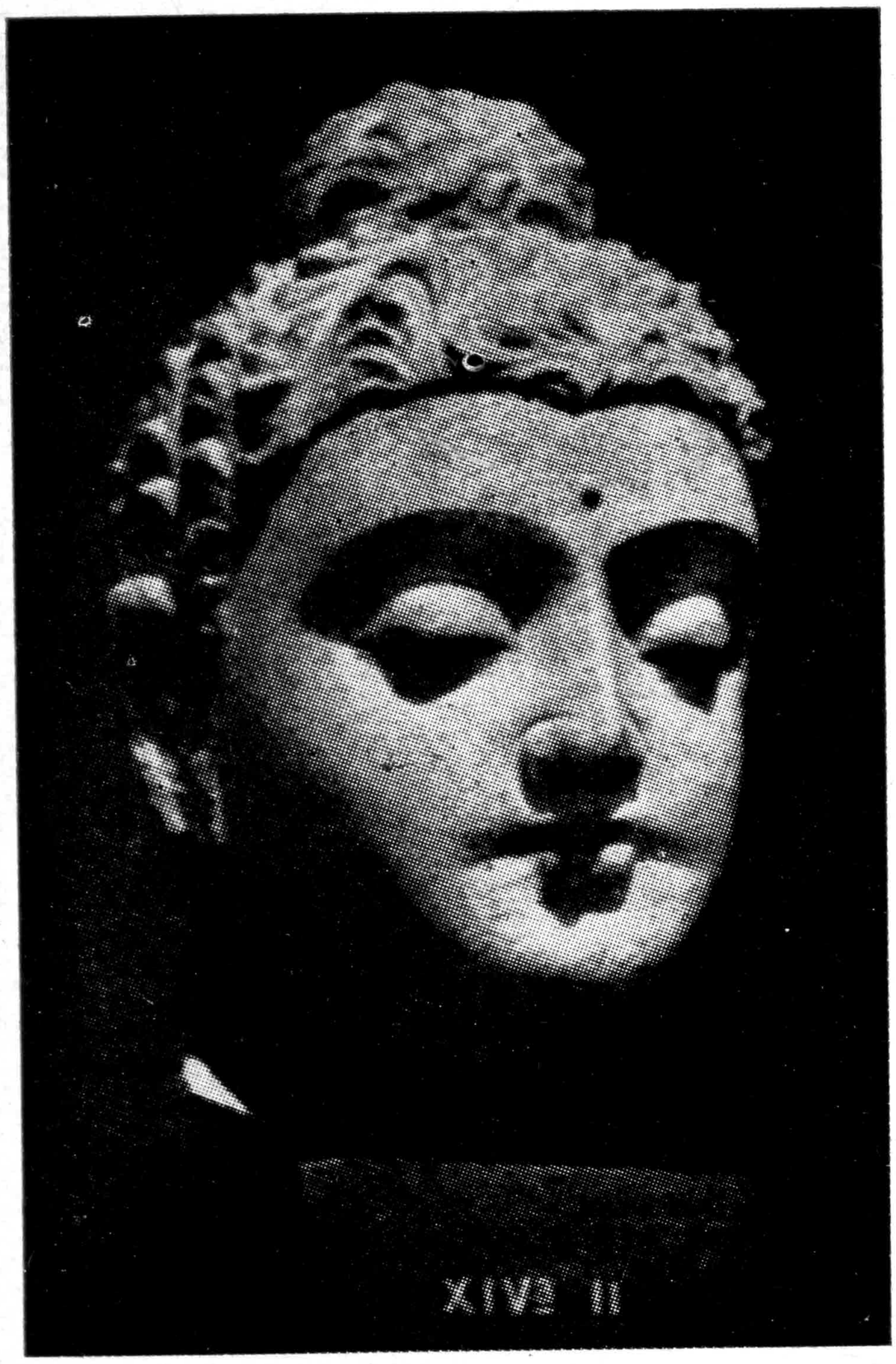


Buddha in the Indrasaila Cave. From the North-West Frontier Province (c. 2nd century A.D.)

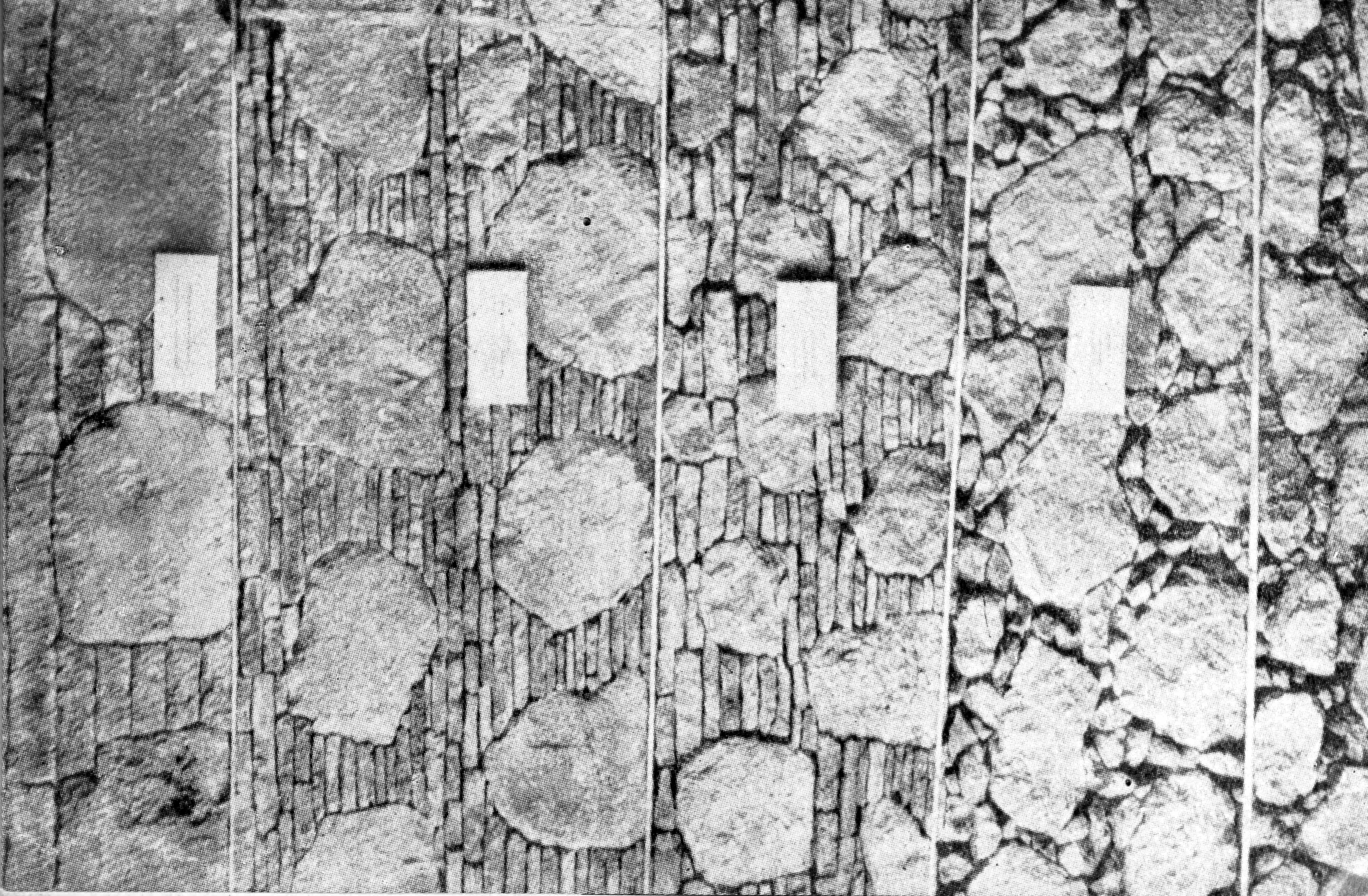


Stucco reliefs on the main Stupa at Mohra Moradu, Taxila—now in the Taxila Museum—(4th-5th century A.D.)

