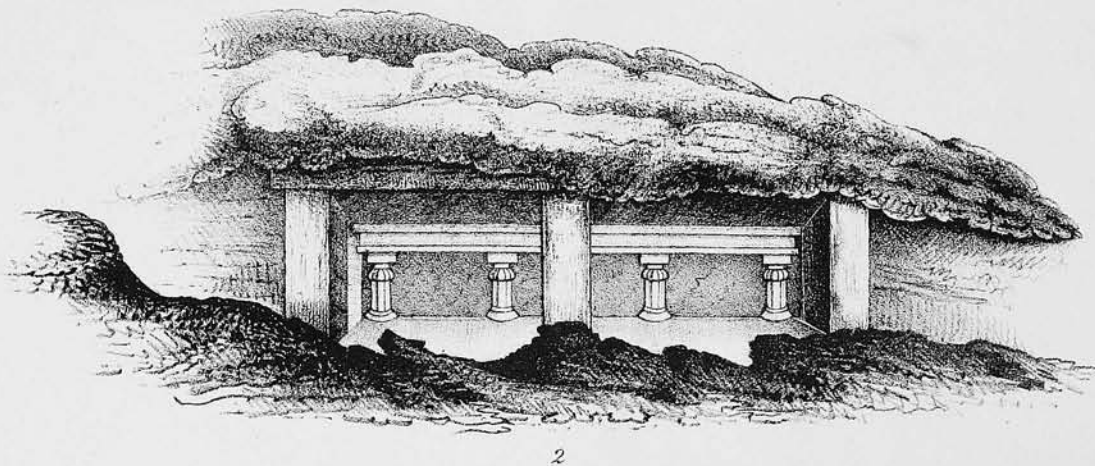
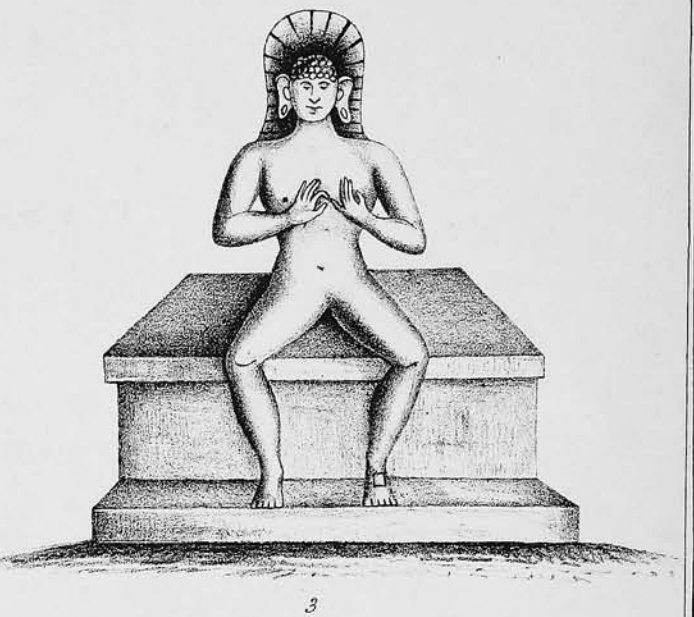
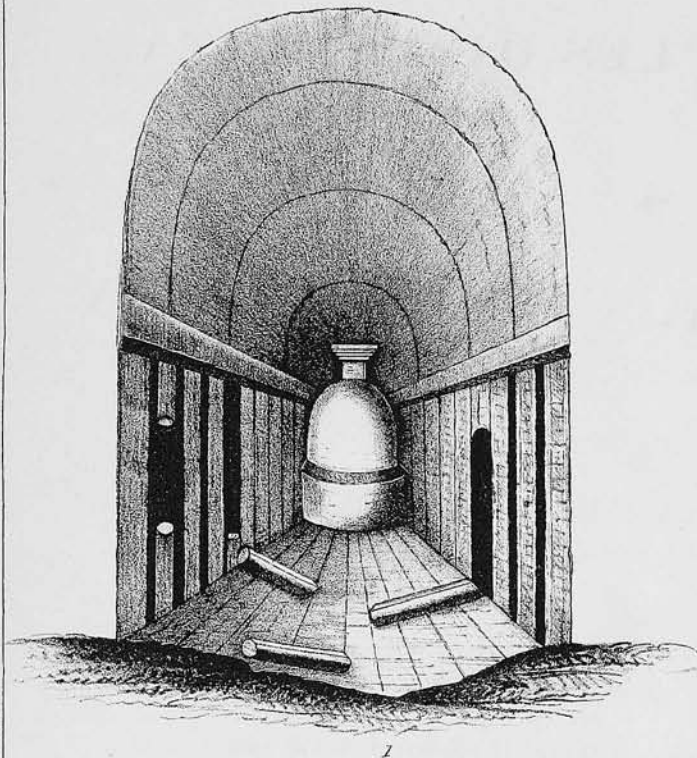


