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Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland / Volume 4 / Issue 08 / July 1837, pp 287 - 291

DOI: 10.1017/S0035869X00014805, Published online: 14 March 2011

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0035869X00014805

How to cite this article:

W. H. Sykes (1837). Art. XX.—*Inscriptions from the Boodh Caves, near Joonur. Communicated in a Letter to Sir John Malcolm, G.C.B., President of the Literary Society, Bombay*. Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland, 4, pp 287-291 doi:10.1017/S0035869X00014805

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ART. XX.—*Inscriptions from the Boodh Caves, near Joonur. Communicated in a Letter to SIR JOHN MALCOLM, G.C.B., President of the Literary Society, Bombay.*¹

Read 6th July, 1833.

DESTITUTE of the prospect of leisure to complete a general description and comparison, long since undertaken, of the cave-temples and excavations, Boodh, Jain, and Brahminical, on the western side of India, involving also the placing in juxtaposition the various inscriptions in unknown characters, to be found in these excavations, I am happy to anticipate a distant period, and at once to lay before the Society some inscriptions obtained lately from the Boodh excavations in the neighbourhood of the town of Joonur in the Poona collectorate. The multiplication of Boodh inscriptions in the hands of the learned, and the early introduction of any new inscriptions to the notice of the profound Orientalists in Europe, may facilitate the attempts now making to understand the lithographic records of a mighty people, who, equally with their language, have disappeared from India, leaving, however, such multitudinous and stupendous monuments of their industry, taste, power, wealth, and numbers, as to excite the most unlimited astonishment in the contemplative mind, that a great nation should have gone down the stream of time without leaving a tradition even of its existence in its native country, the present inhabitants of Western India being more ignorant of the origin of these mighty works of art, than the European stranger who visits them from curiosity.

It is not my intention to enter into a description of the city of caves surrounding the present town of Joonur. It will be simply necessary, for the proper understanding of the locality of the inscriptions, to state that Joonur has a hill two miles to the north; adjoining the suburb on the west is the hill-fort of Sewner, and with a short break leaving a pass over it, the same hill, on which the fort stands, sweeps round to the eastward, giving a mile in extent of the hill a northern aspect. It then turns suddenly to the southward, the hill having an eastern aspect for about half a mile. Joonur thus has hills close around it on the north-west and south. These hills

¹ In this article Colonel Sykes' mode of spelling Indian terms and proper names has been followed.—Ed.

are in terraces formed of horizontal strata of greenstone, amygdaloids, wackes, and basalt. The more compact strata do not readily decompose, and their lateral planes or vertical edges present a perpendicular wall all round a hill of from twenty to three hundred feet in height, according to the thickness of the stratum. One, two, or more of these natural walls are seen in almost every hill in the Dukhun. The intermediate strata decompose, and form rapid slopes, the débris from them frequently shooting over the perpendicular wall below, and partially obliterating its precipitous continuity. These belts of rock therefore offer to man, from the hand of nature, impregnable fortresses in most of the hills of the Western Ghauts and their vicinity. In the face of the perpendicular walls round the hills, the celebrated caves are excavated, and in general the compactness and homogeneous character of the rock assure the excavator of freedom from impediments to the successful execution of his most extended and complicated designs.

The inscriptions numbered 1, 2, and 3, are perfect; they are copied from two pillars at the entrance to a Boodh cave-temple, in the hill with a northern aspect, one mile south of Joonur; from the letters being less angular than usual, and from their being accompanied by many unusual marks, points, and strokes, indicating inflexions of the letters, the inscriptions may possibly be of a less ancient date than others subsequently noticed. In a gallery adjoining the temple whence these inscriptions were copied, three mutilated figures of Boodh, so much injured as scarcely to admit of the sex being determined, have been converted by the Brahmins of Joonur into representations of the Hindoo divinity Parwutee, under her names of Ambah, Ambeekah, and Ambaleekah. I found a Brahmune woman and her son busily employed in washing them with turmeric water, and offering rice and betel-nut to them. I mention this, as it is a generally received opinion, that Brahmins do not worship mutilated images; much less Boodh figures; similar adoptions, and similar worship, however, will be found in the Karleh Boodh cave-temple, in some of the caves at Ellora, and in the Lainahdree caves at Joonur.

