DISCOVERIES IN THE CHIT-DUEN WILDERNESS.

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Half-way between the junction of the Ravi and Chinab Rivers, and Bhawalpur, stretches a barren tract of country, the heart of which is known as Chit-Duen (i.e., Chit mirage, or Duen chaos, or desolation.) With the exception of a few jhund trees, (or rather bushes, for they never exceed 12 feet in height) which are situated in a very regular manner at almost stated intervals of about one hundred feet apart, and which are provokingly alike, in every respect—identical as to color, size, height, and general appearance—there is nothing whatever for hundreds of miles to break the dreary scenery, the monotony of which becomes very trying after a few marches. The whole of this country, including the districts of Montgomery, Mozuffergurh, Dera Ghazi Khan, Mooltan, and Bhawalpur is rainless. Sometimes for years together there is not even a shower of rain, and water is consequently a thing almost unknown unless it is by an occasional inundation of an adjacent river. The Satlaj for instance, in the hot months, when the snow melts in the Himalayas, will inundate miles of country on either side of its course and deluge the outskirts of the Chit-Duen Wilderness, but this is only once in about half a dozen years. In former times the Wilderness afforded a capital hiding place for outlaws, highway robbers, and armed hordes of banditti, who plundered passing caravanseraies, bound either for Sind, Beloochistan, Rajpootana, or Upper Punjab, and they could always get clear away before they were caught. The southern part of the Wilderness has a covering of fine sand over it, blown up by the terrific sand storms of Sind, and where in this region they have spent themselves out; for towards the north the sand so peculiar to Sind is almost unknown, and the whole
surface of the dead level country is here covered with a crust of the hardest imaginable clay, and baked by the fierce heat of the sun until it has become as hard as brickwork. A horse cantering over it makes not the smallest impression on the surface, and the cling and clatter of the feet ring out as if on a hard metal roadway. It is this surface which is so smooth and shines like glass, reflecting an ethereal sky overhead, which changes at times this dreary monotonous waste, into the most varied and beautiful landscape scenery imaginable. The most perfect mirages I have ever seen I have witnessed here. Expansive lakes and little islands, with fields of rich cultivation on the shores; mighty trees and pretty villages dotted here and there, showing life and industry, broken occasionally by towns of enormous magnitude; vast cities with clusters of grand palaces and mosques, and minarets towering far away into a heavenly blue sky; and yet, even knowing of this mirage phenomenon, I have myself been repeatedly deceived because the fraud was so true to nature, the perspective, the blending of the distance, and the harmony so exact, perfect, and natural. It is such scenery as this that has taken many a wretched worn traveller miles and miles away from the beaten path, and whilst he follows this freak of nature, as his only goal, his only escape and last chance of existence, has left him mockingly to die, the most awful death of thirst and hunger, friendless in the desert. The number of skeletons and bleached bones I met with in my wanderings, prove how great a number have met their end in this way.

Twenty miles to the east of Dumjapur (place of the world) I came to a deserted city. There was not the vestige of a living thing about it—bird, animal, or insect, and for the whole journey I had not even met a camel traveller. It was on this site that I made certain discoveries when I came here a week later with a gang of workmen, which I shall now describe. I opened up some old streets and houses from a pile of rubbish and ruins. The bricks were of huge dimensions, being six feet long and three broad and one foot in thickness. On one of these was an engraving, (see Plate II) rudely done, and from long exposure nearly worn away. My guide, a very intelligent native, told me the meaning of the engraving.
was that the elephant represents the government or ruling powers; the figure in the centre is supposed to be justice or the executioner, and the round thing is a man's head; the body is buried in the ground, and underneath the man's head is written his name, or offence. In old times all religious crimes and misdeeds against the priests were punished in this way, that is to say, the culprit was buried up to his neck in the ground, facing the sun and his eyelids cut off. The pain and agony that would thus be caused by gazing at the sun becomes unendurable, so the old records say, and produces the worst type of fever, followed by madness, until death relieves the poor wretch. This mode of torture was invented by the Nepalese, and is still practised in certain parts of China.