Caverned Temples of Adjuntah.



NOTICE OF A VISIT
TO THE
CAVERN TEMPLES OF ADJUNTA,
IN THE
EAST-INDIES.

COMMUNICATED BY ^{*Captain*} ~~LIEUT.~~ JAMES EDWARD ALEXANDER,
/late/ 16th Lancers, of the Order of the Lion and Sun, M.R.A.S., Cor. Mem. S.A.E., &c.

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1829.

Notice of a Visit to the Cavern Temples of Adjunta in the East-Indies.—Communicated by Lieutenant JAMES EDW. ALEXANDER, 16th Lancers, of the order of the Lion and Sun, M.R.A.S., Cor. Mem. S.A.E., &c.

Read February 7, 1829.

It was in the month of February 1824 that, while on leave from my regiment, and travelling about the province of Berar, I visited the extraordinary excavations of Adjunta, situated in lat. 20° 25' N. and lon. 76° 12' E. These, though I believe hitherto undescribed, are as much deserving of a separate publication as the far-famed temples of Ellora; and though I spent only a few hours in their gloomy recesses, yet I saw enough to convince me that they are well worthy of a more minute investigation, and a lengthened sojourn amongst them.

After passing the night in a well built caravanserai in the town of Adjunta,* situated at the head of the pass of the same name through one of the Berar ranges of mountains, I mounted early in the morning, arrayed in my Muselmani costume, and accompanied by a couple of servants and a guide, all of us well armed with sabres, pistols, and hunting spears. We rode through a crowd of camels with their tinkling bells, and Brinjari bullocks, reposing beside their loads of grain and salt. In passing a small party of the Nizam's horse, the Duffadar (an inferior officer) saluted us with the customary compliment of "*Salam alicum*" (Peace be with you); and enquired where we were going. I told him we proposed visiting the caves: to which he replied, "*La illah illallah!*" (There is but one God) you will never return: for if you escape the tigers, these stony-hearted robbers, the Bheels, will destroy you." To this I answered, "*Inshallah* (please God) we'll have the pleasure of smoking a pipe with you in the evening." He replied, "*Khoda hafiz*" (may the Lord preserve you): and taking leave of him, we rode out of the gate which led to the head of the pass, down which our road lay.

* From the Sanscrit word *Ajayanti*, meaning the difficult or impregnable pass.

