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I.—*On the Colossal Idols of Bamian.* By Lieut. Alexander Burnes,  
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ON the 23rd, we reached *Bamian*, which is celebrated for its idols and excavations. These caves are to be seen in all parts of the valley for about eight miles, and they still form the residence of the greater part of the population. They are called "*Samak*" by the people. A detached hill in the middle of the valley is quite honey-combed with them, and brings to our recollection the Troglydytes of ALEXANDER's historians: it is called the city of *Ghulghula*, and consists of a continued succession of caves in every direction, which are said to have been the work of a king named *Julal*. The hill of *Bamian* is formed of hardened clay and pebbles, which renders its excavation a matter of little difficulty, but the great extent to which this has been carried excites attention. Caves are found on both sides of the valley, but the greater number are on the northern side, where we found the idols: altogether they form an immense city. Labourers are frequently hired to dig in the ruins, and their labours are rewarded by rings, reliques, coins, &c. They generally bear Cufic inscriptions, and are of a later date than the age of MUHAMMED. These excavated caves or houses have no pretensions to architectural ornament, being no more than squared holes in the hill: some of them are finished in the shape of a dome, and have a carved frieze below the point from which the cupola springs. The inhabitants tell many remarkable tales of the caves of *Bamian*, one in particular, that a mother lost her child among them, and recovered it after a lapse of 12 years! The tale need not be believed, but it will convey an idea of the extent of the works. There are excavations on all sides of the idols, and in the larger one half a regiment might find quarters.

*Bamián* is subject to *Cábul*, and would appear to be a place of high antiquity; it is perhaps the city which ALEXANDER founded at the base of Paropamisus before entering Bactria. The country indeed from *Cábul* to *Balkh* is yet styled '*Bakhtar-zamín*,' or the *Bakhtar* country. The name of *Bamián* is said to be derived from its elevation, '*Bám*,' signifying balcony, and the affix '*ian*,' country. It may be so called from the caves rising over one another in the rock.

There are no reliques of Asiatic antiquity which have more roused the curiosity of the learned than the colossal idols of *Bamián*. It is fortunately in my power to present a drawing of these images. They consist of two figures, a male and a female; the one named SALSAL, the other SHAN MAMA. The figures are cut in alto relievo in the face of the hill, and represent two colossal images. The male is the largest of the two, and about 120 feet high. It occupies a front of 70 feet, and the niche in which it is excavated extends about that depth into the hill. This idol is mutilated, both legs having been fractured by cannon, and the countenance above the mouth is destroyed. The lips are very large, the ears long and pendent, and there appears to have been a tiara on the head. The figure is covered by a mantle, which hangs over it in all parts, and seems to have been formed of a kind of plaster, and the image has been studded in various places with wooden pins to assist in fixing it. The figure itself is without symmetry, and there is no elegance in the drapery. The hands which held out the mantle have been both broken.

The female figure is more perfect than the male, and has been dressed in the same manner. It is cut out of the same hill, at the distance of 200 yards, but is not half the size. One could not discover that her ladyship was not a brother or a son of the twin colossus, but for the information of the natives. The drawing which is attached will convey better notions of these idols than a more elaborate description. The square and arched apertures which appear in the plate represent the entrance of the different caves or excavations, and through these there is a road which leads up to the summit of both the images. In the lower caves the caravans to and from *Cábul* generally halt, and the upper ones are used as granaries by the community.

I have now to note the most remarkable curiosity in the idols of *Bamián*. The niches of both have been at one time plastered and ornamented with paintings of human figures, which have now disappeared from all parts but that immediately over the heads of the idols. Here the colours are as vivid and the paintings as distinct as in the Egyp-

tian tombs. There is little variety in the design of these figures, which represent the bust of a woman with a knot of hair on the head and a plaid half over the breast, the whole surrounded by a halo, and the head again by another halo. In one part I could trace a group of three female figures following each other. The execution of the work is bad, and by no means superior to the pictures which the Chinese make in imitation of an European artist.