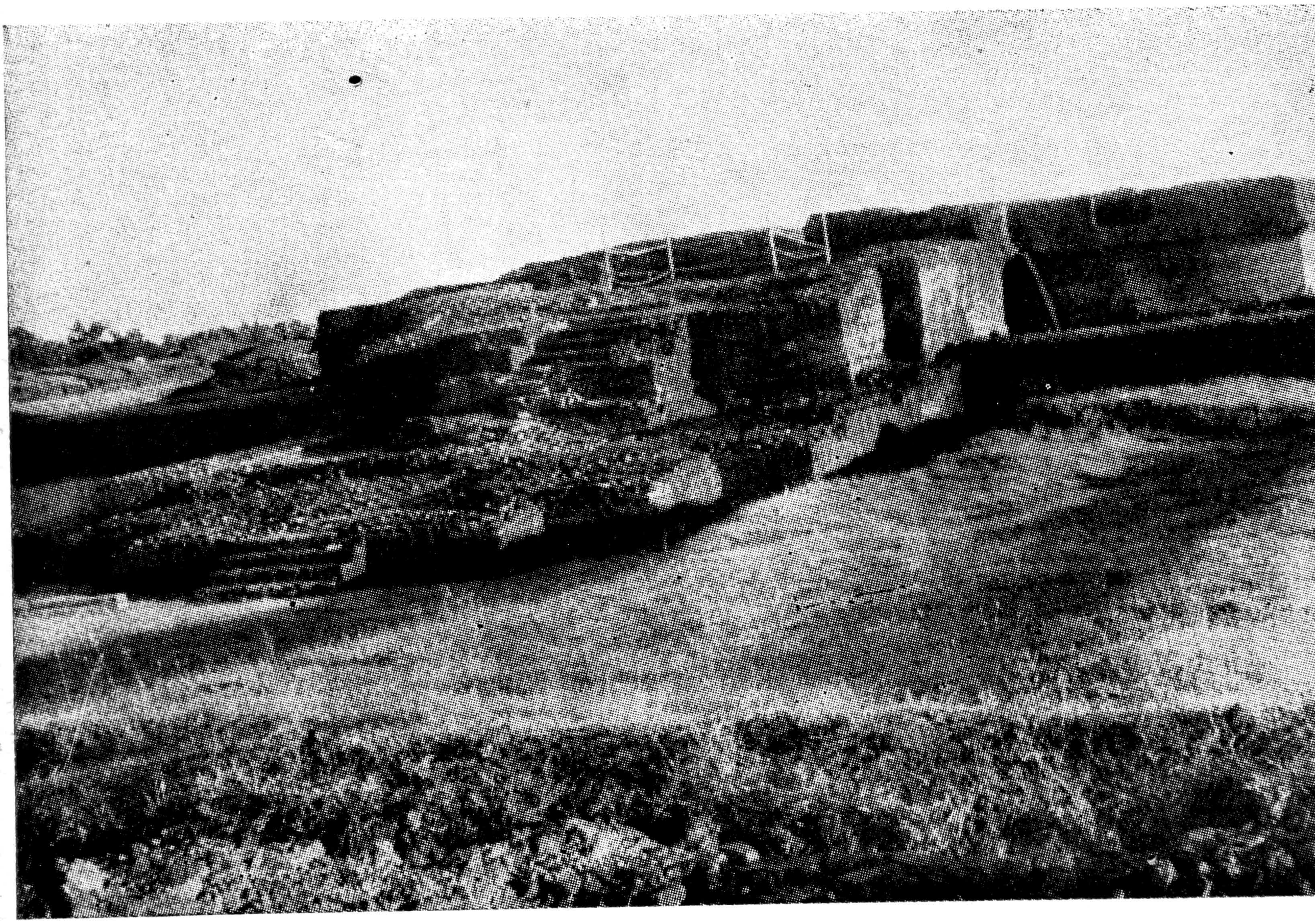
Small stucco head of Buddha from Mohra Moradu, Taxila (c. 4th-5th century A.D.)



Stucco head of Buddha from Jaulian, Taxila (c. 4th-5th century A.D.)

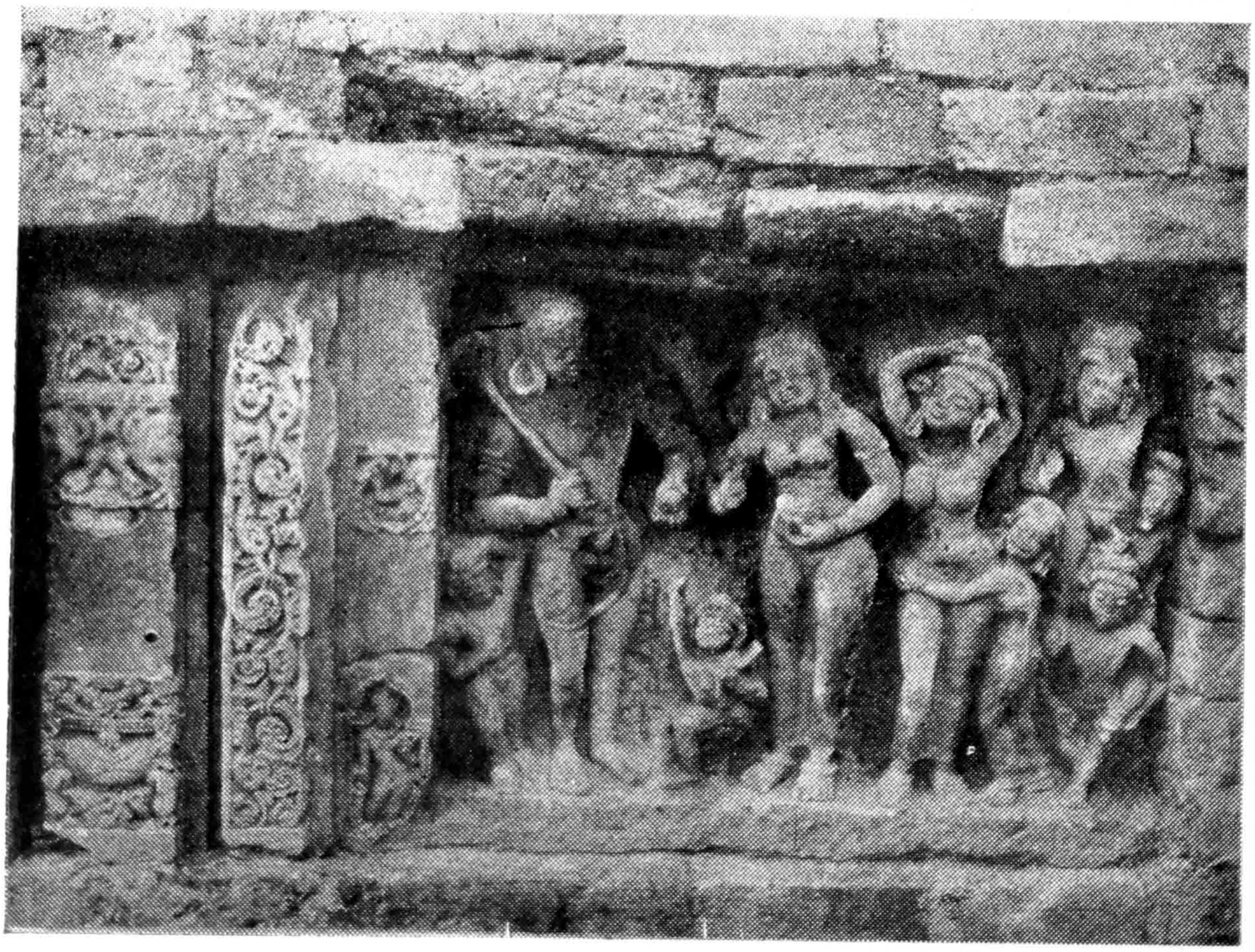


Examples of stone masonry at Taxila illustrating its evolution from 3rd century B.C. to Medieval Times