This buried city was about two miles in circumference, and, judging from the densely-packed buildings and walls, it must have had a population of quite fifty thousand inhabitants. It showed signs of being fortified, and had evidently been pillaged and burnt, my guide said he thought it more than probable by Alexander the Great. Certain tombs on the outskirts of the city were after the style and order of Western architecture and there was nothing Indian about them, and if my guide's surmises are correct, this city must have flourished about 2,500 years ago. These tombs were four in number and of great elevation, the highest measuring 70 feet from the ground, and 25 feet square at the base. (Plate i.)

Half way up the pillar or obelisk was a tablet with the inscription perfectly clear and distinct. It is very evident, therefore, that it cannot have been Mahomedan, because the Mahomedans were not permitted to put any inscriptions over their tombs. It cannot be of Hindoo origin either, because they invariably burn their dead, and I am therefore inclined to think my native guide is correct. He is of opinion that the writing is between Hebrew and Sanscrit, and that the four tombs mark the resting-places of four distinguished officers of Alexander the Great's army, who fell in attacking the place. The inscription of the writing buried in the column is in the most perfect state of preservation, and the accompanying sketch is a fac-simile. (Plate ii.) The whole piece, I regret to say, I was unable to bring away without breaking
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the slab. I have placed the three pieces in the order I found them, and I have drawn them one-fifth their natural size. The distance apart is from the cast, and in due proportion as I found them embedded in the obelisk.

The houses were generally small, the rooms being about 12 feet by 10 feet long, although occasionally they exceeded this. The principal houses had back courts and passages, and the whole of the buildings were built of brick, which were of the old pattern, being about 8 inches square, and 1\(\frac{1}{4}\) deep. The inner walls had mud run into the joints, and the facing and all exposed points were well covered with mortar, which had become very hard although here and there atmospheric, or other influences had damaged and worn the brickway away. All exterior joints were pointed with mortar. Many baked earthen jars and vessels were unearthed, some in a wonderful state of preservation. One huge jar (pottery) was discovered under a wall, and what my guide called a "charity jar," came to light close by it. In former times this "charity jar" rested before the door of a privileged person, such as a priest or licensed mendicant, and all passers by were invited to throw in any coin, grain, or food for the poor man or people the jar belonged to. I have drawn the jar one twentieth its natural size, (Plate II.) Its weight is about 50 lbs. The inscription I have copied, but I cannot make out whether it be Sanscrit or a mixture of Hebrew and Sanscrit.

There were several circular plates with a similar inscription round the edges and some blue mosaic work, a sort of enamel, perfectly flat, about one foot square, and an inch and a half in depth. The circular plates were nine inches in diameter and perfectly flat. They measured half an inch to an inch and a quarter in depth, and were thoroughly well burnt; some were almost vitrified. A brass vase of very elegant workmanship was discovered in the middle of a lot of square and circular plates; the under part and one side is rather damaged by heat, the brass having melted, but the side I have drawn is in perfect order and intact. The vase stands about eighteen inches high, and the drawing represents it as about one eighteenth its natural size. It is about ten inches deep, and was intended either for flowers or fruit; its
weight is about 35 lbs. The stone objects (1—5) are one twelfth their natural size; the stone is the same as the hard blue granite of the Betoch hills. No. 1 is scooped out for seven inches in depth; No. 2 is a ring; No. 3 an oval plate slightly hollowed out towards the centre; Nos. 4 and 5 are pounders or jumpers for bruising grain, &c., in the vessels 1 and 3. These were found five feet below some ruins, among bones and bricks, evidently at one time the interior of a house.

The following brass instruments of torture (1—7) were found quite by themselves at the opposite side underneath a mass of ruins. No. 1 is one twentieth its natural size, all the others are one tenth their natural size. No. 1 is evidently for the throat, there are two pins to fasten the victim in. Nos. 3, 4, and 5 are for the wrists. No. 6 is for the thigh or leg. No. 2 is for the small of the back, and No. 7 is very likely a mouth and nose gag, to prevent the victim from calling out. They are nearly all round in section with the exception of Nos. 1 and 2 which stand upright. No. 2 is reversed. No. 3 is intended to be driven into the ground to fasten the victim out.

