

FIG. 1



FIG. 2



FIG. 3



ART. V.—*Cave Drawings in the Kaimūr Range, North-West Provinces.* By JOHN COCKBURN.

[THE following paper has been forwarded to us by Mr. Vincent Smith, who has kindly added a few notes.—R.H. D.]

Previous Researches.

These drawings were first brought to notice by the late Mr. Archibald Carley and myself, and were discovered by us independently of each other in 1880, he working in Rewah and Mirzāpur and I in Banda. I took up the subject from the anthropological and zoological side entirely, Mr. Carley from the antiquarian or philological side. He evidently had made some important discoveries of *ancient records*, but, as he desired to work them himself, he imparted no information on either the nature or the localities of his discoveries, *and his knowledge has died with him.*¹ The first scientific paper on the drawings was by myself published in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal for 1883, and was entitled “On the recent existence of *Rhinoceros Indicus* in the North-West Provinces, and a description of an archaic rock painting from Mirzapur, representing the hunting of this animal” (Journ., lii, part 2, 1883, pp. 56 to 64, with two plates).² This article excited much interest

¹ “Notes on lately discovered sepulchral mounds, cairns, caves, cave paintings, and stone implements. By A. C. Carley, First Assistant, Archaeological Survey of India. In this paper Mr. Carley enumerates all discoveries of interest lately made by him in the district of Mirzapur, and then gives a general account of his discoveries in Berghelkhand, Bundelkhand, and other places during the last nine years. This paper will be published in the Journal, Pt. I, 1883.” (Proc. A.S.B., Feb., 1883, p. 49.) Unfortunately, the paper never appeared (V. A. S.).

in Europe, and great things were expected from the discovery. I regret that I have no copy of the paper. A short paragraph is also devoted to the subject in the *Gazetteer* of Mirzāpur. There is a further paper in the Proc. Asiatic Society, Bengal, for 1884,¹ on the durability of haematite drawings on sandstone rocks, by myself also. Shortly afterwards Mr. A. M. Markham, C.S., noticed a few words written in this pigment in ancient characters² at Chachaie Koond, or the Falls of the Tons in Rewah. Mr. Beglar, of the Archaeological Survey, also noticed extensive records in this pigment at the Chitilekna rock, Ramgarh, in Sirguja State, Chutia Nagpur, and attributed the writing to the seventh century.³ Then came the discovery of a dated record in this pigment at Gingi Hill, an islet of British territory belonging to Allahabad, but situated in Rewah. I paid a visit to this spot for the express purpose of noting in what state of preservation the writing was, and found it faint, but yet perfectly distinct and readable.⁴ I have seen older writing. The position of this record shows how extremely difficult it is to find pictorial records. It is situated at the base of the hill, which has here perpendicular sides, and the writing is about five feet from the ground, and very inconspicuous. This record is nearly 1,900 years old, and it seems likely from what has been observed in the interior of the Great Pyramid by Dr. Flinders Petrie that the pigment laid on rock lasts 4,000 years in sheltered situations. This gentleman found that the lines drawn in ruddle for dressing and facing the blocks in the interior of the Great Pyramid looked as fresh as if they had been done a few days before; and as the climate of the North-West Provinces resembles Egypt somewhat,⁵ and as many of the drawings are in rock shelters

¹ Proc. A.S.B. for 1884, p. 141. See also *ibid.* for 1883, p. 125. (V. A. S.)

² I cannot find any record of this discovery. (V. A. S.)

³ Cunningham, Arch. Survey Reports, vol. xiii, pp. 34-41, pl. x. (V. A. S.)

⁴ Cunningham, Arch. Survey Reports, xxi, p. 119, pl. xxx. The date is the year 52, probably equivalent to the beginning of the Christian era. The record relates to a Maharaja Bhima Sena. (V. A. S.)

⁵ The resemblance is not very close. (V. A. S.)

or caves, only open on one side, they are perfectly protected from the weather, and might last just as long.