Inscriptions 4 and 5 are copied from the walls of a large square chamber, by the side of the road at the west of the Nane Ghat. This chamber commands a view down the Ghat and over the Konkun or country below the Ghats; three walls (the south side is open to the road) have been covered with inscriptions, but the decomposition of the rock from moisture has occasioned great obliterations. Inscription No 4, however, which is in a continuous line

*Perfect Inscriptions on the two Pillars of the Vestibule to the Boodh Cave Temple,
Exactly South of the small Tank, City of Joonur, Poona Collectorate.*

Nº1

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L. ४. ६
५. ५. ०
५. ०. ५
५. ५. ५
५. ५. ५
५. ५. ५

Nº2

५. ५
५. ५
५. ५
५. ५
५. ५
५. ५

Nº3

५. ५
५. ५
५. ५
५. ५
५. ५

Nº 6.

𐌸𐌵𐌳 𐌶𐌹𐌱𐌰𐌸 𐌵𐌹𐌶𐌹𐌳𐌸 𐌸𐌹𐌸𐌸𐌹𐌳𐌸 𐌸𐌹𐌸𐌸𐌹𐌳𐌸 𐌸𐌹𐌸𐌸𐌹𐌳𐌸 𐌸𐌹𐌸𐌸𐌹𐌳𐌸 𐌸𐌹𐌸𐌸𐌹𐌳𐌸
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Booth Inscription from the Wall of the Vestibule of a Cave Chamber; under the Fort of Sewner.

Nº 7.

𐌸𐌹𐌸𐌸𐌹𐌳𐌸 𐌸𐌹𐌸𐌸𐌹𐌳𐌸 𐌸𐌹𐌸𐌸𐌹𐌳𐌸 𐌸𐌹𐌸𐌸𐌹𐌳𐌸
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Perfect Booth Inscription from the Wall of the Cave Temple, in which there is a very large isolated Dhagope under the Fort of Sewner.

Nº 8.

* * * 𐌸𐌹𐌸𐌸𐌹𐌳𐌸 * * * 𐌸𐌹𐌸𐌸𐌹𐌳𐌸 * * * 𐌸𐌹𐌸𐌸𐌹𐌳𐌸 * * *
 𐌸𐌹𐌸𐌸𐌹𐌳𐌸 𐌸𐌹𐌸𐌸𐌹𐌳𐌸 𐌸𐌹𐌸𐌸𐌹𐌳𐌸 𐌸𐌹𐌸𐌸𐌹𐌳𐌸 * * * 𐌸𐌹𐌸𐌸𐌹𐌳𐌸 * * *

Part of an Inscription over a reservoir for water, in the scarped Rock under the Hill Fort.

round the three sides of the chamber, immediately under the ceiling, is perfect as far as it goes, with the exception of fifteen or sixteen letters. No. 5 is a partially obliterated inscription on the eastern wall of the same chamber, but in some of the lines there are so many letters in continuation, as to justify the hope that information may ultimately be extracted from them. The inscriptions on the southern and western walls have too many lacunæ to render them worthy the labour of copying. Less attention appears to have been paid to the perfect formation of the letters in these inscriptions than is usual in Boodh inscriptions; they bear marks of having been quickly done, as a person writes when careless or in haste. The chamber was probably intended as a resting place for persons passing the Ghat, as there is a stone seat all round the bottom of the walls, and some reservoirs for water, and one or two other unfinished chambers are excavated close by. This ghat, or pass down the mountains, is on the direct line of communication from the ancient Deoghur, near Dowlutabad, passing through Joonur with its city of Boodh caves to Callean, known as the Calliara of the *Periplus*, and thence probably the road continued to that other city of Boodh caves in Salsette.

Inscription No. 6 is from the wall of a verandah to a cave-chamber in the rock under the hill-fort of Sewner. The western and eastern lateral planes of the stratum of rock, on which the fort stands, are pierced with excavations, temples, halls, cells, and reservoirs for water. Above is the fort in which the celebrated Seewajee was born. The inscription No. 6 appears to be perfect, with the exception of eighteen letters, the places of which are marked by small crosses.

No. 7 is a perfect inscription, on the wall of a cave-temple under the fort, in which stands a very large isolated dhagope, a short cylindrical emblem, with an hemispherical top, usually crowned by an umbrella or a laboured crest or process. A sketch is given of this emblem in an accompanying sheet. Mr. Erskine considers it to represent the tomb in which a relic of Boodh is usually buried. The flat ceiling of this temple is chunnamed and painted in small squares, each square having concentric circles of white, orange, and brown. The colours are still sufficiently marked.

