

RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES IN INDIA.

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UNTIL a few years ago the earliest known monuments of India were roughly assignable to the 7th or 8th century B.C. The absence of structures of an earlier period was then supposed to be due to the fact that all previous architecture has been of wood and had completely perished. The recent excavations, however, at Mohenjo-daro, in Sind and at Harappa in the Punjab, have completely revolutionized ideas on this subject and proved that as far back as the third and fourth millennia B.C. and probably much earlier still, India was in possession of a highly developed civilization with large and populous cities, well built houses, temples and public buildings of brick, and many other amenities enjoyed at that period by the peoples of Mesopotamia and Egypt.

At Mohenjo-daro an area of some 17,000 square yards has now been cleared to a depth of about 18 feet below the surface. Here—as also at Taxila—the building construction improves as the lower levels are reached. The antiquities that have been recovered from the lower strata prove that the art of the seal cutter was of a very high order during the earlier periods of occupation. In the course of excavating one of the main arteries of the city five clearly defined periods of occupation were passed through, each with its own drainage system.

At Harappa one of the low-lying portions of the site has yielded abundant skeletal remains. Besides seemingly complete burials in open ground, 110 burial jars were recovered in another part of the site. So far, only 27 of these vessels have been examined and were found to contain skulls and human bones, and are apparently fractional burials. From the paintings on these jars, of flying peacocks alternating with stars, and with a human figure placed horizontally within the body of each bird, it is surmised that the peacock may have been believed to carry the ethereal body of the dead to the Abode of Bliss, and possibly accounts for the strong superstitious feeling for this bird which is still so marked in many parts of India.

Recent surveys of the prehistoric sites in India have yielded striking evidence of their widespread distribution and also of the fact that they are not all attributable to one civilization. Trial excavations in 1929-30 at Amri—near the station of that name on the Rohri-Kotri Section of the North-

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Western Railway—brought to light the remains of stone walls of two strata of occupation. The upper stratum yielded painted pottery and other relics similar to those from Mohenjo-daro, while from the lower stratum embedded in the silt of the Indus was recovered a peculiar type of thin painted ware of entirely different fabric and ornament and resembling pottery from Baluchistan and Seistan. This stratification brings out the remarkable fact that many of the sites in Baluchistan and Seistan must have been antecedent to the Indus valley culture, and that in the Indus valley itself the earliest civilization is not that represented at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa.

This Indus valley culture has now been traced as far as Rupar in the Ambala District, relatively close to the watershed of the Sutlej and Jumna and it is therefore highly improbable that this civilization was confined to the Indus valley.

Of the various discoveries made recently at Taxila, the most striking were several hordes of jewellery found by Sir John Marshall, consisting of bangles, bracelets, finger-rings, rosettes, a hair pin, and two interesting little reliefs of Eros and the winged Aphrodite. All these objects are gold and many are encrusted with coloured paste or gems. Along with them were a few articles of silver,—including two small dishes bearing brief inscription in Kharoshthi, and a dozen coins belonging to the close of the Parthian or beginning of the Kushan epoch. A few pieces from the Bhir Mound belong to the Mauryan period, but the bulk of it is referable to the beginning of the Kushan epoch,—that is, to about the first century A.D.

In the large Monastery of Paharpur, in the Rajshahi District of Bengal, over a hundred cells have been exposed and, except for the Southern and South-Eastern portions of the quadrangle, the whole *vihāra*, the largest ever discovered in India, is now open to view. The antiquities recently discovered were scanty, a few stone and bronze statuettes and an inscribed pillar with XII century epigraph being the most noteworthy.

In Bihar and Orissa some progress has been made in the exploration of the extensive and important Buddhist site at Nalanda. The most interesting finds were eight beautiful images of bronze and stone.

Further excavation of the Nagarjunikondi site in the Guntur District of the Madras Presidency resulted in the recovery of a number of beautiful and interesting bas-reliefs of the Amaravati style.

Excavations in Burma were undertaken at Halin in the Shwebo District, at Old Prome, and Pagan, but save for an inscription in Pyu and a carved

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stone decorated with figures, presumably of Pyu date, very little of importance was recovered. A site in private ownership near Bassein yielded an inscription in Talaing and Pali of the XV-XVI century.

The remains recently brought to light at Mohenjo-daro tend to confirm earlier impressions that the amenities of life enjoyed by the average citizen of that city were far in advance of anything to be found at that time in Babylonia or on the banks of the Nile. Although there are proofs of a close cultural connection between Southern Mesopotamia and Sind, even at Ur the houses are by no means equal in point of construction to those of Mohenjo-daro, nor are they provided with a system of drainage at all comparable with that found in the latter site.

One of the most striking of the seals recovered at Harappa depicts a procession of seven men wearing kilts and helmets and marching in a line from right to left. A unique object found in this low stratum was a model in copper of a two-wheeled cart with a gabled roof and driver seated in front. Sir John Marshall states that this is, possibly, the oldest known example of a wheeled vehicle; older even than the stele fragment with the picture of a chariot recently found by Mr. Woolley at Ur, which in its turn antedates by a thousand years the use of the wheel in Egypt.

