

JOURNAL
OF
THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY.

ART. XIV.—*The Rock-Cut Caves and Statues of Bamian.*¹
By Capt. the Hon. M. G. TALBOT, R.E. With Notes hereon, and on Sketches of Capt. P. J. MAITLAND, Intelligence Branch, Q.-M.-Gen. Department, by W. SIMPSON, Esq., Hon. Assoc. R.I.B.A., etc.; and an additional Note of Capt. Maitland's own.

(Communicated through the President of the Royal Asiatic Society.)

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT.

THE letter which is about to be read,¹ not having been prepared for submission to the Society, may require a few introductory explanations.

Bámíán, a site of considerable fame in the travels and expeditions of the last sixty or seventy years, stands at a height of some 8500 feet, in a valley of the region occupied by Hazára tribes, on the chief road between Kabul and Turkestan, and almost close to the northern base of that part of the Indian Caucasus which is known, from one of its prominent peaks, as Koh-i-bábá.

The passes on the Kabul side of Bámíán reach to 11,000 and 12,000 feet, and those north of it, towards Turkestan, to not much less.

The stream draining the valley of Bámíán is one of the chief sources of the river known as the Surkháb or Áksarai River, a considerable tributary of the Oxus, into which it flows some thirty-two miles N.W. of Kunduz.

The prominences of the cliffs which line the valley of

¹ At a Meeting of the Royal Asiatic Society on the 15th March, 1886.

Bámíán are crowned by the remains of numerous massive towers, whilst their precipitous faces are for six or seven miles pierced by an infinity of anciently excavated caves, some of which are still occupied as dwellings. The actual site of the old city is marked by mounds and remains of walls, and on an isolated rock in the middle of the valley are the considerable ruins of what appear to have been the acropolis, now known as Ghúlghúla.

But the most famous antiquities of Bámíán are certain standing figures of enormous size, carved in the conglomerate rock on the sides of the gorge. These images, which have been much injured by cannon-shot, are cut in niches; both images and niches have been coated with plaster, whilst the plastered surface of the niches has been painted with figures. As seen from the rock of Ghúlghúla, Bámíán, with its numerous grottoes, and with the singular red colour of its soil, presents an impressive aspect of desolation and mystery.

The history of Bámíán is very obscure. There is nothing on which to found an identification of the place with any name handed down in the classical geographers or historians of Alexander. The earliest mention of the kingdom and city of Bámíán is in the travels of (the Chinese) Hwen T'sang, A.D. 630; but his account does not determine the race either of the inhabitants or of the reigning prince. We know also that at a much later date Bámíán was, for half a century, the seat of a branch of the Ghorí or Shansabánya dynasty, which came to an end in 1214. Major Raverty, in his translation of the *Tabakat-i-Násiri* (p. 427), quotes Persian historical writers to the effect that the proper name of the city was Rásif, or the like. But it is no uncommon circumstance in Asiatic geography for the name of a kingdom or territory to usurp and practically to extinguish the name of the capital. In 1222 the place was taken and utterly destroyed by Chinghíz Khán, and I am not aware of any later records of Bámíán's history. The character, however, of the ruins of Ghúlghúla, and concurring local tradition, indicate that the city must have been rebuilt since the time of Chinghíz, and again destroyed.

The great idols, as has already been said, have constituted the matter attracting chiefly attention to Bámíán. They are not, I believe, alluded to by any of the early Arab geographers, at least in any works that have been printed. Burnes alleges that they are mentioned by Sharafu-d dín 'Alí of Yezd in his *History of Timur*; if so, this (1424) would be the earliest Persian mention: but I have not been able to find such a passage in the translation by Petis de la Croix. Hyde, in his *History of the Religion of the Ancient Persians* (ed. 1760, pp. 229-230), quotes mention of them from two Persian writers, viz. the *Masálik wa Mamálik*¹ and the *Farhang Jahángiri*. There is also mention of them in the *A'in-i-Akbari* (Blochmann's Text, vol. i. p. 590, and Gladwin's Trans. vol. ii. p. 168). Hyde, whose book was first published in 1700, was apparently the first European writer to speak of the images.² After him we have Wilford, in vol. vi. of the *Asiatic Researches*. Wilford's exertions in collecting knowledge were most praiseworthy, but, unfortunately for his reputation, he never would publish the knowledge, which he acquired with great labour and cost, without mixing it up with a large amount of his own fantastical and baseless speculations, to say nothing of the forgeries which were imposed upon him. Moorcroft (*Travels*, vol. ii. pp. 387 *seqq.*) was the first of our English or European travellers actually to see these remains, though his account was not published till after that of Alexander Burnes, who passed Bámíán on his way to Bokhara in 1832, and gave an account of it in the second volume of the *Journal of the Asiat. Soc. of Bengal*, as well as (somewhat later) in his *Travels*. Masson (*Various Journeys*, etc., ii. 382 *seqq.*), Mohun Lal, Sir Vincent Eyre, and others have since seen and given their impres-

¹ Ritter quotes this from Hyde as if it were the work of Ibn Haukal bearing the same name; but this is a mistake.

² I have sometimes thought that Friar Odoric had seen the great idol of Bámíán, from expressions he uses about the *Terrible Valley*: "In hac etiam valle ab uno latere ejus in ipso saxo unam faciem hominis maximam et terribilem ego vidi, quae in tantum terribilis erat quod prae nimio timore spiritum me perdere penitus credebam." But other particulars indicate that he may rather have passed by the Panjhír Valley. See *Cathay*, etc., pp. 157-158.

sions, the last account preceding the letter now before us being contained in the Russian Narrative of Dr. J. L. Yavorsky (St. Petersburg, 1882). Mr. Delmar Morgan, ever ready with help, has kindly furnished me with a translation of the passages relating to Bámíán in this last work, but I find nothing in them of sufficient value or novelty to transcribe.¹

The best of the modern accounts of Bámíán till the present time is, I incline to think, Moorcroft's. His estimate of the height of the images is much nearer the truth than that of Burnes, whilst he distinctly recognizes the Buddhistic character of the remains. Elphinstone, writing in 1814, however, already says: "The learned in Indian antiquities are of opinion that these idols are connected with the worship of Boodh, and their situation strongly reminds one of the colossal statues at the entrance of the great temples, supposed to belong to the religion of Boodh, in the midst of the city of caves, which is to be seen at Canara (Kanheri) in Salsette." — *Caubool* (orig. 4to. edition), p. 487. I do not know to what expression of opinion by the learned, Elphinstone can here refer, except to the words of Wilford (*Asiat. Res.* vol. vi. p. 463), who says the place was considered at an early period to be the metropolis of the sect of Buddha, whence *Buddha-Bámián*, which he alleges the Mussulmans corrupted into *But-* (or Idol) Bámíán. But any idol would be *but*, Buddha or not.

Wilford got his information on the subject, at least in part, from a Sayad called Miyán Asad Sháh, who had visited Bámíán ten or twelve times.

With regard to Elphinstone's allusion to Salsette, Masson also says: "I have recently visited the Buddhist temples in the island of Salsette, and certainly there can be no doubt of the resemblance between the colossal figures of Buddha in them and those of the Bámíán niches" (*Various Journeys*, vol. ii. p. 384).

The publication in French, by Julien, of the Life of Hwen

¹ See also in *Panjab Notes and Queries* for February, 1886, p. 84.