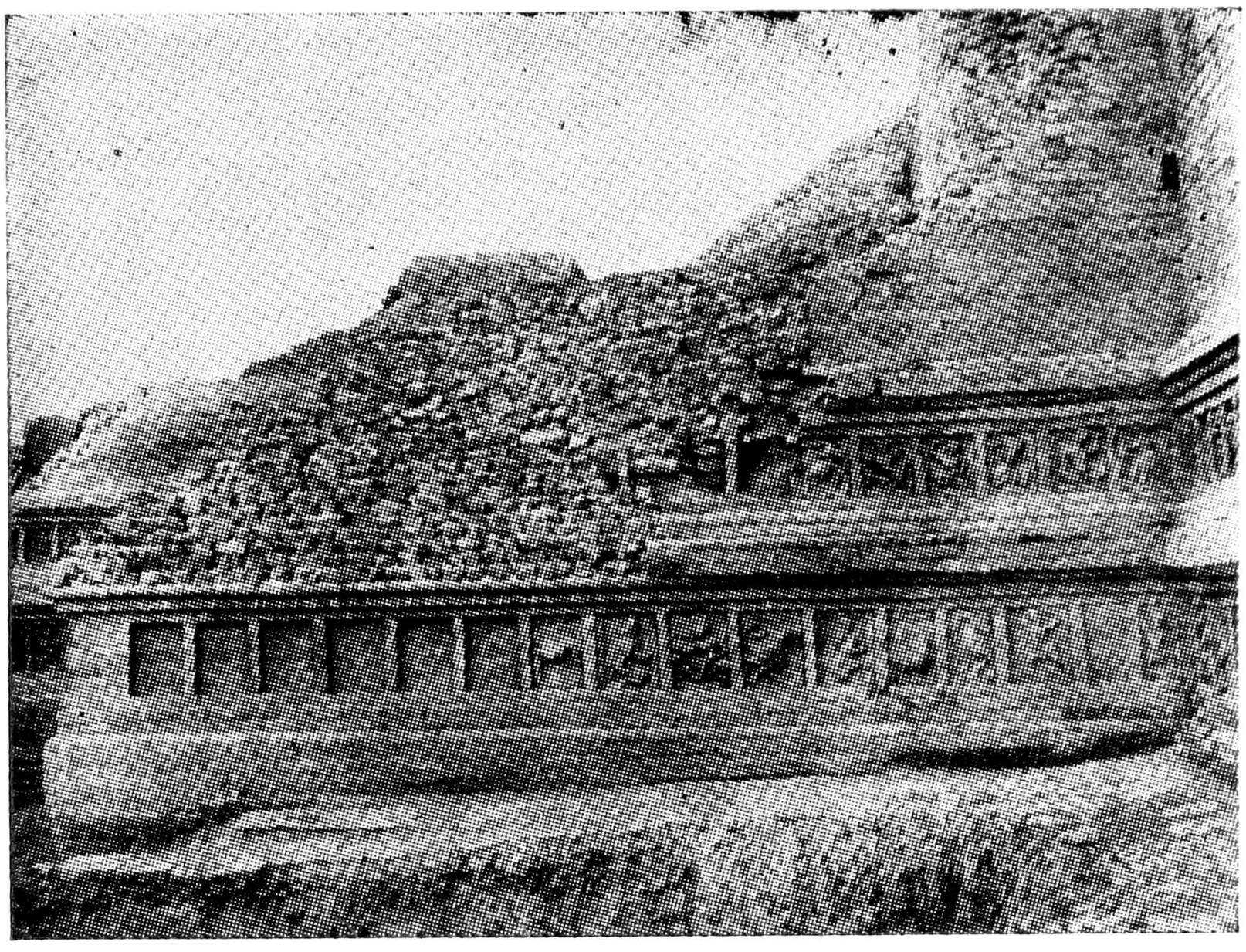


General view of the Central Shrine at Salban Vihara, Mainamati, Comilla

Monks at an East Pakistan Buddhist Monastery

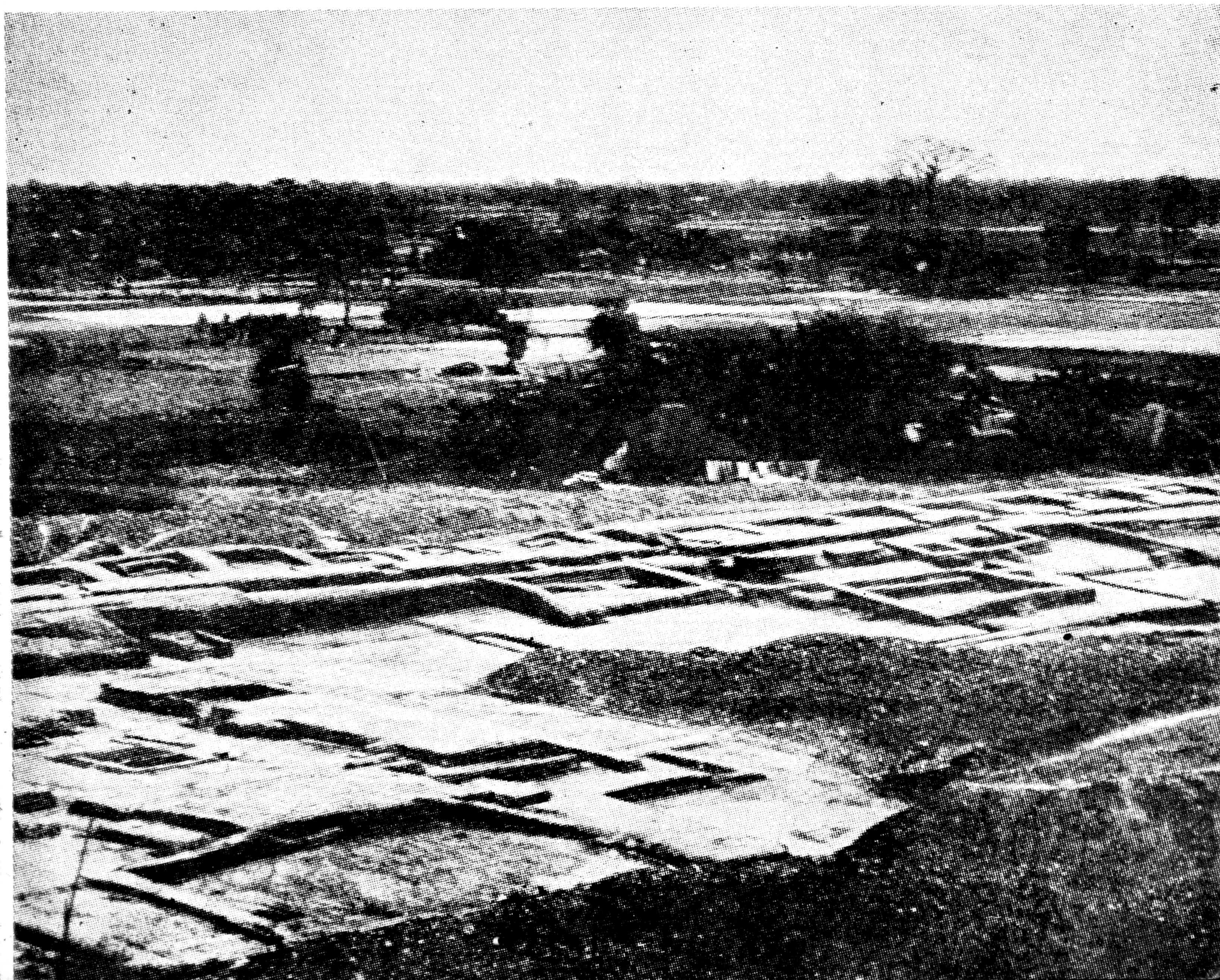


Stone images depicting offering of poison to Siva at Paharpur, Rajshahi



Walls of the Main Shrine at Paharpur, Rajshahi

Bird's-eye-view of the excavated area in northern rampart wall (Eastern Section), at Paharpur, Rajshahi District, East Pakistan



Buddha image from Bogra (c. 5th-6th century A.D.)

Terracotta plaque from Paharpur, East Pakistan. (c. 8th century A.D.)

the masses.

As an eminent scholar aptly points out, "It was a Buddhist culture of a new type where Buddha had lost his original significance and even place in the jumble of Bodhisattvas like Avalokilesvara, their Saktis like Tara, or those who assumed the garb of protectors of their devotees like Jambhala, Heruka, Mahamaya etc., or defenders of faith like Nagarjuna, Padmassambhava". The Buddhist iconography attained a highly complicated stage with the adoption of these divinities.

The primary deities of this complicated Buddhist pantheon is the Adi Buddha and Adi Prajna, who may be taken as the universal Father and the universal Mother of the hierarchy of Gods. The Adi Buddha is sometimes called Pajna Paramita—the Saving Wisdom, and the two together are akin to Purusa and Prakriti and find parallel to Siva and Sakti of the Brahmanical conception.

