

ARCHAEOLOGIA;

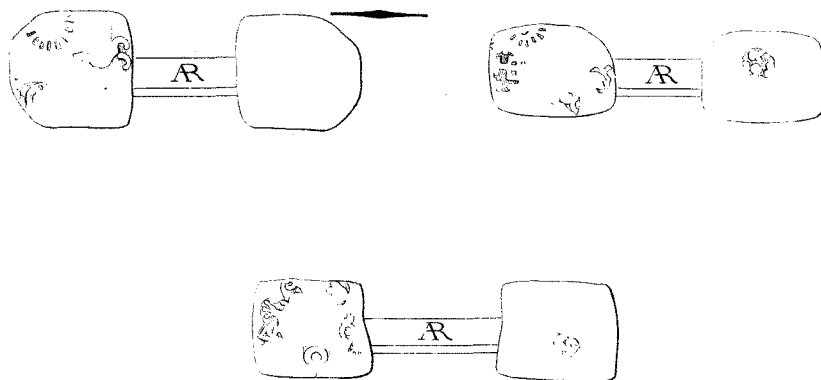
OR,

MISCELLANEOUS TRACTS,

&c.

I. *Account of some Coins found in certain Tumuli in the Southern District of the Peninsula of India. In a Letter from Sir ANTHONY CARLISLE, Knt. F. R. S. and S. A. to RICHARD PAYNE KNIGHT, Esq. V. P. &c. &c. &c.*

Read 18th April 1822.



6, Langham Place, Cavendish Square, March 28, 1822.

DEAR SIR,

THE following Narrative and Extracts, copied from a Journal of Surveying, at the instance of the Honourable East India Company, have been obligingly delivered to me by my good neighbour Lieutenant

Colonel James L. Caldwell, C. B. of the Honourable East India Company's Engineers, and as several incidents thus stated appear to deserve the notice of Antiquaries, I commit them, together with three ancient specimens of silver Coins, to your hands, desiring the latter to be placed in your cabinet, if they come within the range of that valuable collection.

During a laborious Survey of the southern Districts of the Peninsula of India in the year 1809, Colonel Caldwell's attention was often drawn to a series of ancient Mounds or Tumuli, which the present Hinduus represent to be of a date anterior to their own nation, and although the modern Hinduus venerate every spot consecrated to religion, they do not regard the Tumuli to be described with any superstitious observance.

These mounds occur numerous in the province of Coimbatore, and they are each invariably denoted by a circle of rude stones or masses of rock, the diameter of the larger areas being often as much as one hundred feet. In one example, the circle was formed by upright flat obelisks, averaging sixteen feet in height, rude, and without impression of tools. In the centre of each mound a massive table of unhewn stone forms the roof or cover to four chambers, the sides and septa being of the same rude unworked stone, and mortices with tenons apparently ground out by trituration, serve to fix the roofs upon the walls. One of these roofs contained upwards of three hundred cubic feet of granite, and being immovable as a whole, it was divided into four equal divisions by stone cutters, in order to expose the subjacent recesses or chambers. The Hinduu priests call these tumuli Paundoor Coolies, the last word meaning a mound of earth, or a hillock. Their traditional account of the word Paundoor, is, that it was the name of two brothers, the sons of a mighty ancient sovereign, who, from some cause now unknown, quitted the country on the death of their father, and lived in the jungles or woods, doing penance for a thousand years, having first hung up their arms in a certain pagodah or sacred building, the remains of which they point out near to these Paundoor Coolies. The princes having completed their penance

returned, and resumed their arms, and engaged in desperate wars for the right of empire, these tumuli being now considered as commemorations of great battles. - One singular part of the tradition avers (and the whole story is similar among the best informed Hindus) that these ancient people were pigmies, or very diminutive men, and the term always used to denote them, merely signifies "little men." Tippoo Saib was induced to open several of these tumuli, under an impression of their containing valuable treasures, and from the statements of persons who had witnessed those searches, Colonel Caldwell was induced to explore two of the Paundoor Coolies which had not been recently disturbed.

The first mound examined by Colonel Caldwell had, in the central depository, a roof of rude stone near twenty feet in length, twelve feet in width, and of unequal thickness, but generally exceeding one foot. On removing this cover, four equal compartments or square rooms appeared of about six feet in height, formed by the side stone supports, and cross partitions which supported the roof. Each room had an opening exteriorly one foot in width and eighteen inches in height, resembling the mouth of an oven. The tradition of the natives assigned to these apertures the places of doors or entrances for the "little men." Within each compartment were found vases of exceeding fine polished pottery, each standing on three legs, quite filled with an earthy substance apparently calcined, and shewing portions of bone which had been burnt. At a distance from the vases were strewed a variety of arms, as spears and swords of extraordinary form, and apparently of rude workmanship; but the metallic parts having been iron, it was so corroded that no intire instrument could be preserved, although their several forms were clearly shown by carefully removing the crust of earth with a small trowel. These instruments were entirely unknown to the modern natives, and some of them seemed like mattocks. In the large tumulus before alluded to, after cutting the superincumbent roof into four parts, the same division into four rooms appeared, and with similar outer openings to each. Here were deposited vases of

beautiful black shining or glazed pottery of about twelve inches in diameter; the manufacture of this ware being now unknown, and very superior to any native pottery made in this part of India. In these vessels square coins of silver were found, obviously worn by use; also two gold coins of the same size and character; and many remains of copper coins quite corroded, but of similar bulk and form. Cups also of four inches diameter. In each vessel the same calcined substance as found in the tripod vases. One extraordinary vessel of this fine pottery was inexplicable. It resembled an hour-glass, open at both ends, being eighteen inches in length and six inches diameter. On the floor of one chamber were twenty flat beads of a red colour, resembling cornelian, they retained the relative positions of a connected necklace, and had been united together by wires or threads.

The Hindus point out more modern tumuli, which they assert to be the memorandums of military exploits among their ancestors. In one of these a massive stone had been left in its progress to form the roof of a depository, and the mode of raising it was an inclined plane of solid earth, inclosing the upright stones on which it was intended to be placed. Perhaps bearers of timber were used to facilitate the elevation of those massive rocks, and when properly fixed, the circumjacent earth might be cleared away. This circumstance may help to explain the mode of constructing those rude buildings, such as Stonehenge.

I leave the description of the Coins to your superior knowledge. If they should be anterior to the attested records of the Hindus, they may prove to be the most ancient examples of metallic art.

Dear Sir,

Your much obliged servant,

ANTHONY CARLISLE.