T'sang (Paris, 1853), showed how just Moorcroft's surmise had been. The Chinese traveller found at Bámíán ten convents and about 1000 monks belonging to the "Little Vehicle." He goes on: "To the N.E. of the royal city there is a mountain, on the declivity of which is placed a stone figure of Buddha, erect, in height 140 or 150 feet. Its golden hues sparkle on every side, and its precious ornaments dazzle the eyes by their brightness. To the east of this spot there is a convent, which was built by a former king of the country. To the east of the convent there is a standing figure of Sákya Buddha, made of metallic stone" (in Julien *laiton*, i.e. brass), "in height 100 feet. It has been cast in different parts and joined together, and then placed in a completed form as it stands. To the east of the city twelve or thirteen *li* there is a convent, in which there is a figure of Buddha lying in a sleeping position, as when he attained *Nirvāna*. The figure is in length about 1000 feet or so." (*Beal's Transl. of the Si-yu-ki*, i. 50-51.)

From this passage we appear to learn that the second of the images was originally covered with sheets of brass; also, I think, that the larger one was gilt, as is indeed antecedently probable.

Regarding the sleeping Buddha a little more is to be said. These figures are to be found in all Buddhist countries; I have described one near Pagán in the narrative of Sir Arthur Phayre's Mission to Ava, p. 52. One in Ceylon is mentioned in Major Forbes's book (vol. i. p. 370). And gigantic figures of the same kind, indeed, at Kanchau in N.W. China, are mentioned by Marco Polo (bk. i. ch. 44), by Shah Rukh's envoys to Peking, and by Ramusio's Persian friend Hajji Mahommed (see *Cathay and the Way Thither*, p. cciii, and p. ccxviii).

Now it is remarkable that Masson and Mohun Lal both mention a stone object in the neighbourhood of Bámíán, which is known in the legends of the natives as an *Ashdahá* or dragon, regarded as a monster destroyed by 'Ali. The most distinct account of this object is contained in a paper by Lieut.-General E. Kaye, of the Royal Artillery (Bengal),

which was printed for the first time in the Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society for 1879, though the observations date from 1840. He says:—"On the opposite side of the valley (*i.e.* from the images), about a mile to the west, a stony gully leads into the hills; a short way up this there is a nearly isolated rock, on the flat summit of which there is in relief a recumbent figure bearing a rude resemblance to a huge lizard, and near the neck of the reptile there is a red splash, as of blood. This is called the Azdabar, or dragon, said to have been slain by Ali or some Mahomedan saint of bygone days, and an indentation in the rock close by is held to be the gigantic footprint of the slayer" (p. 249).¹

In the same volume (p. 338) I made a suggestion to which I now recall attention, that this Dragon (which, however, General Kaye terms "a recumbent figure in relief") is really the Nirváṇa Buddha of Hwen T'sang. There is a difficulty, no doubt, in the *direction*, which the modern travellers give as west or north-west of Bámíán, whilst Hwen T'sang places it to the eastward. Another difficulty has been suggested from the account of Mohun Lál, who calls the dragon "fifty feet in length." But in this there is probably some mistake. For Masson says this Azhdahá of Bámíán is "analogous in character to that of Bisút, but of much larger size" (vol. ii. p. 395). Now, turning to his account of the Azhdaha of Bisút (the province immediately south of Koh-i-Baba), we find it thus described: "The Azhdha of Bisút is, indeed a natural curiosity, which the creative imagination of the Hazáras supposes to be the petrified remains of a dragon, slain by their champion Hazrat Ali. . . . It is, geologically speaking, of volcanic formation, and a long projected mass of rock, about one hundred and seventy yards in length," etc. "I afterwards found that an analogous mass of rocks, but of much more imposing size, occurs in the vicinity of Bámíán, and is alike supposed to represent a petrified dragon" (*ib.* pp. 357-359).

¹ Both this dragon and another in the neighbourhood are mentioned, as Sir F. Goldsmid kindly points out, in Dáúd Khán's Visit to Afghanistan, etc., 1872, printed by the Panjáb Government.

I will conclude by remarking that some one has suggested (I cannot remember who, it may have been General Cunningham, or it may have been *moi qui vous parle*), that those enormously long graves, which in Afghanistan and India are so often shown as the tombs of holy giants (*chális gazi*, and what not), really mark the sites of Buddha-in-Nirvána images.¹ Such graves are mentioned, in Bisút, by Masson (p. 340), and in Laghmán, the graves of Lot and Lamech, by the same (vol. iii. pp. 195-197). The same traveller also mentions that these long graves are especially numerous in the valleys of Ningrahár, which we can hardly doubt to represent the *Nagarahára* of Hwen T'sang, a region which abounded to profusion in Buddhist shrines and relics of every kind. There is a famous grave of the same kind, if I remember rightly, at Ayodhya, a site which was also rich in Buddhist shrines and memorials.

LETTER.

Camp, Haibak, Nov. 13th, 1885.

MY DEAR SIMPSON,

Maitland and I have made the long-talked-of trip through the Hazara country to Bamian, and we are now on our way to Turkistan, having crossed the Kara Kotal to-day. We have had a very fair time of it, but the weather has been bad. We got our first snowstorm on our second march from Daulatyar on the 10th of October, and did not get free from it till we descended into Yak Urang,² at the head of the Balkhao. After that we had mostly good weather till we got to Bamian. There have been one or two falls since. This has, of course, made it unpleasant and hindered my surveying very much. However I have got my work triangulation and plane tabling all right so far. We saw nothing of any interest in the Hari Rud basin, except a really ancient rock-cut inscription in the Tangi Azao near Shahrak; copies of this I have sent to Cunningham and Rawlinson, but have

¹ As this is going to press, I find that the originator of the suggestion was my friend Mr. W. Simpson. He is now less confident in the theory; but to me it seems a highly probable one.—H. Y.

² *Yaka Aulang*. See Erskine's Baber, p. 211.

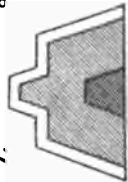
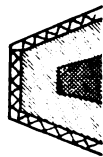
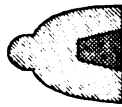
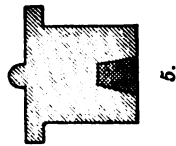
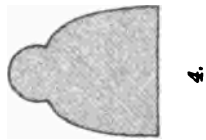
had no answers yet. In the Balkhao valley there are two or three old sites. First and lowest down, Chahilburj. This I did not see, but I send Maitland's description: "Chahilburj is 28 miles from Zári, on the road to Balkh by the Balkhao, standing on a semi-isolated hill at the point at which a large ravine, down which the road comes, joins the main stream. It is at the East end of the Sokhtagi Valley. The road at present forks just below the fort, so that it commands the junction. The remains are those of a fortress of considerable size, and consist of three lines of walls with towers at very close intervals. The walls are in parts fairly perfect, but from a casual inspection I should say that the lower wall was never carried all round the hill. It certainly existed on the south side and on the east side, though now carried away by a landslip. The original height of the walls I should estimate at 50 or 60 feet: the towers are of the same height and large diameter. The walls and towers are all built of very large sun-dried bricks, except the lower courses, which are of stone and mud.

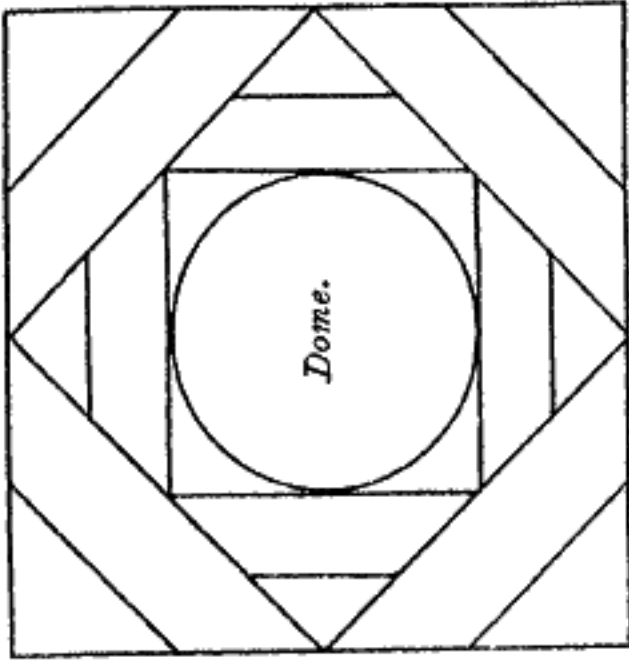
The shape of the loopholes is peculiar (see Pl. I. Fig. 1). I noticed three tiers of such loopholes in a tower still standing on the higher portion of the hill.

