

JOURNAL
OF THE
ASIATIC SOCIETY.

Part I.—HISTORY, LITERATURE, &c.

No. IV.—1874.

*The Temple of Jayságar, Upper Asám.—By J. M. FOSTER, F. S. A.,
Názirah, Asám.*

(With four plates.)

This temple, situated on the north bank of an immense tank, two and a half miles south of Sibságar (the ancient Rangpúr) in Upper Asám, Lat. 26° 54' N., Lon. 94° 40' E., is not remarkable, when compared with many similar edifices in Central India, for its antiquity, ornamentation, or historical associations, but is of considerable interest from its being probably the most perfect specimen of stone architecture existing in Upper Asám, and its having been erected at the time when the Hindú religion was first firmly established in the country, which was for once in its history in a state of peace under an energetic and competent ruler.

The occasional earthquakes, the destructive influences of the weather and the pípal tree, combined with the fact that no proper plans or drawings of most of the ancient edifices in Asám have been made, rendered it desirable that some memorial of this temple should be preserved, as its destruction at a not very remote period may be anticipated. The cold weather of 1873-4 having set in, a small camp was formed, the jungle was removed from the edifice as far as practicable, and careful measurements were made of the most interesting parts of it. The photograph by Mr. H. A. Coombes, Superintendent of Police for this district, gives a very fair idea of the edifice and its decorations (*vide* plates).

The tank upon the bank of which this building is situated is very large, even for Asám, its dimensions according to the Revenue Survey map being 900 by 650 yards, the 'bund' being about 120 feet wide on the top, and its

depth is stated to be thirty-six feet in the centre; the water level is about two feet above that of the surrounding country, and was formerly much more until the bund was cut through for some now unknown purpose. The earth removed during the excavation was used to form the banks. In its immediate neighbourhood are two other immense tanks, the Othæ and Rudra Ságar, which are now dry and were probably never completed.

A slight historical sketch of the causes that led to the formation of this temple and tank will probably be found interesting. During the reign of Gadhádhhar Singh, *alias* Chupatpha, (died A. D. 1625) the Moamariahs or Muttacks (a people living in the north and north-east of *Asám*, who were divided into two clans, the Moamariahs so called from their being a distinct sect from the generality of Asamese, and the Morans, signifying 'inhabitants of the jungle') gave great trouble by incessantly making war upon and plundering their more peaceable southern neighbours. At last they became so powerful, that they elected a chief ruler of their own under the title of the Lorá Rájá, who completely defeated Gadhádhhar Singh, and took possession of the country as far south as Jorhát.*

According to the native MS. Chronicles, Gadhádhhar Singh escaped to the jungles after his defeat, whilst his wife Jaymatí Koorie was captured by the Lorá Rájá and tortured by him to give information as to her husband's place of refuge. In the centre of the Jayságar Tank a post now stands: at this spot she is said to have been daily flogged, but without its producing the desired effect. On being questioned as to his whereabouts, and a promise being made that she should be liberated if she would give the necessary information, she replied that she had not seen him for a long time. Gadhádhhar Singh hearing of this presented himself one day in disguise before her, and asked her why she did not point him out to his enemies. She at once recognized him, but refused to betray him. Addressing him as a friend of her brother, she told him to leave her to her fate, as his submission to the Lorá Rájá could be of no advantage to either. Three times this scene was repeated, and finally Jaymatí Koorie told him she would insult him if he troubled her any more. He at length left for the jungle, and she, faithful to the last, died under her tormentor's hands.

Now Gadhádhhar Singh's sister was married to the Bor Phúkan, who lived at Gauhaṭṭi and was an ally of the Lorá Rájá; Gadhádhhar Singh took refuge in his house, and was so well disguised, that he remained there in safety, being known to his sister only, for two years or more. Ultimately,

* It may here be noted that the Momariahs kept rising in rebellion with varying success until the Government was assisted by a British force in 1793. Ghargaop, the old capital, Rangpúr, the new one, Jayságar tank, Gauríságar tank, and other places, were frequently scenes of most sanguinary battles, the fights on several occasions lasting three days.

a misunderstanding between the Bor Phúkan and the Lorá Rájá occurred. The wife then revealed all to her husband; he and Gadhádhār Singh raised strong forces, marched to Ghargáon, captured it, killed the Lorá Rájá, and reinstated Gadhádhār Singh on the throne of his ancestors. With true oriental gratitude, he was no sooner firmly seated than he put to death his brother-in-law, the Bor Phúkan, and two other of the highest officers of State who had also assisted him, alleging as his reason that as they were powerful enough to depose and kill the Lorá Rájá, they might possibly serve him in a similar manner, should any quarrels arise between them. He did not live long after his restoration, and was chiefly occupied in restoring order throughout the country; and he strictly enjoined his son Rudra Singh to build a temple on the spot where his mother was put to death, and to call it after her name. This was done, and Jayságar Dhol is doubtless the finest specimen of stone architecture in Upper Asám.