Five Dhyani Buddhas (i.e. Buddhas deep in eternal meditation and hence take no part in the affairs of the world) are conceived to have emanated from the pair, and each of them has an active counterpart called Bodhisattvas. The famous among them are Vajrapani, Avalokitesvara, Maitreya and Manjusri. These Bodhisattvas in their turn, have goddesses as their Saktis, the most famous among them being the Taras. Below these are the rest of the divinities taken from the popular worship of Bengal.

The art trend of this period is also marked by a visible change. Its origin though undoubtedly rooted in the art of

the Gupta period developed distinctive elements easily recognizable in the stone sculptures at Paharpur which betray a new School of its own, greatly imbued with the folk-art of Bengal. This new school, however, became conventionalized under the patronage of the Palas. Their chief distinguishing features are richly bedecked figures in the round with stiff body on a background of a curved stelae. However, the development of bronze images produced under the skill of such masterful artists like Dhiman and Bitpala, is indeed noteworthy. Together with these, the art of wood carving also attained a high standard of proficiency, some of the best specimens of which are now preserved in the Dacca Museum.

Incidentally, it may also be noted that the Pala emperors used to call themselves 'Parama Saugata' and invoked the name of Buddha regularly at the beginning of all official records. This invocation brings into relief the true ideology of Buddha and Bodhisattvas in the most developed Mahayana form. During the 4 centuries of their rule, Bengal and Bihar remained the last strong-holds of Buddhism which was gradually vanishing from the sub-continent. But it was precisely during this period that Mahayana Buddhism under the patronage of the Palas, became a dynamic international force and exercised dominant influence from Tibet in the north to the islands of the Malaya Archipelago in the South.

Among numerous other Buddhist ruins in East Pakistan mention may be made of a stupa-mound at Bharat Bhayana in Jessore, believed to date from circa 5th century A.D. At

Sabhar, in the Dacca district, a group of five mounds known as Rajasana and another called Harishchandra's Palace have yielded terracotta pieces stamped with the figure of Buddha and other Buddist divinities. At Vikrampura (Rampal) in the same district flourished the famous Vikrampuri Vihara, primarily under the patronage of the Chandras.

In Rajshahi district the mounds known to contain the ruins of monasteries are at Bihrail (origin not later than Gupta age), Uparbari mound at Kumarpur (Pala period), Halud Vihara near Deepganj (8th|9th Century A.D.) and probably at Dhanora and Mokrama at Kumarpur.

In the same district the mound at Agradigun is said to contain the ruins of Agrapur monastery, while the remains of the grand Vihara of Jagaddala are supposed to be buried in the mound at Jagaddala. But by far the most important and singularly impressive ruin of an extensive Buddhist establishment has been discovered at Paharpur in the same district, which is now definitely identified with the much reputed Somapuri Vihara. This Vihara is known from a set of inscribed clay sealings to have been founded by Dharmapala (c. 770-810 A.D.). The fortune of the great monastic establishment is linked up with the rise, decline and fall of the Pala dynasty in Bengal.

Tibetan tradition preserves the memories of numerous Buddhist viharas belonging to Tantric Mahayana School in Chittagong district and especially speaks of the great Pandita Vihara in the city of Chatigrama (Chittagong). This Vihara is said to have been the headquarters of Bud-

dhism after the decline of Nalanda. In this district numerous Buddhist images, in bronze, stone and wood representing Buddha, Padmapani, Avalokitesvara Tara and other cult images ranging in date from 9th to 12th or 13th centuries A.D. have also been discovered which doubtless speak of a highly flourishing state of Buddhism in this region.

Excavations

The beginning of the monastic life in this region is yet unknown. Yuan Chwang's reference to monasteries and stupas erected by Asoka, as we have seen, appears to be inconclusively authenticated. The material remain of such structures so far unearthed by archaeological excavations and explorations relate to very late period when the monasteries had developed into luxurious and well-organised seats of learning. The greatest attraction during the Pala period was the Somapuri Vihara, the extensive remains of which have been laid bare at Paharpur in Rajshahi district. It is the biggest single Vihara (measuring 922′ north-south and 919′ east-west externally) so far known in the subcontinent. This gigantic establishment, with surrounding 177 monastic cells, gateways, votive stupas, minor chapels, tanks and a multitude of other structures for the convenience of the inmates, is dominated by a central shrine, conspicuous by its height and architectural peculiarities. The central temple consists of a terraced structure having cruciform shape with angles of projection between the arms. This type of temple architecture of East Pakistan profound-

ly influenced the architectural efforts of South-East Asia, specially Burma and Java.

Recently, systematic excavations on the Mainamati Range at Tippera have brought to light a similar picturesque establishment locally know as Salban Vihara, exhibiting similar architectural affinities. This single unit, although less ambitious in architectural proportions, appears to be no less important. The whole range of hillocks of about 11 miles is studded with numerous other Buddhist structures awaiting the excavator's spade and offers immense archaeological potentialities. The distribution of crowded ruins along the entire length of the range itself speaks of a forgotten prosperous Buddhist community which flourished during the 9th to 13th centuries A.D.

Stupas

The stupa is a necessary adjunct to a monastery. Owing to its symbolic representation of Buddha's Nirvana it holds a special significance for the devotees. All the stupas discovered in East Pakistan except a series recently excavated at Mainamati (Kotila Mura) are votive in character. At Mainamati, excavations in 1956 revealed the layout of "three stupas built on traditional style. The stupas have square ornated plinths surmounted by circular drums and hemispherical domes; their 'Harmikas' and finials are missing. The central stupa contains 8 box-chambers; the superstructure of other two stupas are of solid brick masonry. The grand stair-cases on the last side led up the pilgrims to the inside of the shrines". Doubtless these three stupas are

unique in their character and are the first of their kind so far discovered in East Pakistan. Besides the above three stupas, a series of votive stupas have also been unearthed on the same site just behind the main stupas. These subsidiary stupas are considered to represent the last stage of construction on the site. Among other votive stupas mention may be made of those unearthed at Paharpur, the largest number being at the site of Satyapir bhita, about 300 yards east of the main Vihara. They present a wide variety of square, rectangular and circular votive shrines of various sizes and schemes of ornamentation. The simplest but scarce form is square; the majority having a cruciform plan obtained by one, two or even three offset projections on each face. A still variegated shape is the sixteen-sided star, resting on circular base in the courtyard of the monastic area. Their basements are comparatively high and often relieved with bands of Buddha figures. They also exhibit successive tiers of elaborate mouldings including the 'torus' and the 'dentil'. Another interesting noticeable feature of these votive stupas is that sometimes a number of them stand on a common platform forming a distinct group.

All these stupas have only their basements preserved now. However, their complete form may be imagined from the miniature clay stupas found enshrined in the relic chamber of some of the stupas at Satyapir bhita. These exhibit the traditional form of the stupa with a broad moulding at the base, a cylindrical drum, a square "*hti*" and a pointed finial. Its original shape may also be observed in

bronze specimens recovered from Ashrafpur in Dacca district, Paharpur in Rajshahi district and Jhewari in Chittagong District. In these examples the base is square with one offset projection on each face while the cylindrical drum ends in a hemispherical dome. Finally, there is a stone stupa at Yogigopha in Dinajpur district showing a further elaboration of this type in which besides the multiplication of the different elements, there is also, a corresponding elevation of its component parts, and here even without the basement which is lost, the drum and the dome each represents a high cylinder; their total height being more than three times the diameter at the bottom. The drum, as usual, is surmounted by the harmika—not square but circular and ribbed on edge like the amalaka-Sila of a temple. This is a peculiarity which is noticed for the first time in stupa architecture. There is also the range of "Chattra" discs gradually diminishing in size as they go up.

Schismatic Sects of the Buddhists in Bengal

As regards the various schools of Buddhism prevalent in Bengal, Yuan Chwang states that in Pundravardhana there were both Hinayana and Mahayana schools; in Karnasuvarna the Sammatiya, in Tarmralipi the Sarvastivada and in Samatata the Mahayana. It must, however, be remembered that the difference between Hinayana and Mahayana did not present itself to the Buddhist monks in the same way as it dose today. Indeed, as already alluded to, the religious life of Bengal at that time was marked by a spirit of catholicism and mutual respect for other co-

existent schools. The barriers between different religious sects were fast crumbling down and Buddhism, as illustrated in the documents of the Pala period represented the new tendency of electicism. The Chinese and Japanese Buddhists have always regarded the Hinayana and Mahayana as two complementary forms of the same old Faith; the former meant for the less advanced and the latter for the more advanced. Similarly in many Sanskrit Buddhist texts Hinayana (Sravakayana) is simply a lower rung in the ladder, gradually leading to the higher which is the Mahayana.