The three lines of walls are all about the same height, but being built on a steep slope each commands the one outside it. Inside the walls, remains of some buildings were visible. The plateau west of and below the fort is inclosed by a wall originally 10 or 12 feet high and several feet thick, built of rough stone imbedded in mud. The space inclosed may have been the site of a small town. There is a tradition that a portion of it was originally the site of a bazaar.

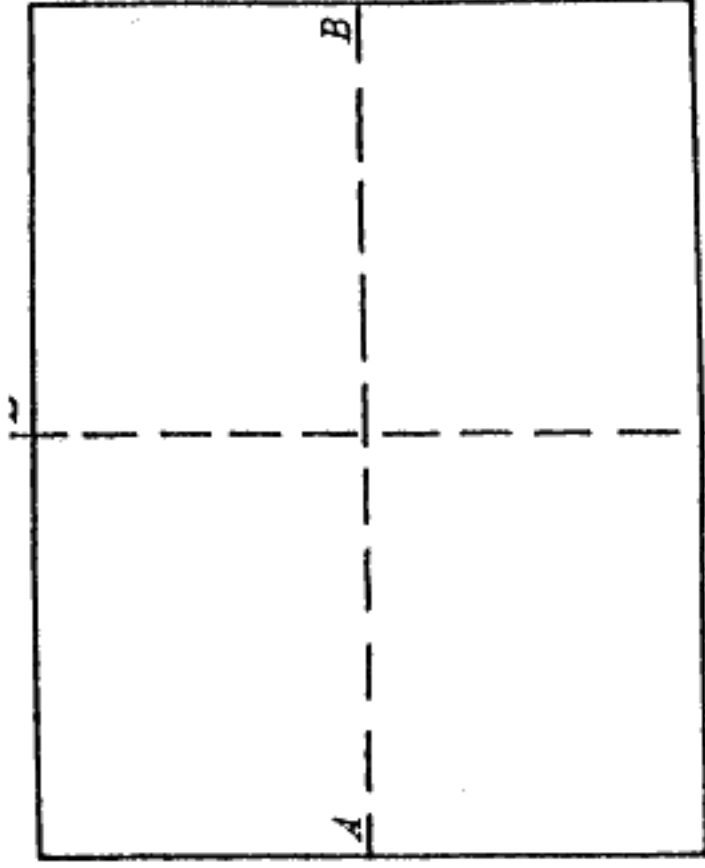
On the south side of the fort, and under a low scarp facing the base of the hill on which the fort is built, are several chambers, some of which are slightly sunk into the face of the scarp and appear to have been divided by mud-brick walls: some are sunk almost entirely into the hill and below the surface of the ground. They have round arches and round arched recesses."

Another place is the Shahri Barbar, some 35 miles higher

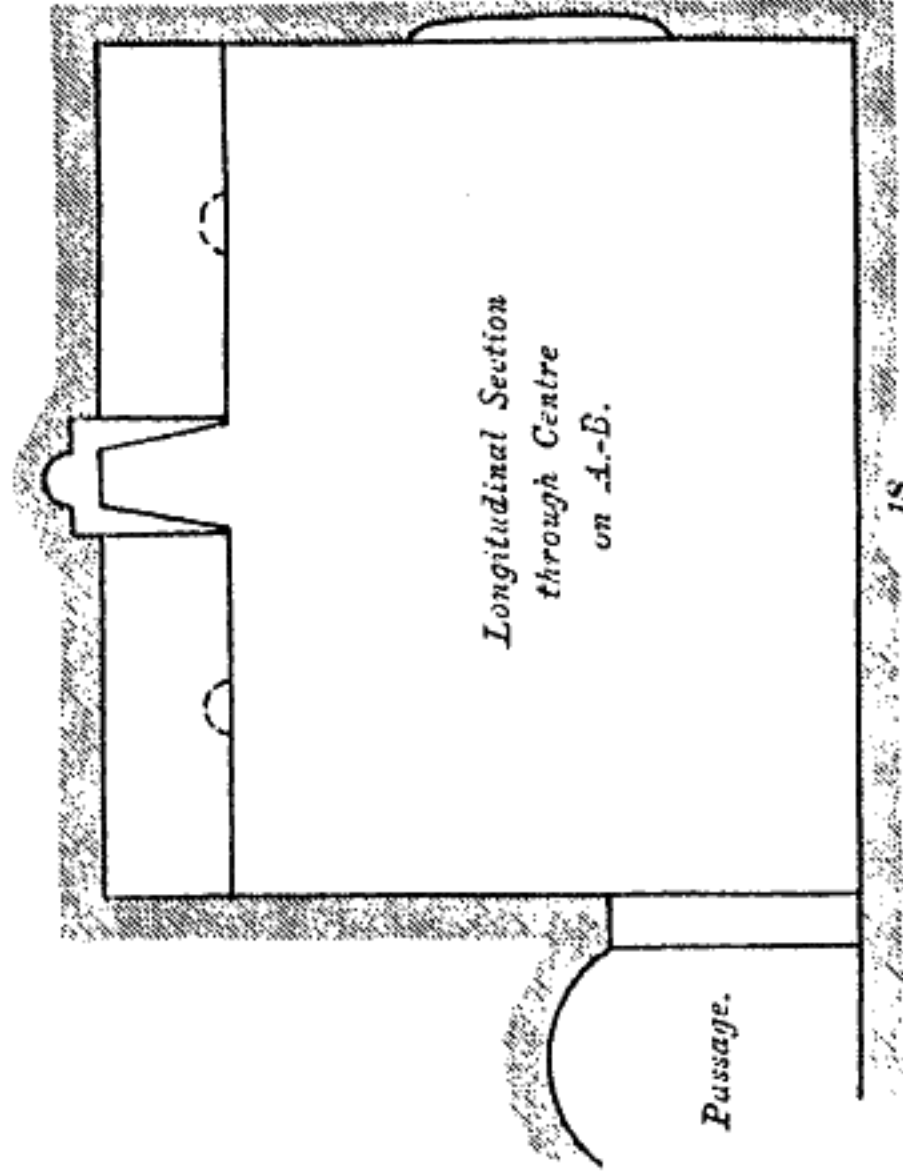




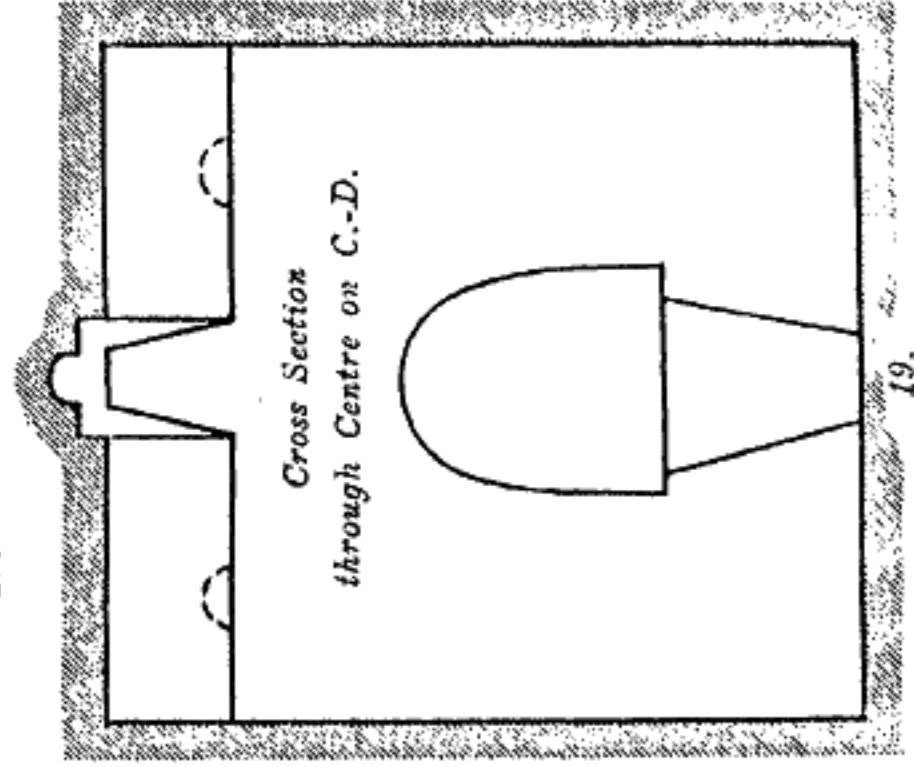
16.