After travelling some distance along a stony road, and passing several cairns, near which were many bushes covered with rags, pointing out the spot where unfortunate travellers had been destroyed by tigers, we suddenly found ourselves at the top of the precipitous *ghat* or pass. The scene which now opened upon us was magnificent in the extreme. The vale of Candesh was stretched beneath our feet, extending far into the blue distance, and enclosed by wooded mountains. Jungle, small lakes, and streams scattered in every direction diversified the face of the valley; and here and there, amongst the trees, appeared the pointed top of a Hindu pagoda, or the white dome of a Moslem shrine. Near us, over the face of the hills,

The bosom-folds of mist, the morning breeze
Wreathed gracefully;

and bore with it the balmy incense of oriental flowers. We now dismounted, and leading our horses down a precipitous pathway to the left of the pass, found ourselves at the bottom among sweet-smelling kuskus grass. Directing our steps towards an opening between the deeply serrated hills, we arrived at the *débouche* of the glen, and fell in with a mountain stream, along whose banks lay the pathway to the caves, leading through low under-wood interspersed with trees and water-grass fifteen feet in height; amongst which, not long before, three tigers had been killed.

We had not advanced far up the glen, when a low whistling was heard above us to the left, and was quickly repeated from the opposite cliffs. This proved to be Bheels intimating to one another that strangers were approaching. The guide evinced strong symptoms of fear; but on being remonstrated with, and encouraged with the hope of a handsome present, he proceeded onwards. Some of the Bheels shewed themselves, peeping out from behind the rocks. They were a most savage looking race, perfectly black, low in stature, and nearly naked. They seemed to be armed with bows and arrows. The principal haunts of these Bheels are in the Northern Deccan, along the course of the Nerbuddah. They live entirely in the jungles, are in a state of great barbarism, and subsist by hunting, rapine, and plunder. They sometimes approach the towns and villages in the neighbourhood of their haunts, and lurk about the outskirts to attack individuals. Whilst in the caravanserai at Adjunta, a Muselman came to me for bandages for his left arm, which had been cut off at the elbow the night before. He lived outside the walls of the town in a garden, which the Bheels entered by a hole they dug under the wall; and the Muselman, in defending his pro-

perty, was disabled by a cut from a sabre. Our fire-arms prevented their attacking us ; and we were allowed to proceed unmolested.

The glen, up which our road lay, almost to its termination, where the caves are situated, was remarkable for its picturesque beauty. It continued winding amongst the hills, which rose from the banks of the stream with a considerable acclivity, and having their sides clothed with scattered jungle. Amongst the trees I observed the *melia azadirachta* (neem), the *robinia mitis*, *mimosa Arabica* (babool), *bassia latifolia* (mowah), from which a spirit is distilled, *ficus religiosa* (peepul), &c. (The hills, whose height was from four to five hundred feet, now began to close in their wild and romantic features upon us ; and though I cannot pretend to rival the author of "The Wonders of Ellora" in enthusiasm, yet it was with no common interest, and with my expectation intensely excited, that I viewed the "low browed" entrance to the first cave, which is not attained till a mile of the glen has been traversed.

Although the beauty of the surrounding scenery infinitely surpassed that at Ellora, yet I cannot say, like the author above quoted, "that my feelings were interested to a high degree of awe, wonder, and delight, at first so painful, that it was a long time before they became sufficiently sobered and calmed to contemplate, with any attention, the surrounding wonders ;" neither can I assert "that Bruce's emotions were not more vivid or tumultuous when first beholding the springs of the Nile, than mine were on first reaching the caves ;" yet *this* I will say, that the retired and umbrageous situation of the Adjunta caves, completely secluded from the busy haunts of men, and enclosed with overhanging hills and woods, with a clear stream rushing past them over its rocky bed, evinced a far better and purer taste in those by whom they were excavated, than can be conceded to those who constructed the caverned temples of Ellora, in the face of a low and barren ridge.

The caves of which I am now treating are excavated in horizontal strata of grey wacke, with imbedded portions of quartz approaching chalcedony. Blood-stones, in which the portions of jasper are larger than usual, may be picked up in a water-worn state, in the bed of the stream. Indurated felspar is also in abundance.

The first cave is about forty or fifty feet above the stream, and faces the south. The whole series of caves has the same aspect, but gradually ascends higher up the ridge ; the central ones being about a hundred and

fifty feet from the stream. The most remote one is near a bluff rock of two hundred feet of elevation, over whose brow a cascade dashes during the rains, though in the dry season the face of the cliff glistens with only a scanty rill.