Buddhism, which indeed attained its Golden Age under the Pala rulers of Bengal witnessed the rise and growth of a new trend in the Buddhist philosophy quite unlike that which Yuan Chwang found in the middle of the 7th century A.D. This relegated the ancient schools like the Sarasvativada and Sammatiya into an insignificant position. The Mahayana had developed into various forms of mysticism, all of which laid greater stress on the esoteric aspect of the religion. These are known as Vajrayana and Tantrayana which dealt with certain deeper metaphysical problems, offering greater attraction to religious men. The teachers of this new movement are celebrated in Buddhist tradition as "Siddhas" whose number is traditionally reckoned as eighty-four. Although the exact chronology of the 'Siddhas' is difficult to ascertain there are strong reasons to believe that they flourished sometime from the early 10th century to the end of 12th century A.D. The record of their teachings in original, is mostly lost but their work was transplanted

by the Buddhist emigrants to Tibet when parts of Bengal were falling bit by bit to non-Buddhist rulers of Sena and Varmana dynasties. Some of the works of these Siddhas have been preserved in Tibetan translations. It appears from the number of works attributed to them that notable among the Siddhas were Saraha, Nagarjuna, Tillopada, Naropada, Advoyavajra, Kahnu-pada, Lui-pada, Sabara, Bhusuku, Kukkuri etc. From the Tibetan collection of Tanjur (Batan Hgyur) we get the name of 53 works composed by them. A few manuscripts by Kahnu and Saraha have been found in original and edited by Dr. Shaheedullah with the help of their Tibetan translations. It appears from the text composed during this period that mystic Buddhism had assumed three important forms: Vajrayana, Sahajayana and Kalachakrayana. Henceforth the ancient philosophical schools like the Yogachara and Madhyamika were virtually discarded and the initiating of the novices by the ancient Vinaya schools, like Sarvastivada and Mahasanghika was confined to very narrow limits.

In fact, both Vajrayana and Sahajayana schools represent two aspects of the same mysticism in which the former laid more stress on ceremonials than the latter. "Great importance is attached to the practice of 'mantra', 'mudra' and 'mandala' in the Vajrayana and hence a great mystic value is attached to the various manifestations of sound which, according to these teachers (Siddhas) could be visualized in the form of gods and goddesses. When these divinities appear before the mystic, they form a 'mandala'

in which they take their proper seat according to various dispositions and the mystic, who is now speechless, carries on his worship with the help of the 'mudra' which is now his only language. Hence the utility of the multitude of gods and goddesses, represented in the literature and iconography of their period. Vajra is defined as the Prajna of which the essence is the Bodhichitta, and hence it is the Sakti in the Brahmanical language of the Tantras" (Dr. P.C. Bagchi). Meticulous observance of Yoga is enjoined for the display of Sakti which required the initiation of the Guru, who is invested with an exalted position in these systems. According to Sahajayana, the disciple aspiring for the "Perfect Bliss" must be guided by an efficient Guru and only a qualified Guru could initiate the disciple into its mysteries. The literature of Sahajayana is full of such statements as " the truth that is free from duality is taught by the Guru". "There is nothing unattainable for the man whom the Guru favours" etc. This testifies to the exalted position given to the preceptor but the qualifications incumbent on the Guru were also very exacting. He had to find the special aptitudes of the disciple and suggest to him the path most suitable for his needs. The spiritual aptitudes were distributed in five 'Kulas', technically called Dombi, Nati, Rajaki, Chandali and Brahmani. The nature of 'Kulas' is determined by five 'Skandhas'. The Sakti, assumes five different forms according to the prominence of 'Skandhas' and the best course for the 'Sadhakas' is to follow his special 'Sakti' in his spiritual march. The work of the Guru lay in envolving

that particular energy in the disciple which was stongest in him and thus help him to perform his 'Sadhana'.

The practice of Yoga required a great deal of knowledge of the physiological system, including the innumerable nerve-channels within the body. The 'Siddhas' or the teachers had evolved a unique system of Yoga. It believed in 32 nerve-channels in the head with brain as the place of 'great bliss'. The object of the aspirant was to have control over all these nerve-channels and achieve the state of 'Sahaja' or 'great blissfulness'. When this state was attained, the material world disappeard from view and the Sadhaka found in himself the sole Reality.

Although the ultimate goal of the Kalachkrayana was the same i.e. 'mahasukha' or perfect bliss, as the other two schools, it attached great importance to the time factor, the 'muhurta', the 'tithi', the constellations etc., in the practice of Yoga. So, the knowledge of astronomy and astrology came to play a prominent part in this School. From the same Tibetan source we learn that this mystic school was specially developed outside the sub-continent but gradually filtered into Bengal during the Pala period.

Buddhism soon lost its individuality and stable footing in Bengal primarily due to the great emphasis laid on the esoteric and debased forms of religion. As time marched on the ceremonial aspects of religion on which earlier Buddhism laid stress, were completely eliminated. What remained of it after this process was speedily engulfed by the all-absorbing Brahminism in its Tantric System of Bengal,

which by an inevitable process had already attained a similar form. Starting from the later part of Pala period the absorption was complete by the 14th century A.D.

The Hindu elements of 'Saktism' was fused with this new type of Buddhist mysticism and gave rise to a new school of 'Saktism' on the one hand and certain other forms of popular religion on the other, which survive till today. The fundamental doctrine of the new school known as 'Kaula or Kula' originating from 'Saktism' is preserved in some recently discovered Nepalese texts. 'Kula' is used there to mean 'Sakti' which is of five kinds, presided over by the five Tathagatas. Kula is defined as 'Sakti' and 'Akula' is Siva; while the dormant divine energy within the body is called 'Kula Kudalini'. This new Buddhist school (Kula) which identified itself with the Hindu Saktism could not be unhinged from Bengal in spite of adverse attacks from its orthodox critics, since its great strength rested in its acceptance of the Varnasrama. Other surviving Buddhist mystic schools which did not admit the Varnasrama were, Nathism, Avaduhta, Sahajiya, Baul etc. It not possible here to trace the history of these movements which were doubtless, indistinguishable from each other in their transitional stage. It is, however, worth mentioning that the followers of Nathism gradually lost whatever individuality and monastic character they originally had and were completely affiliated to the Hindu Society as a separate Caste. Nathism, originating from the religion of the Siddhacharyas once exercised such a powerful influence in Northern and

Eastern Bengal that their miraculous tales became the subject of numerous popular Bengali songs.

Among other Buddhist mystic philosophies, the Sahajiya school established itself deeply in the soil of Bengal before the time of Chaitanya. Its progress could not be checked by the adherents of Chaitanya movement in spite of their best efforts. On the contrary, the Chaitanya movement which once swept the country because of its deeply emotional character, itself became greatly imbided with the philosophy of Sahajiya School. The famous poet Chandidasa was the earliest Bengali writer on Sahajiya, who probably lived sometime in the 14th century A.D. It is possible to trace certain fundamental doctrines of the Buddhist Sahajayana in the numerous modified songs and the Krishna-Kirtana of Chandidasa which have come down to us. It identifies Radha with Sakti, and recognizes Krishna as the Supreme Reality while the Rajaki of Chandidasa reminds us of one of the five 'Kulas' referred to in the Vajrayana.

From the few fragmentary collections of Baul songs preserved in literature, it appears that they were very little influenced by Vaishnavism and retained more faithfully the ancient traditions of Buddhist Sahajayana than the Sahajiyas.

It is evident from the above survey that Buddhism which once was a dominant religion in the country gradually merged into the resurgent Hindu pantheon. The rise of all these various mystic philosophies proves for certain that Buddhism had not only accepted the Hindu Pantheon of

gods and goddesses but had also inculcated the Hindus philosophy of 'Atman' and 'Yogachara'. The all-absorbing Hinduism accepted Buddha as the ninth 'Avatar' (incarnation) of Vishnu and absorbed the main body of the Buddhists in the sub-continent, discarding the rest who clung to Catholic Buddhism.