17. C1



18.



19.

up the Balkhao than Chahilburj. It is situated in the fork at the junction of the water from the Band i Amir with that of the Sarikol and Firozbahar. It consists only of a wall built round the north and only accessible side of a plateau about 1200 feet above the valley, and must only have been used as a place of refuge. The wall is built of uncut but selected stone, all of much the same size and shape, roughly a cube of nine inch side, arranged in straight courses sometimes breaking joint, sometimes not. The wall is eight to twelve feet high and about eight feet thick. In a low portion of the plateau there are four holes eight to twenty feet deep, apparently to collect rain or snow-water. There are two small mud buildings. At one point, built in the thickness of the wall, are some small domed chambers: the domes are built in the usual manner.

In two nalas, called respectively Darali and Sarikol, at the head of the Balkhao, are a good many caves—50 or 60, I dare say. Those in the Darali were all inhabited, and mud walls had been built in front of them, hiding the shape of their doorways.

In the Sarikol valley I visited several. They were mostly situated a little way up the cliff and awkward to get at. Several had ledges at the inner end three or four feet wide and one foot high, as if for sitting or sleeping on. The most perfect one was a passage twenty-five to thirty feet long, nine feet high, and nine to ten feet wide. The door was narrower, as shown in the sketch (Pl. I. Fig. 2).

At the lower end of the Sarikol Nala, and about six miles above Shahri Barbar, is an old fort called Gáwargin. I was told that its original name was Gabarger. It consists of walls and towers of sun-dried bricks, built on both sides of a ravine, on nearly inaccessible rocks. The only curious thing about it is a staircase cut inside the rock, descending from the highest point down no one knows where. The chief of the place told me he had been down seventy steps. He expects to find great treasures at the bottom.

After seeing Shahri Ghulghulah and Zohak, Maitland and I came to the conclusion that these three places, Chahil-

burj, Barbar, and Gawargin, might well be of the same date. Just below the fort of Gawargin is a mound which looks like a tope. Near the top a piece of flat wall is exposed, which must, I should say, have been part of the relic chamber, as it appears to have been in the centre of the tope.

I spent four days at Bamian, but could give only a very small portion of that time in visiting the antiquities.

To begin with the figures: there are five.

1. First the big idol, male. The passage up to the top of this is broken away, so I measured it with my theodolite and found it to be 173 feet high. It is sunk in a niche, so as to be protected from the weather. The shape of the niche is something like Pl. I. Fig. 3.

2. A female figure 120 feet high, measured by Maitland with a tape. The passage up to the top is still accessible.

There are paintings on the roofs of the niches of both these figures. In the case of the latter some have been copied. Both figures are hewn out of the conglomerate rock, but the finishing, drapery, etc., was all added by putting on stucco. The niche of the female figure is irregular, and looks as if it had been left unfinished.

3. A smaller figure, 50 or 60 feet high, estimated. This figure has almost entirely disappeared.

4. A seated figure about 25 to 30 feet high, in a niche. This figure looks as if it had been cut out and prepared for stucco, but the stucco had never been applied. Shape of niche shown in Pl. I. Fig. 4.

5. A standing figure about one mile from the others. Unfortunately, owing to a misunderstanding, we never visited this.

No. 4 also has paintings, some of which have been copied. The caves are innumerable, they extend for miles. The best ones are close to the female figure. The doorways are mostly sunk well 10 or 15 feet into the rock, with a porch excavated outside. I show drawings of the most remarkable (see Pl. I. from Figs. 5 to 14).

Most of the caves in good order are now inhabited, so I could not visit them; of those I did visit most had domed

roofs, the floor being square. The conversion of the square into a circle, preparatory to the springing of the dome, is effected or rather indicated in the manner used in the present day with kacha bricks, that is, by a succession of arches at the corners. Looking at the corner from the centre of the cave it appears thus (see Pl. I. Fig. 15).

Fig. 16 seems to be connected with a very curious cave, somewhat hard to draw. Its plan is an oblong 16 by 20 feet. The roof is highest in the centre, a square being cut out containing a geometrical pattern enclosing a hemispherical dome about $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet in diameter (see Pl. I. Figs. 17, 18, 19).

I won't swear to the accuracy of these drawings, as they are done from very hurried sketches, but they are something like. Maitland made a freehand sketch of the roof of this cave, of which I will send a sketch if I have time to make one.

The caves near the idols are all connected by rambling passages and staircases cut in the rock.

Many of the caves have paintings, but we could not see them as the caves were full of grass, etc., stored for winter.

In Shahri Ghulghulah we saw nothing remarkable.

Zohak is a wonderful fort as regards situation and multiplication of lines of defence. It is fairly well preserved in parts, so much so that the natives say it was not captured but abandoned. Some domed chambers in it are the exact facsimiles of the domed caves above mentioned.

I saw no Vihara caves. I inquired about them, and was told that there were some with rooms round a central passage or hall; but as they were occupied, I did not see them.

They were described as being in one or two cases a square or rectangular room, with a small room opening off from it on three sides, the side of the entrance being the exception. I was also told that there was one cave which had six rooms opening off from it, that is, two from each of the three sides. I think there are very few of these Vihara caves. The different shaped caves I have shown are all mixed up together. It would be impossible to pick out any one lot from their style as having been executed at one particular time; at

least, so it seemed to me from a very casual inspection. Many caves have fallen partly, at least their porches and original doorways have gone. Many others have had their doorways and porches partly bricked up, so that their shape is lost.

I could see no sign of the sleeping Buddha. I have seen caves more or less all the way to here, Haibak, but nothing new or remarkable; also mediæval ruins.

No time for more. Excuse a very rambling letter, but I cannot afford time to put it into shape. Hoping it may interest you,

Believe me, Yours sincerely,

M. G. TALBOT.

NOTES TO CAPT. TALBOT'S LETTER, BY WILLIAM SIMPSON.

A number of travellers have passed Bamian at various times, and have given notices of the colossal figures and the caves, but they have brought away only vague details of them. Captain Talbot's letter supplies us with the first instalment of accurate information regarding this wonderful place; and the details are so valuable, that I scarcely like to utter the wish that he had sent us more of them, as such an expression might seem to indicate a want of thankfulness for what we have received. We must remember that Captain Talbot is very devoted to his duties in the Survey Department, and that he was only four days at Bamian.