These paintings and petroglyphs, or rock writing, must, therefore, be considered among the most ancient records in India; some of them, in all probability, being earlier than the earliest of records graven on stone or copper,¹ and their importance can hardly be overestimated, particularly as some of the writing is in a character that looks like Mongol or Tūrki, and, when regarded in connection with the discoveries now being made in the buried cities of Central Asia, the supposed home of the early Aryans, may possibly throw light on the Aryan invasion of India.²

Similar drawings in the identical pigment occur in Australia and in South Africa, where they were done by the Bushmen, in North America, as described by Catlin, and in South America as described by Alfred Wallace. The concentric circles, yet considered by the natives of the Amazons as symbols of the sun and moon, are very common in Indian caves. But the most remarkable feature about them is their close similarity to modern savage Australian drawings done on bark. (See Brough Smith, "The Aborigines of Victoria.") The conventional method of representing the stone chip spear or 'gidjee,' the stone knife, boomerang, and the attitudes of the corroboree dance, are identical. There is also a close similarity in other points. The Australian drawings which have been explained by aborigines to Englishmen are a valuable key to the Indian paintings.

A great antiquity is generally ascribed to this class of drawings, but they continue to be made to the present day, particularly in India, where the painting, done in red pigment on the front of a house where a marriage has occurred, and called *Kohobur*, passes imperceptibly into the cave drawing, some of the conventional forms of animals, birds, and inanimate objects being identical. It is therefore

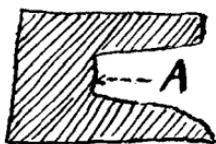
¹ Mr. Cockburn's estimate of the antiquity of these documents may prove to be exaggerated. (V. A. S.)

² This result is, I should think, very unlikely. (V. A. S.)

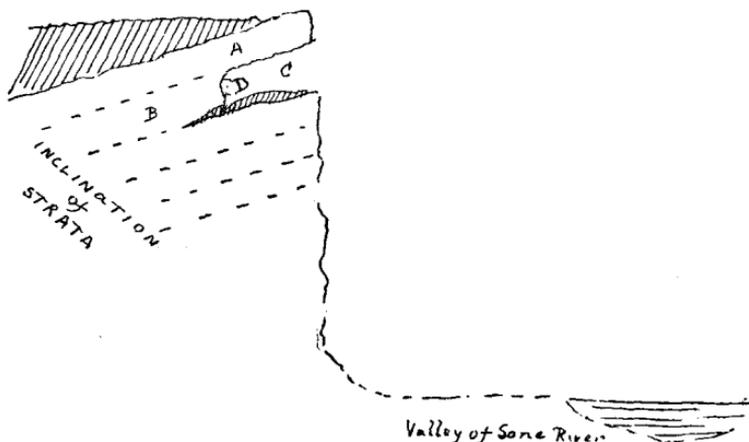
just possible that the drawings in these caves would afford as complete a pictorial record of the history of antiquity down to modern times as a volume of *The Graphic* does of the civilization of the present day, and they will certainly yield as much as, if not more information than, the sculptures of the Bharhut railing.

Position of the Drawings.

The drawings are executed on vertical rocks, and in caves known as rock shelters. The accompanying sketch will give an idea of a section of a typical rock shelter: the drawings are done on the surface A, which is generally from four to ten feet high, and presents a very smooth and almost imperishable surface of vitreous quartzite. But many of them are on vertical rocks. Overhanging boulders, and the curious deep cañons, or gorges, formed by streams that cut their way through the Vindhyan plateaux, are favourite localities.



S. 7.



SECTION OF THE LIKHUNIA ROCK SHELTER C SOUTH OF SHARGANJ ON THE KYMORE SCARP OVERLOOKING THE VALLEY OF THE SONE.