With the progress of exploration it has become evident that the connection of the Mohenjo-daro and Harappa civilizations with the Sumerian civilization of Mesopotamia was due, not to actual identity of culture, but to the intimate commercial or other intercourse between the two countries.

Among other interesting discoveries it has been established that cotton textiles were in use at Mohenjo-daro 3,000 years B.C.

At Harappa an interesting seal was recently recovered bearing a representation of the Earth Goddess. Among terracottas were human figures of men seated with legs drawn up in a devotional attitude, others squatting with their knees clasped in their arms, three nude figures, one of which is seated on a three-legged stool, pregnant women, others suckling babies, one kneading bread, and another with her hands placed sideways over her hips.

The most remarkable and most valuable find of small antiquities that has yet been made at Taxila was recently made in Sirkap, and consisted of a hoard of gold and silver ornaments and of silver vessels.

Several important results emerge from the recent excavations at Paharpur, in Bengal, namely: the discovery that a prosperous school of sculpture existed

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in Bengal earlier than any so far known, and the recovery of images of orthodox Brahmanical deities in an undoubtedly Buddhist monument as well as of the earliest known sculptures in East India depicting the exploits of the boy Krishna, and the earliest images of Krishna and Radha. The Paharpur finds take back the beginnings of Krishna worship in Bengal to the sixth century B.C.

Within the last few years our knowledge of the old civilizations, and especially that of the Indus Culture, has been considerably enriched by the discoveries referred to above. It has been established that the specimens of wheat found in Mohenjo-daro resemble the common variety grown in the Punjab to-day. There are also strong reasons for inferring that the rainfall in Sind and the Western Punjab was then somewhat heavier than it is now; also that the Sind was watered by two large rivers instead of one. The food of the Indus people, in addition to bread and milk, consisted of beef, mutton and pork; the flesh of tortoises, turtles and gharial; also fresh fish from the Indus and dried fish imported from the sea coast. Among domesticated animals so far no trace has been found of the cat.

Male attire among the upper classes consisted of a skirt or kilt fastened round the waist, and a plain or patterned shawl, which was drawn over the left and under the right shoulder. Men wore short beards and whiskers, with the upper lip shaven. Their hair was taken back from the forehead and coiled in a knot at the back of the head with a fillet to support it. Among the lower classes, men went naked, and women with a narrow loin cloth only, though there is one statuette of a dancing girl without even this garment. From which it would appear that clothes were worn more for the sake of adornment than from any sense of shame. Ornaments were worn freely by all classes alike.

From the surprising paucity of weapons that have been recovered it would appear that the cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro were but little acquainted with warfare. Evidence shows that the people were familiar with the art of writing.

The main features of the Indus religion as revealed up to the present are:—the worship of a Mother Goddess, and, side by side with her, a male god, who is identifiable with Siva; the worship of animals both real and fabulous and of therio-anthropic creatures, as well as belief in Nagas; the worship of trees and baetylic and phallic stones, including the *linga* and *yoni*. 'There can be no question' says Sir John Marshall, 'that most of the elements found at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa are characteristically Indian and that they carry back the story of Hinduism to an age before the coming of the Aryans,

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thus disposing of the commonly accepted view that these elements represent a popular form of worship evolved by the Indo-Aryans themselves.'

It has been established that the Indus civilization extended over much of Baluchistan as well as over Sind and the Punjab; there is also evidence to show that it extended eastward over Cutch and Kathiawar towards the Dekhan. There is no question that it formed part and parcel of the wide flung Chalcolithic culture of Asia and Europe.

It is, perhaps, one of the most curious and unexpected results obtained that the Travels of Apollonius of Tyana in their accounts of Taxila contain several particulars which tally remarkably well with recent discoveries on the spot. Sir John Marshall concludes that Apollonius did in fact visit Taxila, probably in the year 44, A.D.

Among the numerous antiquities which the site of Sirkap has yielded, perhaps the most fascinating is a bronze statuette (height 5 inches) representing the Egyptian childgod Horus or, as the Greeks called him, Harpocrates, wearing on his head the double crown of Upper and Nether Egypt. His right hand is raised to his lips as if to impose silence.

Sir Aurel Stein's recent explorations in Baluchistan and Waziristan, on the North-West frontier of India have provided ample proof that the 'chalcolithic' civilization of prehistoric Sind once extended to those territories.

The explorations of Mr. Hargreaves at Nāl, in the Jhalawān Division of the Kalāt State, have demonstrated the existence in Baluchistan of a dolichocephalic people who used both stone and mud brick for building purposes, whose tools and weapons were of copper and who carefully buried their dead in different ways; a people acquainted with the art of melting ores and highly skilled in working refractory stones, capable of spinning if not weaving.

From the valuable knowledge we have gained from recent discoveries it is evident that further exploration will clear up other debatable points and add considerably to the knowledge already gained. There remains a vast and almost virgin field yet to be explored by the practical archaeologist. It is no exaggeration to say that the archaeological discoveries that have been made in India within the last few years have opened up an entirely new vista; have upset many of our former beliefs and theories, while confirming others; and have, owing to their stupendous importance, evoked a world-wide interest. We may confidently look forward to further explorations yielding more discoveries of supreme interest in the near future.