As far as I can make out from Captain Talbot's letter, he and Captain Maitland, one of the political department with the Afghan Boundary Commission, came from the north-west, where the camp of the Commission was during the summer months, and dropped into the valley of the Hari Rud, probably on the east of Obek. They followed up the valley as far as Daulatyar, which is near the junction of the Tingab and the Jangal Rivers; from this they moved east to the sources of the Balkh River,—called in the letter *Balkh-háo(áb)*. Capt. Maitland here visited Chahilburj, on this stream, from whom Captain Talbot quotes an account of that

place: the route after that was still east to Bamian, from which they went north on the regular road towards Khulum; and the letter is written at Haibak, about forty miles to the south of Khulum. The ground gone over is, the most of it, new to us. Ferrier passed from somewhere about Balkh or Khulum to Herat, but his route was to the westward of Talbot's; he struck the Hari Rud Valley, passing by Singlak, about twenty or thirty miles on the west of Daulatyar. Ferrier mentions caves at Singlak, but Captain Talbot found nothing of interest, except an inscription, in the Hari Rud Valley. It is not till he gets east to the Balkh River that he mentions groups of caves, but that is so near to Bamian, that they all might have been off-shoots from that place, which may have enjoyed the character of a religious centre.

Captain Talbot gives us what we may now accept as the true height of the two principal figures. Various estimates have been given by travellers. Sir Vincent Eyre—who visited Bamian while a prisoner in the first Afghan war—made statements regarding them, and came very near the truth. The female figure he gives as 120 feet, which turns out to agree exactly with Captain Maitland's measurement. The male figure he puts at 160 feet, which was only thirteen feet from the truth. Sir Vincent Eyre describes the holes in the figures for pieces of wood to be inserted, the object of which was to make the plaster or stucco hold. Captain Talbot gives us an outline of the form of the niches (Pl. I. Fig. 3) in which these figures stand. This agrees perfectly with a sketch I have, made by Sir Vincent Eyre,¹ and the trefoil arch is a feature we are familiar with in the Jalálábád remains, as well as those in the Yusufzai country, and in the Cashmere architecture. There is a niche very like this, only smaller, in a cliff above the Fíl Khána Tope at Jalálábád, and it was from the authority of Sir Vincent Eyre's sketch that

¹ I give in Pl. II. a rough copy of Sir Vincent Eyre's sketch. I do not think it was ever published, but if it ever appeared, the drawing is not well known to archaeologists. Burnes gives a highly-finished lithograph in his work of this figure, but I do not think it is so accurate; this can be judged of so far by comparing the shape of the top of the niche with the outline given by Captain Talbot. It will be seen that Eyre's sketch is much nearer to the truth.



William Simpson

The Large Male Figure at Bamian.

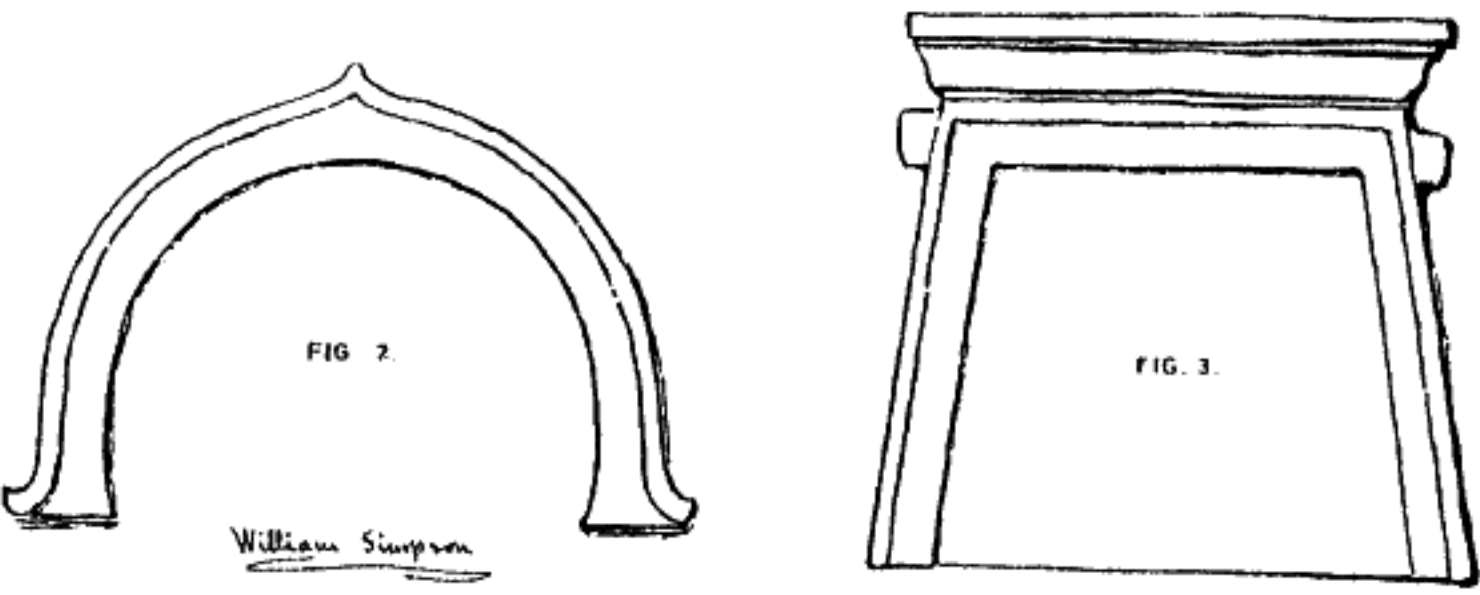
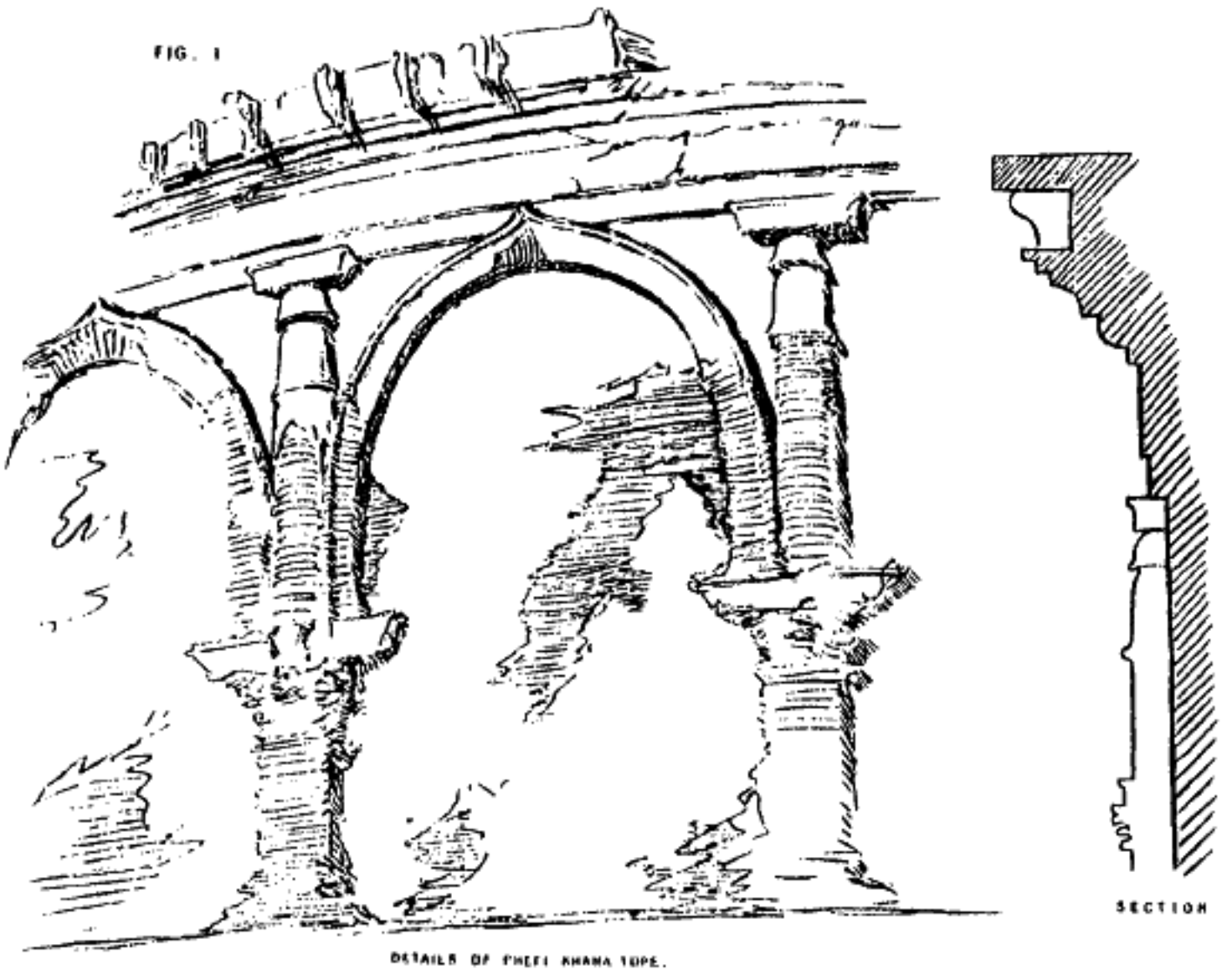
From a sketch made in 1812, by Lieut-General Sir Vincent Eyre, K.C.S.I.