The Chunderpurba and Karamnasa rivers are cases in point. The drawings occur on both the northern and southern scarps of the Kymores, and also on the plateau between,

which is from twenty to thirty miles wide; thus I have seen them near Mirzāpur and Chunar, at Pabhosa, and at Chitrakot, where a typical rock shelter with ancient drawings has had a series of modern stone steps several hundred feet high built up to it. The best of the rock shelters and drawings, in my opinion, are to be found on the southern scarp of the Kymores, which overhangs the valley of the Sone. The above sketch shows the position and probable way in which these rock shelters of the Kymore scarp have been formed. The stratum A being of great hardness endures, while the material of the cave C was crushed, or broke away at right angles to B, and was removed by denudation. The surface D is generally vertical, being cleanly fractured transverse to the bedding, and is an admirable material to draw on. There was but little soil in this cave. The Likhunia shelter overlooks Tuppeh Chourasi in the valley of the Sone, perhaps the finest bit of scenery in the Mirzāpur District. I have hardly devoted more than a couple of weeks in all to their examination, and only in my spare time. Many of them are in exceedingly dangerous positions, necessitating crawling down the face of a precipice on the hands and knees; but most of these nearly inaccessible caves, if there is any earth on the floor, form veritable museums of prehistoric antiquities in the way of flint knives, cores, arrow-heads, celts, fragments of fossil and charred bone, pottery, etc. From this source alone I am confident I could make a fine collection, sets from which might be sent to every museum in the world, after meeting our own wants. Colonel Rivett-Carnac, assisted by me, has already presented sets of the larger stone implements to every museum in the world.¹ It must not be supposed that every cave contains

¹ "On Stone Implements from the North-Western Provinces of India. By J. H. Rivett-Carnac, Esq., C.S., C.I.E., F.S.A., etc." (J.A.S.B., vol. lii, pt. 1, p. 221, 1883.) This excellent account, illustrated by three good plates, describes the larger stone implements, hammers, ringstones, and celts collected by Messrs. Rivett-Carnac and Cockburn in the course of several years. A promised supplementary paper by Mr. Cockburn on the smaller chert implements does not seem to have been published. (V. A. S.)

interesting drawings, or records, or implements, and it must also be understood that very often miles of the Kymores prove to possess no caves at all, or the caves prove to have only a few trivial drawings of a very rude and conventional character in them. Thus, near Markandi and Majhgawan in the Banda District, after a laborious search, I only found two sets of drawings, and the most interesting of these was perfectly inaccessible, as it was on the face of a scarp 100 feet high, and the floor had dropped off. As a matter of fact, rock shelters sufficiently durable to contain drawings only occur in certain localities where the upper strata of the Kymore sandstone have been fused to a very considerable degree of hardness. In the strata known geologically as the Rewah formation they hardly occur, and I only know one good cave in the south of Pargana Khairāgarh of the Allahabad District, near Atrazee [*sic*], where this formation occurs.

The height of the hills is no criterion, but rather their hardness.

Petroglyphs occur everywhere. I have chiefly seen them about Bijaygarh in South Mirzāpur: one particularly fine record in perfect preservation was seen by me at Ek Powah Ghat near the gorge of the Ghaghur, near Robertsganj in South Mirzāpur. Each letter was about two inches long, and the strokes were a quarter of an inch thick. There were about six lines of about four feet in length, if I remember right. The character was some early form of Hindi. The shell-writing occurs everywhere, and much of it is of very large size, each letter being a foot long, and the record extending for fifteen or twenty feet.¹ Words in Asoka characters are common in many of these caves. There can be no doubt that they have been inhabited first by savages, and then by Buddhist and Hindu hermits, from the earliest times to the present day, when holy men from Benares occasionally take up their residence in them, many of the

¹ See Cunningham, Arch. Survey Reports, vol. i, pp. 60, 67; iii, p. 154, pl. xiv; viii, pp. 86, 129, 192. Cunningham referred this style of writing to the seventh and eighth centuries A.D. (V. A. S.)

caves being no more than a single long march from Benares. I am certain that a considerable mass of rock-writing will be discovered in the course of a general search, but a search for writing alone would not be very remunerative.