Recent excavations on the Mainamati-Lalmai hills have brought to light some hitherto unknown important historical information about the Buddhist Deva rulers, who appear to have flourished as independent kings in south-east Bengal after the decline of the Guptas in c. 17th-8th centuries A.D., as well as the Chandra kings who held sway over Samatata during 9th-10th centuries A.D. One of the copper plate grants recovered from this site also mentions the name of ruler of Viashnavite dynasty which appears to have yielded a temporary sway over this part of the country after the decline of Buddhism during 12th-13th centuries A.D.

The disintegration of the Pala empire was followed immediately by chaos and taking advantage of this troubled political situation, south-east Bengal was brought under a new dynasty, the Chandras who ruled from 900-1050 A.D. with Rohitagiri as their capital. It is now generally agreed that Rohitagiri (Red Hill) is identical with Lalmai (Red Hill), the southern end of the Range of picturesque low hills near Comilla. The northern end of this Range seems to be named after Queen Mainamati, the wife of Manickchandra of this dynasty. Exploration of various peaks on

this range have yielded many interesting remains.

Puran Chandra is the first man of note among the Chandra of Rohitagiri. His grandson Trailokya Chandra was a warrior and is said to be the mainstay of the king of Harikela or Vanga (Southern Bengal). Trailokya seems to have annexed the kingdom of Chandra Duvipa which was the name of the tract of land now forming the district of Bakerganj.

Trailokya's son Srichandra Deva mastered the whole of Vanga. He issued his copper-plate grant for Vikrampur now known by the ruins of Rampala, situated in the heart of Vikrampur Pargana of the Dacca district.

The Chandras were ousted from Bengal in the beginning of the 11th century by Vermans who in their turn made room for Senas by the end of the same century. The Palas had already been limited to Magadha by the Chandras of Bengal, and when the Vermans usurped the Chandra kingdom, hard days for Buddhism came to Bengal which was the last refuge of this religion in the sub-continent.

The Senas were no friends of Buddhism. Vijaya (1070-1108), the grandson of the founder of Sena dynasty in Bengal, warred with Palas and wrested northern Bengal from them. The Senas being zealous Brahmans, had special reason for hostility against the Buddhist rulers of Bengal, and having once cleared them Vallala Sena, known as Ballal Sen, completed the work of destroying Buddhism in Bengal and reviving the Hindu Caste system. He introduced Kulinism among Brahmans, Baidyas and Kayasthas, so that

by the time the Muslim General Ikhtyaruddin Mohammad bin Bakhtyar conquered Nudiah at the end of the 12th century, there was no Buddhist institution left in Bengal.

Buddhist Art in East Bengal

Bengal was the last resort of Buddhism in India but the destruction of its artistic wealth has been so complete that it is now impossible to judge the degree of the sway of this religion on the population of this province. It is just like the aftermath of a flood which once swept the entire country and left is strewn with a multitude of broken objects, stones and pot-sherds on its recession. Even in this debris we do not reach far back into the antiquity. The oldest centre of culture so far discovered appears to be the fort of Chandra Varman (4th century A.D.), the earthen ramparts of which enclose a thickly populated tract of land $2\frac{1}{2}$ x $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles in area. This magnificent fort is situated in the southern area of Faridpur district but no image discovered here can safely be attributed to this period. Only the statuette of Avalokitesvara fished out from the Sailadaha river approaches this date closer than any other relic. A number of other images have been discovered from this area but they do not belong to this period. The beautiful copper lotus with moving petals, the great image of Gautama Buddha in black stone and the artistic Marichi all hail from the 10th century A.D.

Badkamta

Badkamta, 12 miles west of Comilla, was an important centre of Buddhism in the Khadga period. In the north-east

of Badkamta stands a curious mound about 25 feet high surmounted by a lingam. These are the remains of the stupa seen by Hiuen Tsang. The surmounting lingam proves for certain that it had fallen a prey to Brahmans and was used by them. Belasa, situated only a mile west of Badkamta, yielded a magnificent image of Avolokitesvara. Five miles further north was discovered a life-size statue of Vajrapani Bodhisattva from Subhapur. A fine image of Dhyani Buddha was discovered from Bagherpur village east of Subhapur. All these images prove the existence of Buddhist institutions in and around Badkamta.

Paharpur

The magnificent remains of the Paharpur Vihara, with its imposing terraced central shrine, enclosed by a well-laid quadrangular monastery cells, is the biggest single Vihara so far known in the sub-continent. Being founded by one of the early Pala rulers of Bengal, Dharmapala (c. 770-810 A.) it continued to receive royal patronage till the time of Ramapala (c. 1077-1120 A.D.) Its general form and the whole layout, as it is exposed today is not very different from similar establishments in famous sites elsewhere. The monastery is quadrangular in plan, with high enclosure walls around, along the inner side of which are lined the residential cells of the monks. The pyramidal temple occupies the centre of the monastery. It is distinguished by "its cruciform shape with angles of projection between the arms, its three raised terraces and complicated scheme of decoration of walls with carved brick cornices, friezes of

terracotta plaques and stone-relief". It should be noted however, that the feature of cruciform shape with re-entrant angles is closely paralleled in one of the temples discovered at Mahasthan; in some of the temples on Lalmai ridge (particularly Salban Vihara) and at Birat at Rangpur district. The other cardinal feature of its raised terraces with surface decoration is also quite common in majority of the temples unearthed at Mahasthangarh. Here excavations, specially at Lakhindarer Medh and Gokul Medh have brought to light the elaborate precautionary measures adopted by the builders in erecting such terraced structures. The guiding motive behind these elaborate measures, is presumed to have been taken to secure a solid foundation on the soft alluvial soil of Bengal. The solid foundation was achieved either by erecting brick-built "Cellular" chambers in honey-comb fashion, the inner cavity of which was later filled with beaten earth as is best illustrated in Gokul Medh, or by adding buttresses or cross-walls to a rectangular structure, the gaps of which again being filled with beaten earth. The same motive can be traced in the Paharpur example, where we find a consolidated and well-planned structure. Mr. K. N. Dikshit rightly observes, "the plan of the Paharpur temple was the result of a pre-meditated development of a single central unit, in which, future expansion was, in a sense, pre-determined in a vertical direction..."

Parallel to the outline of the plan runs the ambulatory passage with a parapet wall. The basement conforms to the alignment of the first terrace structure, resulting in three

angular projections between the arms of the cross. The basement wall is decorated with sixty-three stone reliefs, and above this line runs a single row of terracotta plaques. The plainness of the walls in the first and second terraces is relieved on the outer face, by bands of terracotta plaques, set in recessed panels; each terrace having double rows—the rows being separated from each other by projecting cornices of ornamental bricks.

The lower portion of the central shrine, as already mentioned, is decorated with many stone-relief of gods and goddesses of Hindu pantheon, which though appear curious in a Buddhist establishment, are by no means uncommon in Bengal as already explained. Although the Pala emperors were ardent Buddhists they offered their devotion equally to various Brahmanical deities, as was done by Vainyagupta, Harsavardhana and queen Prabhavati. Besides, during this period of religious eclecticism which indeed brought the two equally flourishing religions inevitably closer, leading eventually to complete assimilation of one by the other the existence of the Siva and Krishna images alongside the Buddha and other Buddhist divinities need not surprise us. They only reflect faithfully the true character of the trend of prevailing religious thought of the period.

The shape of the upper structure can only be imagined and it is surmised that it was pyramidal in shape. The excavations have revealed that the entire structure underwent vast repairs, probably in the days of Mahipala. But these repairs appear to have been carried out by some care-

less architects of the time who were not versed in the Buddhist legends. Terracotta plaques have been arranged according to the shape and form of images and any idea of sequence has simply been jettisoned as useless. In the new arrangement the type of the image and not the sequence of the story is the criterion. A bull is followed by a bear and the bear in its turn is followed by a rampart elephant. The jumbling of plaques has made the work of the archaeologist difficult and tedious, and the temple is not in a position to record the legends as they were in vogue at the time of construction.

In spite of this mal-arrangement, terracotta plaques still remain the most important and most numerous specimens of antiquity from Paharpur. Some two thousand are still *in situ*, while about eight hundred specimens have found their way to various museums in India and Pakistan.

Paharpur cannot, however, be proud of having been the pioneer in this art. The history of terracotta goes back to the pre-historic finds from Harappa and Moenjo Daro. Stone sculpture was limited to a few places where there was abundance of material, either due to the natural surroundings or the rich patronage and religious importance of the place. But the richness, variety and exuberance of the material from Paharpur is unrivalled.