Although the Hindú religion was introduced in 1615, and a number of Bráhmans was procured to teach the observances of their faith, and though in 1654 Chutumla publicly adopted the Hindú faith and encouraged Bráhmans to his court, as well as assumed the Hindú name of Jayadhajia Singh; yet Gadhádhār Singh is said to have been a Buddhist, to have eaten beef and frogs, and drunk spirituous liquors. His son Rudra Sing, however, was of the Hindú faith from the commencement of his reign.

In Robinson's "History of Asam," p. 168, we find—"Gadhádhār Singh, *alias* Chututpha, died in 1695, and was succeeded by his son Rudra Sing, *alias* Chuckungpha. In 1699, this prince is said to have founded the fort and city of Rangpúr, where he also caused an extensive tank to be made that still bears his name. In the same year he erected a theatre for the exhibition of sports, denominated Tulatuli. He died suddenly the following year at Gauhaṭṭi. Rudra Sing was, without doubt, the greatest of all the Asamese princes: he reduced the whole valley to order, and received the submission of all the hill tribes."

"In an old Asamese bulanji it is said that "Jaymatí Koorie was taken into custody by the Lorá Rájá, carried to the place where Jayságar now is, and was caned and whipped to death under a large pípal tree, which was in the same place where the pillar in the centre of the tank now stands."

In a native work, entitled "A History of the Kings of Asam," by Sri Radhanath Bor Borua and Kasinath Tamuli Phúkan, p. 34, we find the following—"On the 14th Phalgún, 1617, (A. D. February 24th, 1695) Rájá Rudra Singh went to the Singree Ghur at Ghargaon, and there assumed the name of Sooklungphaw, and, according to his father's command, memorialized the death of his mother Jaymati Koorie by digging the large tank called Jayságar, and erecting three temples in and about the place where she was murdered. The largest of these temples was dedicated to the

worship of Vishnu, one of the smaller to Siva or Mahadeb, and the other to Durga. The famous works of Rudra Singh's life are, the Matakát Rungpore, Joysaugor Dhol Pookrie, Rungonath Dhol Pookrie, Phakooah Dhol, Namdang Heel Sanko, Damoru duo heel Sanko, Kerkooteah Allee, Dooberownee Allee, and Matakaroo Allee."

To quote Robinson again, p. 276. "The remains of temples and public buildings, which are so often met with in various parts of the country, testify that the Asamese had once made considerable progress in sculpture. Their productions are, however, not merely void of attraction, they are unnatural and not unfrequently offensive and disgusting." The latter part of this paragraph is hardly correct with regard to Jayságar, only one of the designs being unfit for publication, and that is one of the incarnations of Vishnu in which a boar plays a prominent part. The stone body of the temple is literally covered with very fair specimens of sculpture, the designs and their details being in some instances wonderfully fine and artistic; not an available inch of surface is left undecorated, and the frieze of hunting scenes in the basement is for the most part extremely accurate and life-like.

The body of the building, about twenty-two feet high, supporting the dome, is built of sandstone and carries twelve pinnacles; the dome is of brick-tiles, covered with stucco, which is ornamented by being divided into an immense number of sunk panels, each having a rose in its centre, and is about thirty feet high; and the superstructure of brick, somewhat mutilated, built around an iron centre rod, makes the total height about sixty-five feet above the ground. The bund underneath the temple is composed of large sandstone boulders. These with the stone used in building the temple were probably brought from about Sadiyá by boat, and landed opposite Rangpúr; for there is a good ancient road leading from the Dikko River at that point to the Jayságar tank. The sculptured slabs are very neatly let into the wall and with their surrounding frames are mostly crowded with diaper work and minute carved tracery. The building is octagonal, the four sides facing the cardinal points of the compass are each twenty feet broad, the other four sides have recessed angles. At its west end are two entrance rooms; from the centre one seven steps lead down through a fine stone doorway into the grand room of the temple, which is quite dark and has probably a subterranean chamber as water could be heard running underneath the floor. This room is twenty-three feet across and devoid of ornament excepting the niches; the stone work, as on the outside, reaches up to the foot of the dome which, being devoid of stone, shews the brickwork to the top, the height appearing immense when viewed by magnesium light, although it cannot exceed fifty feet.