Nature of Drawings.

The more ancient drawings are often very elaborate and exhibit considerable skill, as will be seen by a reference to the plate of the rhinoceros hunt, which covered about a square yard of rock. The drawing is executed with a degree of boldness and accuracy as regards zoological detail quite beyond the natives of India at the present day. The position of the man tossed by the rhinoceros, sprawling in the air, is ridiculously like a picture in Baldwin's "African Hunting." Drawings as large depicting other scenes occur, and a good deal of information may be got out of them. For example, a river scene shows the character of the boat used, and the species of huge fish harpooned is recognizable at a glance. The reels holding the harpoon line are very similar to those used in parts of Africa at the present day.

Some of the drawings of animals are of a high standard of merit. One drawing of a stag, *chital* (spotted deer), with his head turned round, is quite up to a modern drawing, and certainly better than I could draw the animal myself.¹

¹ I have not seen the tracing of this drawing. Tracings of three drawings are enclosed. (V. A. S.)

FIG. 1. Man spearing Gonor stag (*Rucervus Duvaucelii*). From Bhalduria, Pargana Ahraura, Mirzāpur. The animal has an arrow stuck in the throat, and was also shown as attacked by dogs. The spear-head, while very like those made of hoop-iron used by the modern Andamanese for spearing dugong, may possibly have been of stone, though the probabilities are in favour of iron or copper. The Gonor is locally extinct, but is yet found in small numbers 200 miles south.

FIG. 2. Man with a torch encountering a panther at night. From Lohri Cave.

FIG. 3. Man spearing sāmbar hind with stone spear. The object in front is probably a leaf screen, such as Indian shikarris yet use in stalking game. The conventional form of representing the head and barbs of the spear is exactly similar to that used by the modern Australian aborigines in representing their stone spears on bark and in cave drawings. From Likhunia Cave.

Individual abnormalities in the antlers of deer are often represented, and I came across an injured drawing of a two-horned rhinoceros. Weapons, utensils, and totems are very accurately figured. Pigments of various colours have been used. I have seen traces of white, black, and yellow, but the chief pigment is ruddle, or red oxide of iron, which occurs in a very pure form in these hills, pencils and lumps of it being found in the soil of the caves. The pigment was probably rubbed up with animal fat, and I have succeeded in reproducing it perfectly, and left my name at various spots with a date, fourteen years ago. It would be interesting to know in what state of preservation this writing is now. Wallace, in his "Travels on the Amazon and Rio Negro," mentions finding the names of Spaniards who had visited picture drawings a century before, in perfect preservation, they being done with the same pigment, red oxide of iron, which was also the favourite war-paint of the North American Indian. Indeed, the Indian equestrian cave portraits resemble the American reproductions of Catlin very closely, though the latter cannot possibly be more than three centuries old, for horses were introduced by the Spaniards. This pigment was laid on pretty thick, and perfectly preserved paintings bear much resemblance to the red paintings on the outside of mummy cases. I have shown in one of my papers how this oxide of iron communicates a stain to the rock—a stain that is evidently capable of lasting thousands of years; but, unfortunately, many causes are at work destroying the drawings, and not a monsoon can pass without some of them being destroyed.

The chief causes of destruction are natural ones. The roofs of a considerable number of the shelters project many feet in the form of a thick slab, and these very frequently give way when saturated by rain, thus closing the shelter. Then, again, the water that oozes through the strata of the sandstone is charged with carbonate of lime, and leaves a thin white deposit of stalactite over the drawings, completely obliterating them. Smoke made by fires of

herdsmen and robbers who frequent these caves accounts for the destruction of a considerable number. I have also seen a few mischievously battered with stones. It may be safely said that every year sees their numbers diminish, so that their examination ought to be taken up as speedily as possible.