The terracotta art of Paharpur belongs to the close of the 7th and the beginning of the 8th century A.D. This was the time when Buddhism was a spent-force in the subcontinent. Even its force as a devotional legend was on the

wane. Furthermore, the classical restrictions on the chisel of the iconographist had died out by this time. This gave a unique freedom to the artists of Paharpur and they could allow their fancy to roam at leisure with a medium which offered a comparative ease of production. Their imagination wandered from a set variety of scenes to depict everyday life in Bengal, and we have a document, richer in the social history of Bengal than any treatise so far discovered. While the creative genius of the sculptor was limited to the details of form and anatomy, the terracotta artists revelled in reproducing every conceivable scene which life and jungle stories, fiction, legend and fancy could conjure up before him. The Paharpur artists have produced a folk art of the soil to which they belonged.

A unique side of the story of this art is that the artist of this part of Bengal never worried about the medium he had to utilize. The details of the composition of many stone reliefs have been continued and completed in terracotta. This indifference to material can be explained by the fact that it was easier to manufacture terracotta whereas the stone had to be brought from considerable distances.

A close study of these terracotta plaques also reveals that Buddhism, though flourishing as if in a golden age, had reached its decadence. The old Brahmanical system of barter had already produced its effects. While on the one hand the Hindus had accepted many of the deities of the Buddhist Pantheon, they had succeeded in making their own gods and goddesses quite agreeable to the Buddhist taste. Hence

the terracotta galleries have a number of Sivas in various forms along with Brahma, Vishnu and Ganesh. Buddha, however, always occupies the most venerated and central position. The Buddha deities represented here do all belong to the Mahayana school. Buddha in various attitudes with his halo and bodhi trees is followed by the Bodhisattva Pantheon, Manjusris, Dhyani Buddhas and Jasbhalas (the god of wealth). Among the female divinities Taras are the most popular images. The Gandharas are the denizens of the sky and are shown in numerous plaques as flying alone or with the Vidyadharas, their female counterparts. Many Naga rajas are said to have paid their obedience to the Lord while he was living, and Paharpur could not manage without these deities. These Nagas and Naginis are often shown paying homage to the Blessed One. The presence of Nagas and Naginis does not, however, mean the presentation of Jatakas at Paharpur. Passing through Mahayana philosophy Buddha had by now lost his human entity and his birth stories were no longer a subject for thought and conjecture. He was a god and belonged to the Pantheon of Dhyani Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and human Buddhas who influenced the lives of human beings from their celestial seats.

The main characteristic of the terracotta work at Paharpur is its dynamic quality. Movements of men and women fill a large number of plaques. The rest are grotesque figures, centaurs and hybrid birds and animals belonging to various Tantaric stories.

All these representations are found, in the words of Sir

Mortimer Wheeler, "in a bewildering profusion and confusion. They are set in the building without coherent sequence, and the examination of them has (and was doubtless intended to have) the excitement of a voyage of discovery".

Rohitagiri

A passing reference has already been made to the Rohitagiri of Chandras as identical to the Lalmai range. The Lalmai range is a light red plateau rising from 40 feet to, at places, one hundred feet in height and extending over ten miles in length. Its importance as a centre of ancient culture was recognized as far back as 1875 when the work on the Comilla-Kalirbazar Road had exhumed the remains of a very thick and extensive boundary wall. A copper-plate inscription of one Rana Vanka Malla discovered on Lalmai in 1803 had proved that the town of Patikera or Patikara had also existed on the same hill, with a large monastery within. But the actual site of this town, which had been referred to in the Burmese chronicles of 11th and 12th centuries, was accidentally discovered during the years of World War II. Digging trenches for defence, a military contractor chanced on a very big reservoir of bricks, and the mistake was realised only after his men had already done considerable damage to those vestiges of great archaeological value. A large number of bricks and reliefs had been dug out and used up when further damage was stopped.

The entire hill is covered with mounds of different sizes. They have been divided under 18 main groups of which Nos. 5, 6, 7 and 10 have been examined. Mound No. 5

is the largest ruin. The plan very much resembles the Paharpur monastery, and though it was not probably so nicely decorated, it must have vied with Paharpur in richness, exuberance and colour. Terracotta plaques of Buddha surrounded by panels depicting divine and semi-divine figures have been found on the existing walls. This mound has been named as Anandaraja's palace.

To the south of this are mounds Nos. 6 and 7 which are called Ruphan Kanya's palace and Bhojerapa's palace respectively. No. 6 is again a central building surrounded by a massive brick wall. The inner portion of this building is also profusely decorated with plaques representing Buddha with his pantheon, human acrobats, warriors, birds and beasts.

The structure of mound No. 10 seems to have stood on a cruciform. Its sides have been ravaged beyond recognition. The remains, however, prove that from the sides of its re-entrant angles to the inner halls and galleries it was lavishly decorated with terracotta and sculpture. It was on this site that seven pots containing tiny images of Buddha in bronze were found. Thirteen of these miniatures were recovered. All of them are in earth-touching attitude. They are two inches high, bear religious seals and resemble the votive images excavated from Jhewari in the district of Chittagong, dating back to 9th century A.D.

But by far the most important Buddhist structure unearthed during the recent excavations is situated at Salbanpur. Here systematic excavations have revealed an extensive Buddhist establishment, consisting of an imposing

central shrine, enclosed by a series of well-laid monastic cells. The central shrine which is doubtless, one of the biggest Buddhist monuments in East Pakistan is know from a copper plate grant to have been built by the Deva ruler Sri Bhavadeva. This copper plate was apparently issued from his capital, Devaparvata. Together with this a large number of important silver coins inscribed with 'Patikera' legend have also been exhumed from the early period cubicles of the monastery. Sri Viradeva is now known to be the first ruler of the dynasty.

From another copper plate from the same site we also learn that he was succeeded by his son Ananda Deva. The last few lines of the second grant endorse the earlier grant of Ananda Deva by his son Bhava Deva (II). These grants are engraved in the eastern script of 9th century A.D. which is akin to Nagri.

The central shrine of the Salban Vihara, constructed of brick, is cruciform in plan, measuring 170 feet from arm to arm and resembles closely the plan of Paharpur temple with projecting angles and recessed corners. Its apparent gigantic size speaks that originally it attained a considerable height. Another shrine close to it, consisting of an enclosed oblong cellar and an entrance passage, is preceded by a columned terrace. The unusual plan of this Buddhist sanctuary, bearing close similarity with the style of Hindu temples appears to have developed in south-east Bengal during 7th-8th century A.D.

The central shrine was provided with a stepped terrace,

facing the main entrance on north, and an ambulatory passage of 7 feet wide, encircling the whole edifice which communicated with the four cells in each arm of the cross. It is presumed that each of these cells contained a large bronze image of Buddha as is indicated by the existence of such an image in the western cell.

A study of the plastic terracotta art, sculpture and other architectural peculiarities tends to prove that it was contemporary with that of the Pala period art, as clearly illustrated at Paharpur. The square layout of the monastery and the cruciform plan of the central shrine in both sites are identical. The establishment at Salban Vihara is enclosed by a series of 115 well-arranged monastic cells which originally must have accommodated a large number of monks and students.

Excavations at Mainamati hills have yielded a great variety of important objects including bronze images, terracotta plaques, seals and sealings, coins and a large number of other small interesting finds, all of which throw a flood of light on the prevalent art of that period. Of all these finds, a number of bronze votive statuettes of the Buddha, Bodhisattva, and Tara are doubtless most important. All these statuettes, characterized by their high uniform finish —somewhat resembling their counterpart in stone-work— faithfully reflect the transitional phase of Mahayana Buddhism to Tantric form of the 7th-8th century A.D. In some specimens, Buddha is represented in the "Bhumispara mudra" or earth-touching attitude with left hand resting on

lap, while in others, he is seated in 'Dhyani-mudra' or 'Meditating-pose'. The bronze statue of Bodhisattva Padmapani seated on a lotus throne, is profusely ornamented. He is shown with crossed legs, holding a lotus in his left hand. In other examples the Bodhisattva is shown seated in the 'Lalitasana'.

In one of the two, very finely executed images, Tara is shown seated gracefully with her pendant right leg placed on a lotus and the left folded; her right hand in the 'Varada mudra' or the boon-bestowing pose, and the left holding a lotus. She is profusely decorated with various ornaments. The other image, about 7 inches high, is of the four-armed goddess standing on a lion.