The first circumstance that strikes an attentive observer of these magnificent remains of antiquity and wonders of art, who has previously visited the mythological or pantheistical excavations of Ellora, is the great want of ornamental and minute sculpture in the former, compared with the exquisite and elaborate finishing of the latter. The general appearance of the Adjunta caves is similar to that of the caves of Ellora; that is, they are mostly low, with a flat roof supported by massive pillars having cushioned capitals; but there is a great deficiency in ornamental carving and fret-work. Some, however, are exceptions to this remark. In most of the caves, to compensate for the want of profuse entaille and sculptures, are paintings in fresco, much more interesting, as exhibiting the dresses, habits of life, pursuits, general appearance, and even features of the natives of India, perhaps, two thousand or two thousand five hundred years ago, well preserved and highly coloured, and exhibiting in glowing tints, of which light red is the most common, the crisp-haired aborigines of the sect of Buddhists, who were driven from India to Ceylon after the introduction of Brahminism.

Before proceeding farther with our description, let us endeavour to inquire into the antiquity of these excavations. It has generally been observed, in tracing the history of any religion, that elaborate and complicated systems of sacred rites and modes of addressing the Supreme Being are commonly posterior to more simple forms and rituals. This I should imagine applies to Buddhism; for not only in their rites, but also in their places of worship, the Buddhists display a system which appears to be much more crude and simple than that which now predominates over the greater part of the Indian continent. Reasoning from the above premises, it may be confidently affirmed that Buddhism is greatly anterior to Brahminism. The Buddhists adore one deity (some peculiarities in whose personification in these caves shall be hereafter noticed); they are monotheists, and their religion is exoteric; while the gods of the present race of Hindus are uncountable. Some speculators in Hindu mythology maintain that the chief temple in all Jain*

* The Jains and Buddhists only differed in regard to the history of the personages whom they deified: both sects reject the *Vedas*, or sacred books of the Hindus; worship one Deity,

and Buddha caves being arched, shews a posterior date to the flat-roofed excavations of Elephanta, and others appropriated to the followers of Brahma: and, in support of this theory, it is said that the Hindus, previously to the Muhamedan invasion, were unacquainted with the manner of constructing the arch. But when we consider that these vast excavations must have been hewn out of the living rock, while the Jains were in the plenitude of their power, and long before the persecutions had begun by the followers of Brahma, I think we may safely assert that their antiquity is much greater than that of either the Ellora* or Elephanta excavations.

Respecting the antiquity of the Jain or Buddhist religions: in the earliest accounts of India, by Arrian and other authors, and at the period of Alexander's expedition in 327 B.C., the natives are described as having long hair and slender bodies, and as being divided into different castes or tribes. It is therefore pretty evident that the religion of Buddha was then on the decline: for I think that its high antiquity may be satisfactorily proved, both from the paintings and sculptured figures in these excavations; which exhibit traces of the existence of a woolly-haired race, now no where found on the Indian continent; and who, according to the commonly received legend, were persecuted and scattered by the disciples of Brahma; a considerable body of them being driven to Ceylon, from whence they spread the religion of Buddha through Siam, Burma, and China. This persecution is supposed to have arisen from the Buddhist religion (when placed in immediate comparison with the Brahminical) not being suited to the taste of the inhabitants of Hindoostan, who are fond of glitter and shew, and who dazzled by the splendour of the present rites, turned from these plain and unadorned figures of Buddha, to the mysterious Trimurti, and wonder-working Avatárs. From these premises I conceive the age of the caves of Adjunta to be nearer three than two thousand years.

Examination of the Caves.

The principal excavation, or grand temple, is situated about a hundred and fifty feet from the bed of the nullah, or stream, and on the face of the hill. The magnificent entrance is surrounded by scattered jungle and

and several subordinate saints; both excavated temples; and, in India, were divided into the four castes of priests, soldiers, merchants, and labourers. In Ava the Buddhists are not divided into castes.