The traditions of the people regarding the idols of *Bamian* are vague and unsatisfactory. It is stated that they were excavated about the Christian era by a tribe of kaffirs (infidels), to represent a king named *SALSAL* and his wife, who ruled in a distant country, and was worshipped for his greatness. The Hindús assert them to have been excavated by the Pandús, and that they are mentioned in the great epic poem of the *Mahábhárat*. Certain it is that the Hindús on passing these idols at this day hold up their hands in adoration, though they do not make offerings, which may have fallen into disuse since the rise of Islam. I am aware that a conjecture attributes these images to the Buddhists, and the long ears of the great figure make it probable enough. I do not trace any resemblance to the colossal figures in the caves of Salsette near Bombay, but the shape of the head is not unlike that of the great trifaced idol of Elephanta. At *Manikeala*, in the *Panjáb*, near the celebrated '*Tope*,' I found a glass or cornelian antique which exactly resembles this head. In the paintings over the idols I discover a close resemblance to the images of the Jain temples in Western India, in mount *Abú*, and at *Girvan* and *Palitana* in *Katywar*. I judge the figures to be female, but they are very rude, though the colours in which they are sketched are bright and beautiful. There is nothing in the images of *Bamian* to evince any great advancement in the arts, or what the most common people might not have executed with success. They cannot certainly be referred to the Greek invasion, nor are they mentioned by any of the historians of *ALEXANDER'S* expedition. I find in the history of *TIMOURLANE*, that both the idols and excavations of *Bamian* are mentioned by *SHERIF UD DIN*, his historian. The idols are described to be so high that none of the archers could strike the head. They are called *LAS* and *MANAB*, two celebrated idols which are mentioned in the Koran; and the writer also alludes to the road which led up to them from the interior of the hill. There are no inscriptions at *Bamian* to guide us in their history, and the whole of the later traditions are so mixed up with *ALI*, the son-in-law of *MUHAMMED*, who we well know never came into this part of Asia, that they are most unsatisfactory. It is by no

means improbable that we owe the idols of *Bamián* to the caprice of some person of rank, who resided in this cave-digging neighbourhood, and sought for an immortality in the colossal images which we have now described.

II.—*Account of the Earthquake at Kathmandú.* By A. Campbell, Esq.  
Assistant Surgeon, attached to the Residency.

On the 26th of August last, about 6 o'clock P. M. a smart shock of earthquake was experienced throughout the valley, and the neighbouring hills, westward in the valley of *Nayakot* and *Dúny Byas*; eastward at *Panoutí*, *Banappa*, *Dulkele*, and *Pholam Chók*; and southward at *Chitlong*, *Chisagarhy*, *Etounda*, and *Bissoulea*. The shock was preceded by a rumbling noise from the eastward. The motion of the earth was undulatory, as of a large raft floating on the ocean, and the direction of the swell was from north-east towards south-west. The shock lasted about 1 minute. At 10-45\* P. M. of the same day another shock of equal duration and of the same character occurred, and at 10-58, a third and most violent one commenced: at first it was a gentle motion of the earth, accompanied by a slight rumbling noise; soon however it increased to a fearful degree, the earth heaved as a ship at sea, the trees waved from their roots, and houses moved to and fro far from the perpendicular. Horses and other cattle, terrified, broke from their stalls, and it was difficult to walk without staggering as a landsman does on ship-board. This shock lasted for about three minutes in its fullest force. And the following is as correct an estimate as can be ascertained (without official documents) of the damage done by it to life and property throughout the great valley and neighbouring districts of Nipal. It is believed that the two first shocks were harmless†.

\* Not by chronometer, but by a good-going clock, which stopped during the great shock. Its pendulum vibrated north and south. [If the clock was set by the sun, the shock must have been 51m. earlier than in Calcutta.—ED.]

† Doctor Campbell's subsequent letters inform us, that there have been frequent shocks of less violence since the above, many of which (on the 4th and 18th Oct. particularly) were felt at Calcutta, Monghyr, Chittagong, Allahabad, and Jabalpur, nearly simultaneously. On the 26th Oct. he writes, "At 10h. 45m. A. M. a sharp shock of the dangerous or undulating kind occurred. The embassy has returned from China, and I am informed that the great shock was not felt at Lassa, so that it would appear to have been confined to India within the Himálaya."—ED.