A red stone seal and a terracotta sealing, discovered from the same site, are of great interest. The stone-seal belongs to one 'Padmadhara—holder of a lotus'. The upper part of the sealing depicts the royal emblem of the Deva kings, the Dharmachakra on a terraced pedestal, flanked on either side by two seated deer symbolizing the First Sermon of the Buddha at Sarnath. The lower part contains a three-lined inscription, recording the name of the first ruler, Sri Bhavadeva who built the great Vihara.

Among numerous other antiquities discovered from the Salban Vihra, a large number of very interesting terracotta plaques were either found in a loose condition or in situ, arranged in a single row round the western projection of the basement wall of the cruciform shrine. These terracotta plaques provide us with an interesting study of the popular

folk-art of Bengal of that period. For the richness of details and artistic perfection, this plastic art is "distinguishable like those of the Paharpur as a school of unique art by their predominant quality of dynamic movement and easy expressiveness, free from academic tradition". The bewildering variety of subject matter depicted on these plaques is noteworthy. It includes almost any subject that a rural artistic mind could conceive of. Men and women in various movements, animals and birds, divine and semi-devine beings and subjects from the plant kingdom are freely portrayed. The naturalistic representation of wild boars, and majestic movements of lions and elephants are amply balanced by equally grotesque human and semi-devine figures and funny pranks of monkeys etc.

Paundra Vardhana

The Chinese Pilgrim Hiuen Tsang had found Paundra Vardhana (Mahasthan) flourishing with Buddhist monks and monasteries. It was once again a centre of this religion during the Pala regime, but with the advent of Senas all the sacred Buddhist monasteries were turned into Siva temples. A notable example of this is the mound of Gokul Medh. The temple is built on a cruciform plan with circular construction so popular with the Palas of Bengal. It is evident to the trained eye that the upper floor carried a stupa but the entire thing was removed and replaced by the Siva Linga (11th and 12th centuries A.D.) and covered by a square shrine and a porch at a slight angle.

No traces of the Buddhist art are left on the walls of

the temple and we can only judge it to be a Buddhist temple by its construction and existence of the four other buildings on four corners of the cross making it (Pancharatara) five-fold in type.

There must be many more examples of the Buddhist art turned into Brahmanical temples and finally destroyed by invaders. More elaborate excavations will bring more examples to light.

Buddhists in East Pakistan Today

Today the Buddhist population in East Pakistan is about 316,000, the highest in the sub-continent. It is interesting to note here that their present distribution is mainly confined within the borders of ancient Samatata i.e. within the plains of Chittagong, Noakhali, Tippera and eastern districts of Bakerganj. Out of this total population, the Chakmas of the Chittagong Hill Tracts number 108,000; the Arakanese Buddhist 136,000 and the Bengali Buddhist 72,000.

The Chakmas, who claim their descent from the Sakya Clan and profess to be of Aryan stock, hold themselves out in the inaccessible central regions of the Hill Tracts, apparently undisturbed by modern civilization. They are flanked on their left by the Mongs and on their right by the Bohmangs—both being Buddhist tribals of Arakanese origin.

From 15th Century onwards Bengal plains were repeated over-run by the Arakanese free-booters and in the course of their periodic raids a large number of them settled in South and East Bengal. But when Shaista Khan recon-

quered Chittagong in 1666 A.D. the Arakanese settlers fled to their homeland but a pocket of their colony stayed rooted along the Arakan border in the Cox's Bazar sub-division of Chittagong. An abandoned Arakanese garrison in Bakerganj formed the nucleus of another colony. Their descendants now constitute an appreciable proportion of the local population. Their number was gradually swelled by Burmese families fleeing from Lower Burma to escape from the oppressive levies and conscriptions in their own land.

Numerically the Bengali Buddhists are the smallest Buddhist population of ancient Bengal. They are generally known as the Barua Buddhists—the term 'Barua' signifies "Great Aryan" or a Military Commander of the highest rank. As such it would be perhaps wrong to dub then all as "Maghs" which has come to be indentified with the buccaneers who infested the waters of lower Bengal.

Reformation Movement

We have already seen how Buddhism, adopted many complicated philosophies and practices foreign to it and against the earlier canons, over centuries. An urge for reformation was keenly felt in the Buddhist world by the later part of the 19th century. The channel of reformation movement in Bengal, however, flowed from Arakan. Sangharaja Saramitta, the leader of the Theravada Sangha in Arakan undertook this mission and came to Chittagong with his chapter in 1868 A.D. He worked for 30 years in the plains of Bengal and in this period the massage of the Buddha was preached anew and a fresh ordination of the Bhik-

khu Order was carried in strict accordance with the Vinaya text. The resurgent majority of the Buddhist Community came under the fold of this new Reformed order, henceforth known as the "Sangharaja Order", but 2 or 3 groups remained outside the pale and are collectively known today as the "Mahathera Order". Although presently the non-reformed Mahathera Order have succeeded in carrying out many reforms themselves which virtually make them indistinguishable in their religious practice from those observed by the regular Theravada Sangha elsewhere; this schism remains a source of weakness to the Community.

At present there are about 310 viharas and temples in East Pakistan, out of which 245 alone are in the district of Chittagong, the remainder being in Noakhali, Tippera and Bakerganj. Of these about 260 belong to the Sangharaja Order. The total number of the Bengali Bhikkhus is about 200 out of which 150 are of the Sangharaja Order. There are 29 Pali tols in important monasteries where free instruction in Pali Scriptures is given and regular examinations are held by the Education Department of the Government of East Pakistan.

In the Chittagong Hill Tracts alone there are 320 monasteries among the Chakmas, Mongs and the Bohmongs. Their peculiar philosophy and Codes are compiled in a number of manuscripts (about 22) collectively known as the "Aga Tara", mostly written in corrupt Pali and very difficult to comprehend. Before the Reformation movement, their monks were known as "Raulees" and except for their

saffron garb, there was virtually nothing in common between them and the Theravada Bhikkhus. In fact the Chakmas, before the Reformation, professed Buddhism in a blend of Mahayana, Hinayana and Mystic forms. Now the Raulees have practically disappeared; their place being taken by Arakanese and Bengali Bhikkhus, while the number of Chakma Bhikkhus is steadily increasing with the spread of education and the gradual breaking up of their absolute isolation in the wilderness of Hills. It is pertinent to mention here that the Arakanese Mongs and Bohmongs, the tribal neighbours to the Chakmas and the Arakanese in the plains are predominantly Theravada Buddhists with some minor local variations. The Arakense shrines in Cox's Bazar and the Mong shrine at Chittagong in the Hill Tracts are held in great veneration by all sections of Buddhist in Bengal and regular pilgrimages are made there.

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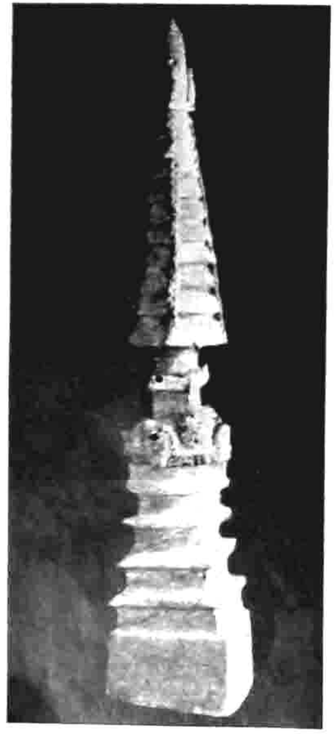

Reliquary in stupa form found from Jaulian, Taxila

Gandhara stone friezes depicting scenes from Buddha's life (North-West Frontier Province, c. 2nd cent., A.D.)

A group of terracotta figures found in a niche in the monastery at Jaulian, Taxila, (c. 5th century A.D.)

Stucco image of the Bodhisattva Maitreya, found from Jaulian, Taxila (5th century A.D.)

General view of the stupas at Jaulian, Taxila, (c. 2nd to 5th cent. A.D.)

Small stucco sculptures in situ on Stupa D. 4 at Jaulian, Taxila. (5th century A.D.)

Panoramic view of Taxila Valley with the city of Sirkap (2nd cent., B.C. to 2nd cent., A.D.) in the back-ground

Panoramic view of Haro Valley, Taxila, with the Buddhist Monastery of Jaulian in the fore-ground