* One of the Ellora caves is a Jain temple; the rest are Brahminical.

brushwood, and is particularly striking ; being a lofty portico, somewhat resembling those of Caneri and Carli. In the centre of the portico is an immense horse-shoe arch, on each side of which there stand colossal janitors, ten or twelve feet in height, and with curled hair. At the request of the guide we approached with great caution ; and on coming under the arch he pointed to the roof, from which a number of wild bees (*apis rufa*) had suspended their pendant hives. We were careful not to disturb them, or they would have soon deprived us of the use of our visual organs, here so much required.

We proceeded to the interior. On looking round, I found myself in a lofty and well-lighted hall, which may be about twenty-five or thirty feet in height, instead of the low caves with flat ceilings, as in the other parts of the hill. This is a well-aired chamber, and in many respects similar to the high coved excavation of Carli, or to what is commonly termed the carpenter's cave at Ellora. The form of the arch is however different. In the Carli cave the roof bears a close resemblance to the high-pointed gothic arch. It is ribbed with teak wood, so as to fit the cove, and is attached to the stone by wooden nails or teeth. In the Ellora caves, stone ribs supply the place of the teak ones of Carli ; but the Adjunta cave has a Saxon or (nearly) semicircular roof, without ribs of any sort. Two rows of hexagonal pillars run along the sides of the cave, and behind them is a passage. The entablature of the pillars is without ornament, and the pillars themselves are quite plain. Many of them are broken off, and have fallen on the floor.*

Opposite to, and about fifty feet from the entrance, at the farther extremity of the cave, is what is called, in descriptions of the caves of Carli, &c. a circular temple ; but which I consider to be nothing more than the *rostrum* from which the *Rhahans*, or Buddhist priests, recited prayers and delivered homilies to the assembled congregation in the hall. A passage from a description of the ritual of the Siamese will illustrate this idea. Treating of the present state of religion in Siam, it goes on to state : "Attached to the temples there are generally monasteries, and within these are oratories or small pulpits. In these the priests, morning and evening, recite prayers. From these same pulpits they likewise preach sermons, taking as a text some sentences in the *Bali* or language of their sacred books,†

* See the accompanying plate, fig. 1.

† The Burmans have likewise two languages, a sacred and a vernacular. The character of the former is square, like the Sanscrit, Hebrew, and Chinese ; that of the latter is circular. While at Ava I saw some of the sacred books with gold leaves, but they are commonly made of ivory.

and descanting on it in the vernacular language ; their principal hearers on these occasions being women, who sit with their hands clasped, their feet under them, and small lighted tapers burning before them."

The stone hemisphere, then, probably served the purpose of a pulpit. It rests on a pedestal, somewhat larger than the hemisphere, surmounted by a square block, in shape resembling the capital of a pillar. In Ellora the *figure* of the deity, of gigantic dimensions, is placed on a seat in front of this hemisphere of stone ; *but* in this cave it is omitted. In the gallery, or passage behind the pillars, are fresco paintings of Buddha and his attending supporters, with *chowrees** in their hands. The thickness of the stucco is about a quarter of an inch. The colours are very vivid, consisting of brown, light red, blue, and white : the red predominates. The colouring is softened down, the execution is bold, and the pencil handled freely ; and some knowledge of perspective is shewn. The figures are two feet and a half or three feet in height. The obliterating and sacrilegious hand of the Portuguese has not exercised itself in defacing with pious rage these caves ; nor are any of those mutilations visible here which are so common in the excavations which the Portuguese converted into places of worship. That these excavations served for the retirement of some monastic society, does not, I think, admit a doubt. Adjoining the large caves are several cells with stone bed-places, which, in all probability, were the abodes of the devotees : and in many there are springs of clear water.