Returning by way of my camp my men discovered a most curious idol, which appeared much damaged, or rather it was a sort of *three idols in one*. The sketch (No. 8) represents it one thirtieth its natural size and is a fac-simile; it is of the same hard blue granite as the pounders. On the opposite side it has a similar representation, the figures being equally hideous and unmeaning. The legs and arms are damaged or broken off quite short to the stumps. Its weight was about 120 lbs. It had evidently been nearly twice its present size. The nose, ears, mouth, lips, and sides were almost worn away. Such an idol is totally different to anything I ever saw in India before, and is not unlike a sketch I once saw, made I think by Mr. Gerald Massey, of certain gods and idols peculiar to the ancient Egyptians.

There cannot be the least doubt that in spite of the instruments of torture and gods, this place must have been in a very flourishing state, and enjoyed (considering the time) a very high state of civilization, and judging from the buildings and knowledge of order, ideas of comfort and luxury, and appreciation of certain arts, &c.,
that it could not have been in this state less than 2500 years ago, and it is highly probable that it was known and reached a certain degree of importance 4000 years ago.

From observations taken along the base of this lost city, I find there is a gradual fall towards the south west, and it has a sort of hollow or basin scooped out for some distance in that direction.

There cannot be a doubt that this hollow basin is the channel of a river, and that that river is no other than the "Lost River of the Indian Desert." It has been clearly proved that the Narra or Hakra was not the old bed of the Indus, and the course of the lost river is traced from the Himalayas to the Sea. Evidence is brought forward to show that the Hakra did not dry up in consequence of any diminution of rainfall or failure of the course; but that its waters, having ceased to flow in their ancient bed, still find their way by another channel to the ocean. It has also been demonstrated that the missing river was not the Gaggar, nor the sacred Sarawasti, nor yet a mythic stream, but was no other than the well-known Satlaj. The Dhora Pürám may be traced under different names from above Halla to the Ranú of Kach. There can be no doubt that, as observed by Pottinger, (see "Journal of Asiatic Society"), this was the eastern branch of the Indus, down which Alexander the Great sailed to the great lake and to the sea.

This also was evidently the eastern or greater arm of the Mihran described by Rashid-ud-deen as branching off from above Mansura to the east to the borders of Kach, and known by the name of Sindh Sagara. (Elliott i, 49) This ancient river bed is also identical with the Sankra-Nala, which was constituted by Nādir Shāh, the boundary between his dominions and those of the Emperor of Delhi.

The coins I have found are certainly of a much later date, and show possibly that this country was under the power and control of Porus or Phoor, as they bear his authority. They may not, however, have been in circulation, or were perhaps brought here by some traveller for inspection, so that the evidence they afford is scarcely reliable.

But there cannot be the smallest doubt that the present wilderness was at one time under cultivation, that the
land was as rich and good as elsewhere about, that the Satlaj passing through it watered the whole of the surrounding country and produced sufficiently good crops for a thriving and industrious population, that vegetation was abundant and covered the country, and that the rainfall was as great as in the present surrounding provinces. It is more than probable that at some date subsequent to the country being overrun by a victorious army, who pillaged the towns, killed the inhabitants, and left their route to the flames, the severe erosion, always going on in the Punjab streams, changed the Satlaj course higher up near the Himalayas, and forming for it a new channel, the country was left to its fate, and without water everything became parched and consequently died. When vegetation was gone the rain ceased to fall, and the terrific sand-storms from Scind soon laid waste a thriving province and changed it into a barren desert. The sub-stratum of the vast sandy regions and boundless arid plains in the Ajmere direction and again to the north of Bickanneer prove that at some period the whole of this country was watered by the neighbouring rivers, and most likely much of it has been in byegone ages peopled and cultivated.

Marching northwards towards Montgomery and branching off on reaching the high road to Lahore, I came to high impenetrable jungles and patches of cultivation, where the antelope and ravine-deer, partridges, sand grouse, bustard, coolan, and other large game birds abounded in number, and where the shooting is very good. I had been wandering in the jungles and desert for nine months without once seeing a European face or hearing a word of English spoken, and was delighted to get back again to civilised life.