All the other buildings are composed of brick tiles, have curved roofs, covered with stucco, generally stone doorways, and in two cases having

series of carvings in sandstone let into the walls on the outside of the buildings. Nearly all are more or less damaged by the frequent earthquakes they have had to withstand.

On the outside of the temple, near the foot of dome, runs a series of tablets, each containing an angel and all having different attitudes, as nearly resembling the angels in European mediæval sculpture as can be well imagined. Amongst the figures in the frieze of hunting scenes near the base of the temple are three unmistakeable Nágás, leading a captive by cords; the neck ornaments, the tightly pinched-in waist, scanty covering, sturdy limbs, and uncovered heads, all indicate their nationality; the weapon in the hand of each resembles the Burmese dhao-luey, and is not such an article as we see carried by the Nágás in this neighbourhood. The vehicle conveying the Rájá is of very curious construction, the wheels being supported by springs on the outside like modern railway carriages, and the single shaft reaches over the horses' back as far forward as its head. This drawing is unfortunately somewhat mutilated, and the details cannot be accurately made out. Camels are frequently represented: these may bear allusion to some event during Mir Jumlah's invasion of Asám, as there are no such animals now to be found here and the country is quite unsuited to them. Amongst the native sports on grand festivals, elephant fighting probably had a place, as two are shewn carrying riders, and the mahauts are evidently urging the beasts to the combat; one of the elephants has the trunk of the other in its mouth. This is a very spirited and well executed piece of work.

This frieze of hunting and other scenes is undoubtedly the most interesting part of the carvings; coming from the N. W. angle and going round the building to the East we find:—

1. Two armed men on horseback. An old man on foot. Two men sitting under a tree.
2. Two old and two young alligators, having rounded ears like leopards.
3. A deer on its back, a tiger holding it by the throat, two deer and fawn running away.
4. Two men mounted on horses, one carrying a spear, the other a bow, two dogs chasing two deer and a fawn, a man in a tree aiming a gun at the deer.
5. A man on a galloping horse, about to shoot an arrow at a man on an elephant, the latter being suddenly stopped by the mahaut.
6. Two alligators with big ears.
7. Two camels marching, one mounted, the other led by a man on foot, two men on horseback conversing, two animals (dogs?).
8. Two elephants carrying mahaut. and rider, the first rider brandishing a sword.

9. (20' face to N.) A tree, under it a man kneeling, apparently wounded, having his back turned to a man about to shoot an arrow at him. Man on galloping horse looking back and shooting an arrow at the man under the tree. Man on horseback lancing a charging buffalo over his horse's left shoulder, he carries a quiver on his back. Man kneeling behind a tree, and man up in a tree, pointing guns at some buffalo. Elephant driven by mahaut going from some buffalo, the rider carries a gun. Man on galloping horse, throwing lance at two running deer and a fawn, two dogs also pursuing the deer. Man in tree pointing gun at some deer. Herd of six large and small elephants. Forest scenery. Two tigers chasing two deer and two fawn, monkey climbing a tree out of the way.

10. Two monkeys on a tree. Man and woman on two walking horses, evidently conversing. Two monkeys on a tree, an old man under it. A tree, on one side a hut with a man in it, a person sitting down on the other side.

11. Two men on galloping horses after a deer and fawn, the one about to shoot an arrow, the other to throw a lance, two dogs pursuing the deer at full speed (very spirited).

12. Two elephants with riders being suddenly stopped by the mahaut's judges, they see No. 13.

13. A tiger holding a deer by its throat having turned it on its back, another deer is dashing off into the jungle.

14. Similar to 7. (? a tiger).

15. Two large and two small alligators, as before.

16. Man on galloping horse shooting arrow at man on elephant, mahaut suddenly stopping it.

17. Two alligators with big ears, as before.

18. (20' face to E.) A monkey on a tree. Man and woman on horseback conversing, not seeing a tiger ahead. A man on tree pointing gun at a tiger that is watching the people approaching. Man on a tree pointing gun at the tiger's rear. Man on galloping horse shooting arrow at the same tiger. Two bears about to fight. Three Nágás leading a prisoner child bound with cords, each armed with a knife. Two monkeys on two trees, two animals (leopards?) about to climb up to them. A monkey on small tree eating a fruit. A bear (?) walking beside two people on horseback. Man walking behind a covered carriage, drawn by two horses, one saddled, a driver kneeling in front. Two people on horses. Two men and four women crowded together behind a covered carriage drawn by two horses, containing a driver, a Rájá, and an attendant who kneels behind. Broken place. Five women dancing, and seven people playing musical instruments, approaching the carriage.