The other caves which I visited are all flat-roofed, and generally in excellent preservation. The fetid smell, however, arising from numerous bats (*vespertilio noctula*) which flew about our faces as we entered, rendered a continuance inside, for any length of time, very disagreeable. I saw only one cave with two stories or tiers of excavated rock. In it the steps from the lower apartments to the upper had been destroyed by the *Bheels*. With our pistols cocked we ascended by the branch of a tree to the upper range of chambers ; and found, in the middle of one of the floors, the remains of a recent fire, with large foot-marks around it. In a corner was the entire skeleton of a man. On the floors of many of the lower caves I observed prints of the feet of tigers, jackals, bears, monkeys, peacocks, &c. ; these were impressed upon the dust, formed by the plaster of the fresco paintings which had fallen from the ceilings.†

* Painted sticks, to which are attached the tails of the Thibet cow ; used to drive away flies.

† See the accompanying plate, fig. 2.

The paintings in many of the caves represent highly interesting and spirited delineations of hunting scenes, battles, &c. The elephants and horses are particularly well drawn. On the latter two men are often seen mounted. Ram and cock-fights I observed in one of the excavations. The spears are peculiar, having three knobs near the head; and there was an instrument resembling a lyre with three strings. I observed something like a zodiac; but not at all resembling the celebrated one of Dendera. The pillars, in most of the caves, resemble the cushion-capitaled ones of Elephanta. In one I saw a pair of fluted pilasters: and fluting is supposed to have originated in Greece, to prevent the spears from slipping off the columns.

The figure of the God.

Buddha is commonly represented of gigantic size, in a sitting posture, and holding the little finger of his left hand between the forefinger and thumb of his right. Sir Chas. Malet and Mr. Salt tell us "that Viswákármá, or the carpenter,* says the legend, having fabricated the caves in a wondrous night of six months duration (but before he had completed them the cock crew, and they remained unfinished) retired to his hovel, having wounded his finger." Sir Charles, however, imagines that this is merely an attitude of devout meditation. The statues of Adjunta are well proportioned, but deficient in anatomical expression: for among nations of luxurious habits the figure of Apollo supersedes that of Hercules. The figures, however, are in perfect unison with the other sculpture of the caves. The features are of the African cast; with curled hair and prominent lips. The chiselling of the hair resembles strings of beads. In some, the hair is concealed by a tiara; in others by a conical crown, like that of the Burman Buddha: in most a drapery, similar to that on the head of the Egyptian sphynx, adorns the head. The lobes of the ears are elongated and hang upon the shoulders. The vestment, in many of the figures, consists only of a shoulder band, which may be the origin of the *zenaar*, or sacred string of the present race. In the left foot of the largest figure is a square hole, which is not observed in any of the others.†

After making a few hasty sketches of the lower caves, and the most interesting objects in them, I consumed some time in unavailing attempts to reach some apparently well-preserved caves higher up on the hill. We

* Rather the "architect." "He whose work is the universe." The Vulcan of the Hindus.

† See the accompanying plate, fig. 3.

clambered up on our hands and knees, till stopped by a precipice; and not having ropes, we were unable to reach the caves from above: we therefore gave up the attempt in despair, and after we had partaken of a slight repast, and a *chihum* had been smoked in one of the best lighted and finest excavations, we returned to the horses, and rode back to the town of Adjunta.

Though it was but a rapid and unsatisfactory glance (unsatisfactory in as much as my time was limited, from my leave being nearly expired) that I had of these imperishable monuments of antiquity,

Quæ non imber edax non aquilo impotens
Possit diruere, aut innumerabilis
Annorum series,

yet I was highly delighted with my excursion; and although many are the caverned temples which I have explored, and many which I wish to revisit, yet to none would I sooner return than to those of Adjunta. Several of them I was unable to examine; but the paintings alone, in such as I had an opportunity of examining, would render them much more interesting to those who might desire to become acquainted with the appearance of the ancient inhabitants of Hindustan, than the grotesque, though beautifully sculptured deities of Ellora.

*Royal Military College, Sandhurst,
August 1828.*