No. 8 is an imperfect inscription in the face of the rock over a reservoir for water. The first three letters are wanting, and twenty other letters are effaced in subsequent parts of the inscription.

Inscriptions Nos. 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13, are from the excavations called the Lainahdree caves, in the hill two miles north of Joonur.

The whole of them are quite perfect. The principal temple, in its design, resembles the Karleh temple, but it is smaller. There are octangular pillars on each side, on whose capitals repose two elephants, or two lions. The roof is arched, and appears supported by stone ribs, whose ends rest between the elephants on the summit of the pillar, a sketch of one of the pillars accompanies the inscriptions. The proportions throughout are good, the design tasteful and ingenious, and the execution very perfect. The inscription No. 10, is over the doorway to this temple, within the vestibule; the letters are very large, well finished, and quite distinct. No. 9 is a perfect inscription over a door to a small hall with dormitories round it, a little to the eastward of the temple just mentioned. Almost adjoining the large temple on the west, there is a large hall without pillars, 57 feet broad by 51 in depth. The hall has a stone seat all round the walls, and there are eighteen cells in the west, north, and east walls; each cell has a stone couch for its former occupant. It is remarkable that this refectory and dormitory appending on the Boodh temple have been taken possession of by the Hindoos. A recess has been excavated in the northern wall, and a gigantic figure of Gunputtee, the son of Mahadeo, is in it, either chiselled out of the rock, or placed there, I could not determine which. The Brahmins insist upon this figure of Gunputtee being one of his eight spontaneous manifestations; there is a yearly pilgrimage to it, and it is in high repute. This figure is called Usht Weenaek, from Usht and Weenaek, a name of Gunputtee. An avenue of trees runs up to the cave from Joonur, said to have been planted by Amrat Rao, the adopted son of Raghoba, the late Peshwa's father. On the western wall, between the doors of two cells, there is an unfinished copy, in the most faint outline, of one of those sculptured stones, so common in the Mahratta country, representing the worship of the Leeng in the upper compartment, and combats in the lower compartments.

The inscription No. 11 is in a panel in the rock, over the left cistern, near the large reservoir for water, considerably westward of the great hall just mentioned. No. 12 is in a similar panel over the right cistern near the great reservoir. No. 13 is a perfect inscription in a panel in the rock near the most western chambers. The ground of the panel has been covered with a reddish, indurated ochry matter, which is in excellent preservation, and the letters appear to have been cut through it. In the neighbourhood of this inscription, another panel has been chiselled, smoothed, and prepared for an inscription, but the design was not perfected.

In concluding my notices of these inscriptions, I beg to call the attention of the Society to the very singular fact, that in comparing Boodh inscriptions with very ancient Sanskrit inscriptions, Boodh letters are discovered in the latter; and the prevalence of Boodh letters is in the ratio of the antiquity of the Sanskrit inscription. I have identified forty-five Boodh letters in the ancient Sanskrit inscriptions to be met with in the volumes of the Asiatic Researches. Can it be that these letters are a very ancient form of the Sanskrit alphabet, and that the inscriptions themselves are in the Sanskrit language? The variations in the forms of the letters in the above Boodh inscriptions, would seem to indicate that some of them are of different ages.

(Signed) W. H. SYKES.

Poona, August 1, 1828.

Since the above paper was sent to the Literary Society of Bombay, the volumes of Sir Stamford Raffles on Java fell into my hands, and on turning to copies of the ancient inscriptions in Java and Bali, I was struck with the identity of some of the letters in the Boodh inscriptions in the Dukhun, with those in the "Aksara budda" or ancient alphabet of Java, and with those in the "specimen of an inscription in the ancient Javan or Kawi found in Maleng." As the powers of the letters of the Javan-Boodh alphabet appear to be still known, they might possibly be successfully applied to decipher Boodh inscriptions in India necessarily fraught with the highest interest, as they involve notices of people, the predecessors of the present races of inhabitants; a people of whom not a tradition remains, but whose extended range of occupancy is attested by their wonderful cave-temples, occurring at intervals from Boodh Gyia to Salsette. I have not had leisure to go into details, nor make rigid comparisons of the respective inscriptions of Java and India, but hope my notice may induce some more competent person to work out the subject.

W. H. SYKES, Lieutenant-Colonel.

London, June 6, 1832.