I described it as having had a statue of Buddha in it. This peculiar arch is also given in Pl. I. Figs. 4, 6, and 7.

Fig. 5 in Pl. I. is a form I cannot pretend to explain. The small semicircular form on the top seems to be a not uncommon characteristic, for it appears again in Figs. 13, 18, and 19; and in Figs. 12 and 14 we may perhaps have the same structural idea in another form. The origin of the trefoil arch is, I think, not yet quite clear; and in this peculiar feature, in which we see what may be possibly varieties of it, there is just a chance of new light coming to us on this point. On my late visit to the Afghan frontier, I saw a great amount of what I call "Mud Architecture," that is, mud and sun-dried bricks. Wherever wood for rafters was scarce, the sun-dried bricks were thrown over the roof in the form of a vault or dome, and the process I believe goes back to a very early period; this particular construction might account for the form under consideration,—but I only hazard this as a guess,—and leave the matter in that position till further light turns up.

The pointed arch in the caves lately discovered in the Murghab Valley produced in my mind what seemed about the only reason which might stand against their having been Buddhist. Fig. 10 thus becomes important, for it gives us the exact outline of the section of the Murghab Caves, and shows that the form did exist in that part of the world at the Buddhist period. Fig. 11 is very nearly the same form. When the paper on the Murghab Caves was read, Mr. Thornton called attention to the fact that the pointed arch was found in the Buddhist remains of the Yusufzai country. Since then I have looked over my own sketches, photographs, books, etc., and I have to confess that I had not then given the point that attention which it deserves, and I am glad Mr. Thornton mentioned the matter. The Buddhist arch was round originally,¹ but as the style travelled from its source, the forms were often rudely followed, and across the Indus this arch will be found round, oval, at times faintly

¹ In the Lomas Rishi Cave a pointed arch will be found.



Details of Buddhist Architecture to illustrate the Forms found at Bamian.

pointed, and often it becomes a pointed arch ; so often, in fact, that I now consider it quite sufficient to account for the pointed arch at Bamian and in the Murghab Valley. In Pl. III. Fig 2 is given the form of this arch as it appears at Ajunta and Ellora ; in Fig. I. of that plate is the same arch from the Fil-Khána tope at Jalálabád, but it will be seen that the arch has been elongated into an oval.¹

In Pl. I. Fig. 14 and others we have a form which is unknown to Indian architecture, unless it be some survivals of it in the sloping walls of the older Buddhist caves, of which the one at Bhaja is a good example, and in the slight slope given to door-jambs, as in that of the Lomas Rishi Cave. In the Jalálabád valley I only found it as a decorative feature. As blind windows with Greek pediments are a common manner of covering blank walls in Europe, so this descendant of an old constructive system is repeated on the sides of stupas, and often alternating with the trefoil arch, as panels or niches, for sitting Buddhist figures. It is also found in the sculptures, and is a very common form. I came upon one instance of it at Ali Masjid, formed of plaster, and with mouldings of a classic origin, but the cross-beam, or lintel below the cornice, was represented with tenons projecting through the sloping jambs, in the same way as the lintels of the Sanchi gates project beyond the pillars, thus repeating a technical detail dating from the period when it belonged to a practical form of construction, and telling us at the same time of its wooden origin (see Pl. III. Fig. 3). I take it that this was the form of all doors and windows, or buildings, in which the walls had a considerable batter, and which walls were most probably originally wooden. Remains of this style, although no longer wooden, are still to be found in Tibet, and when Káfiristan has been explored, I should expect it may be still found there as the mode of construction in its original materials. As the round arch (Pl. III. Fig. 2) was the prominent constructive feature of the Buddhist period on the plains of

¹ The subjects in this plate are reductions from illustrations I gave in a paper on the Buddhist Architecture of the Jalalabad Valley, read before the Royal Institute of British Architects.

India, this was its counterpart to the North of the Indus. It is one of the primitive forms of architecture in that part of the world, and it is most interesting to see it appearing as prominently at Bamian.

Captain Talbot describes these sketches as representing porches in front of the caves. This is a peculiarity of which I cannot recollect anything of the same kind in the caves of the Jalálabád valley. It may have existed, but many of them were so ruinous, particularly in the front, that it was difficult to say what they had been originally.

Most of the caves at Bamian are domed; in the Jalálabád valley this is not the case; there are at Hada only a few square caves with domes in the roof. In one of these there was the base of what had been either a sitting Buddha or a small Stupa, under the dome. I am interested in Captain Talbot's identification of these domes with the modern manner of building with "kacha," which means sun-dried, "bricks." In Persia I made a similar sketch to that in Pl. I. Fig. 15; it, and some others I made of "mud architecture," were done on account of ideas they suggested in relation to Buddhist architecture. I may yet write about them, but at present they are to me far from certainties; naturally, I feel encouraged by Captain Talbot's suggestions on the domes, but it may be recalled that in my paper on the Buddhist caves of Afghanistan,¹ I have put it that the caves of the Jalálabád valley were copied from the early caves at Barabar, near Buddha Gaya: now, in three of these, the Lomas Rishi, Viswa Mitra, and the Sudama Caves, there are domed chambers. Here I think we have an explanation which is sufficient to account for the domes; but it must be confessed that it is only theoretical, and we may have yet to accept the "Kacha brick" explanation in its stead, which would give a Central Asian, rather than an Indian, origin to this particular form in Afghanistan.

Captain Talbot says he saw no Vihara caves, but some were described to him. They are square rooms; in one case

¹ *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. XIV. Part 3.

there were three rooms opening off from the central room—that is, one on each side, but none on the side of the entrance. Another had two cells opening off from each side. At Darunta, in the Jalálabád valley, I found only one cave of this kind, and it had three cells on two of its sides, and four cells on the back wall, forming seven in all. A plan of this is given in my paper on the Buddhist Caves of Afghanistan,¹ where it will be seen that it is exactly the same, excepting only the number of cells, with the description given by Captain Talbot.

Figs. 17, 18, and 19 I cannot quite understand. Captain Talbot says it is “a very curious cave, somewhat hard to draw.” It must wait till he comes home to explain it.

When I left the Afghan Boundary Commission, as Captain Talbot had hopes of extending the Survey to the eastward, I asked him if he managed to visit Bamian, to look out for the remains of the Great Sleeping Buddha, which Hiouen Thsang describes as being 1000 feet long. A long mound is all that could be expected to be found now, but nothing of the kind is to be seen. Mohan Lal describes a petrified snake, regarding which he gives a legend: it still lies a large mass on the ground, about fifty feet long. It is about four miles to the west of Bamian. The 1000 feet is so evidently an exaggeration, that I suspect Mohan Lal's legendary snake to be most probably the remains of the Sleeping Buddha.