19. Two large and two small alligators with mouths open.

20. Man on horseback, as 16.
21. Two riders, one about to throw lance, the other to shoot an arrow at two deer and a fawn running away. A man on a tree pointing a gun at some deer.
22. Two elephants, as 12.
23. A tiger as 13, a deer and two fawn running away.
24. A repetition of 10.
25. Two alligators as before, with open mouths.
26. Two camels, one mounted, the other led, then two men on horseback brandishing swords, two dogs running.
27. (20' face to S.) A tiger lying down wounded, two men on trees pointing guns at it. Two elephants fighting, biting each others' trunks, carrying mahauts and riders who are urging them on. (Very spirited.) Man kneeling, pointing a gun, and man mounted, also pointing a gun at a tiger attacking a buffalo. Two men on galloping horses, one shooting an arrow at the same tiger, his companion looking back and shooting an arrow. An elephant approaching carrying a mahaut and rider. Two men on galloping horses, one shooting an arrow, the other throwing a lance at two deer running away.
28. Similar to 10.
29. Two large alligators, as before.
30. A repetition of 5.
31. A duplicate of 7.
32. A repetition of 2.
33. Similar to 27.
34. Tiger holding a deer by its throat and turning it on its back, two deer and two fawn running away. A monkey climbing a tree, and a man on a tree aiming a gun at the tiger.
35. Repetition of 12.

What standard of measure may have been used in the construction of these buildings cannot be easily ascertained, but the English foot seems to adapt itself for taking measurements where the *háth*, or cubit, would give some trouble. There is also an indescribable peculiarity in some of the decorations that seems to indicate the hand of an European architect, or at least some one who had some acquaintance with European decorative art: the structure is not ornamented in a purely oriental manner, and although the Asamese style of arch in doorway is prevalent, yet the massive stone perforated blocks for the reception of the heavy door hinges, which are found in every room, look more as if copied from some Roman building than the production of an effeminate race such as the Asamese have been. The brickwork strongly resembles many specimens of Roman architecture now existing in England: large flat tile bricks, the double rows to form arches,

the mortar mixed with broken brick, are identically the same. The solidity of the buildings, some of which, not more than fifteen feet square, have walls five feet thick, would indicate that earthquakes were as prevalent in those days as now, and perhaps more destructive; yet in spite of their massive construction very few have escaped the effects of the shocks, for great rents are visible in nearly every pucca building of any antiquity in this district.

Between Jaysāgar and Sibsāgar are numerous dhols and tombs and a large two-storeyed brick building, called the Rangghar, which is in a fairly perfect state. The smaller buildings are buried in long grass. When an opportunity occurs, a careful investigation shall be made of the most interesting of them.

Note on the Chittagong Copper-plate, dated Śaka 1165, or A. D. 1243, presented to the Society by A. L. CLAY, Esq., C. S.—By PRANNAṬH PANDIT, M. A.

(With a plate.)

The plate, transcript and translation of which have been given below, measures about $7\frac{1}{4}$ inches in length and 7 inches in breadth, with an extreme thickness of one-eighth of an inch. It has a curvature at the top, which would seem to have been designed to serve the purpose of a handle. The extreme length from the tip of the curvature is over 9 inches. In this space are delineated, on the first face the figure of a crescent surmounted by a sun, symbolical of the gift's enduring* as long as the sun and the moon shall exist in the heavens; and on the second face, the figure of Vishnu riding on Garuḍa, which would denote that the dynasty was Vaishnava in religion, a fact borne out by the three names mentioned in the plate, which are all synonyms of Vishnu, and also by the fact of the first sloka being addressed to that divinity. The plate is engraved on both sides with characters which bear a close resemblance to those on the Tipara copper-plate, translated by Colebrooke in Vol. IX. of the Asiatic Researches, and Vol. II. of his Miscellaneous Essays; and to use the language there used "the character agrees nearly with that now in use in Bengal; but some of the letters bear a close resemblance to the writing of *Tirhut*."† The engraver has been hard-pressed for space on the second face, and was obliged towards the conclusion

* Compare *आचन्द्रार्कम् आस्तान्* in sloka 6 of the Tipara copper-plate, Colebrooke, Vol. II. p. 243, *आचन्द्रार्कवर्षवृत्तिस्यितिसमकालीनः* in the Gurjara grant in J. R. A. S., New series, Vol. I, p. 275. *चन्द्रार्कवर्षवृत्तिसमकालं* in the Ujjayini plate, Colebrooke, II, p. 308.

† Miscellaneous Essays by H. T. Colebrooke. London, 1837, Vol. II, p. 242.