Lady Sale, in her book, mentions that she or her daughter, Mrs. Sturt, copied some of the paintings at Bamian. The probability is that these copies escaped the dangers of the campaign, and that they still exist. Perhaps some of the members of the Royal Asiatic Society may know something of them, and as they might be of importance in supplying details regarding Bamian, it would be most interesting if they were produced before the Royal Asiatic Society.

¹ *Ibid*, Plate 3.

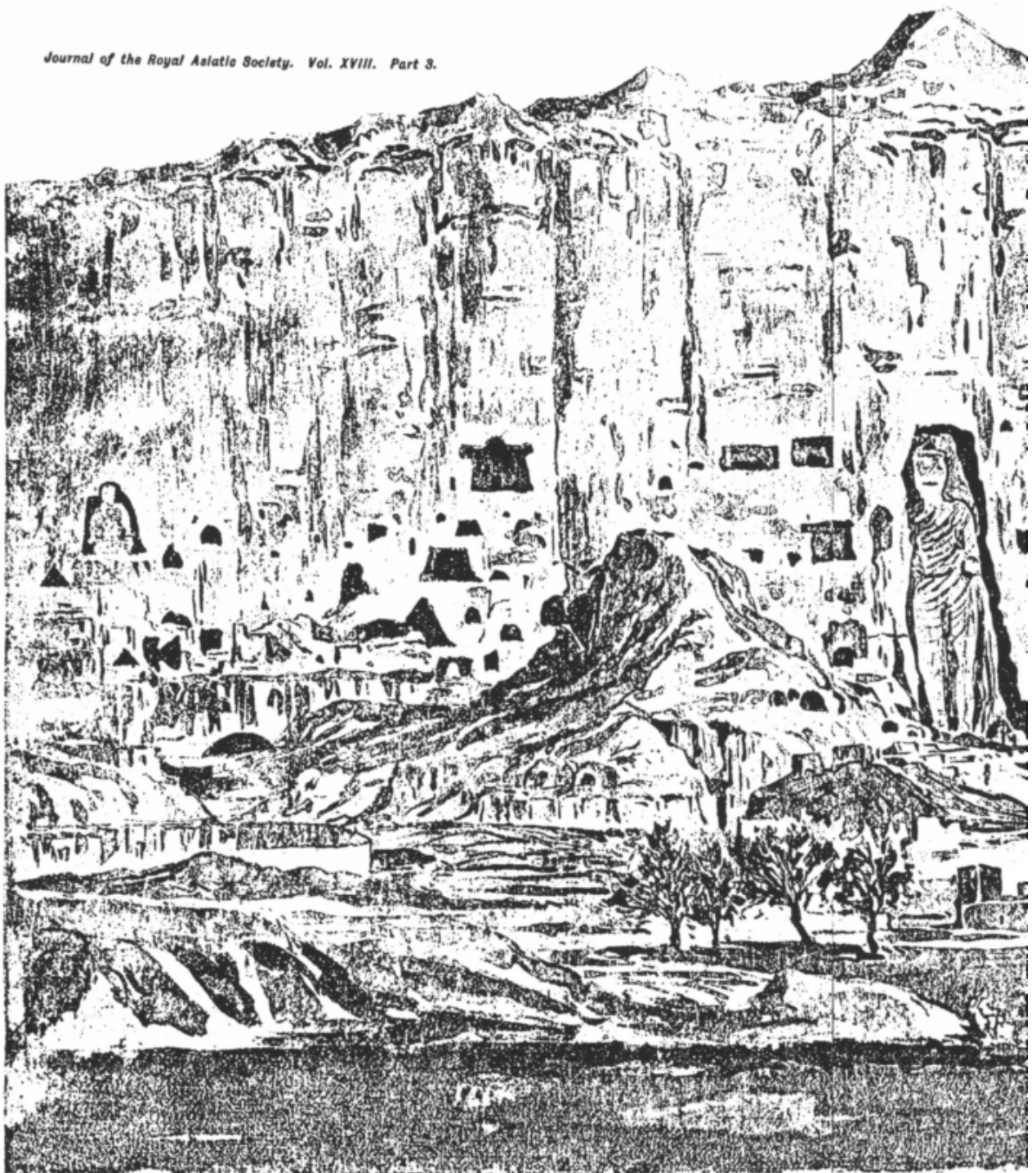
NOTES TO CAPTAIN MAITLAND'S SKETCHES OF BAMIAN.

A few days after Captain Talbot's communication had been read at the Royal Asiatic Society, I received some sketches made at Bamian by Capt. Maitland. On submitting them to Colonel Yule, it was arranged that they should be added to this, and I have been asked to supply a few notes to them.

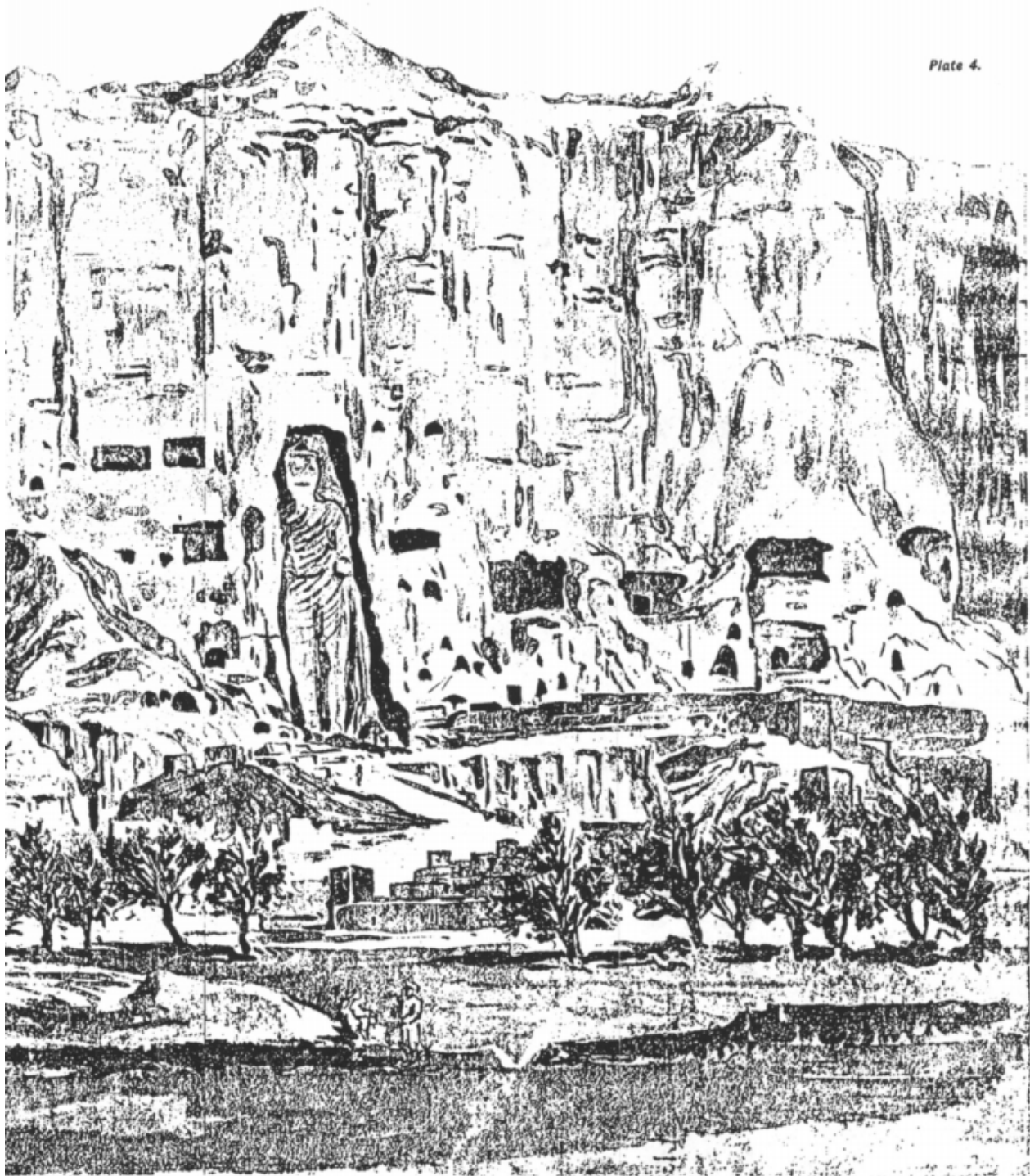
Captain Maitland's name has already been mentioned; he accompanied Captain Talbot as Political Officer, and the drawings sent home were copies of his sketches, made by Bhayron Bakhsh, a Brahmin attached to the camp of the Afghan Boundary Commission, and a pupil of the School of Art at Jáipúr.

Unfortunately no descriptions came home with the drawings; so some slight explanation of them has to be given. Plate IV. represents that portion of the cliff at Bamian where the second statue stands, which is seen with the caves on the right and left of it. On the extreme left is, what Captain Talbot numbers as the fourth statue, a sitting figure. The largest statue does not appear in this plate, but it stands still further to the left, and according to Sir Vincent Eyre, is about 400 yards from the second one.

The arrangement of the verandahs in front of the caves, described by Captain Talbot, can be seen in this plate; and the peculiar forms drawn and described by him, although only roughly sketched in this case, can be easily identified. On the top of the cliff are a number of elevations, which I take to be mounds, most probably the remains of ruined stupas; in the Jalalabad Valley in almost every instance where there were caves in a scarp, there were similar mounds of stupas above them; and the great probability is that it is the same here. The largest mound, it will be noticed, is exactly over the statue. Burnes says that the rock at Bamian is "indurated clay and pebbles." Sir Vincent Eyre describes it as "that species of conglomerate known by the name of pudding-stone, consisting of very



Bamian. View of the Caves and The Second Statue



Bamian. View of the Caves and The Second Statue.





Bamian. The First, or largest Statue.



hard clay, thickly studded with various kinds of rounded pebbles." On the level ground underneath the statue there is an Afghan village.

Plate V. represents the first and the largest of the great statues at Bamian; and as it is evidently carefully drawn, and gives minute details, it is particularly valuable, as it sets at rest all doubts as to the character of the sculpture. Hiuen Tsiang distinctly states that it was a figure of Buddha, and Masson identified it with the Buddhist figures he had seen at Salsette. Now we have the safer authority of this drawing of Capt. Maitland's to guide us, and it leaves no doubt on this point. The knob on the head; the regular lines of the folds of drapery,—leaving the form of the body to be indicated,—is all in the well-known style peculiar to Buddhism. It might naturally have been expected that the Greek influence, which is so well marked in the Buddhist sculptures of the Peshawar and Jalalabad districts, would perhaps be found here more strongly manifested, as the region is so much nearer to Bactria; but strange to say this influence can scarcely be traced in either of the two statues. The rigid mannerism of the drapery is the same as we find on the Indian side of the Indus. The suggestion which offers itself to account for this is, that the sculptor, or sculptors, were brought from India, and that the design was not produced by the local artists. Sir Vincent Eyre noticed in his visit the small holes which are represented in the drawing of this figure, and he makes the following remarks regarding them:—"One circumstance struck me as remarkable, which was, that in all those parts where the limbs are deficient, there are regular rows of small holes, in which pieces of wood have been struck, for the evident purpose of making plaster adhere. From this it would appear either that an attempt had been made to restore the mutilated parts by these means, or that the figure was originally only partially sculptured in the rock, and the deficiencies made up with plaster in the manner I have mentioned." The soldiers of Timur-lang may have shot arrows, and the artillerymen of Nadir Shah may have fired cannon at the

celebrated idols, this being what the people of the locality believe, but no one would have taken the trouble since the Mohammedan period to make any repairs; we can only suppose that these efforts date back to the time when there were Buddhist monks at Bamian. If the small holes had been all over the figure, it might have been supposed that it had been covered with metal; but we can perceive in the drawing, as Sir Vincent Eyre says, that they are only on the mutilated parts. It will be seen from the drawing that both Burnes and Sir Vincent Eyre correctly described this statue as having the upper part of the face destroyed, the mouth being the only feature which had been preserved. Captain Talbot measured this figure with the theodolite, and gives the height as 173 feet; it must be the highest statue known, and a good notion of its size may be formed by comparing it with the London Monument, which is only about 27 feet greater in height; or the Nelson Column in Trafalgar Square, it being 170 feet, or 3 feet less than the statues.

Plate VI. represents the smaller statue, which stands, as already stated, about 400 yards to the right of the larger one, and is 120 feet high; this has been generally known as the "female idol," but it is now evident that Hiuen Tsiang had correctly described it as "a figure of Sakya Buddha." He also describes it as being formed of metal, "it has been cast in different parts and joined together;" the folds of the drapery are yet so carefully given in the figure, that we must suppose it had only been covered with a thin plating of metal, and not with plates which had been cast; this is confirmed by the absence of holes or any indications by which heavy pieces of metal could have been fastened and supported. The larger figure was in all probability gilt, for the pilgrim says that "its golden hues sparkle on every side," and whatever metal was used in the smaller figure, must have been so thin, that it was made to keep its place by means of some adhesive substance. Captain Talbot says that in both figures "the finishing, drapery, etc., was all added by putting on stucco." This is all but decisive against



Bamian. The Secret Statue.





Bamian.. The Fourth Statuo; and Caves.

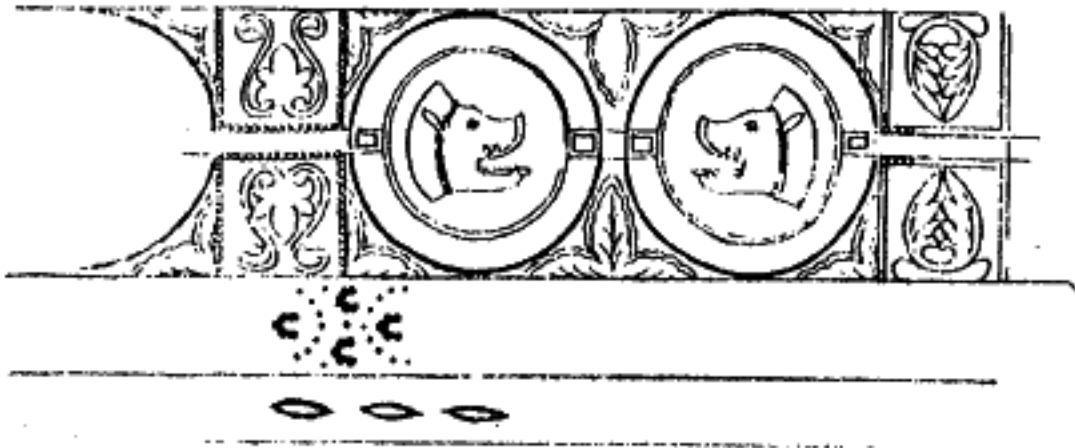


Fig. 1.

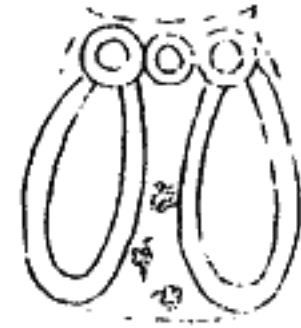


Fig. 2.

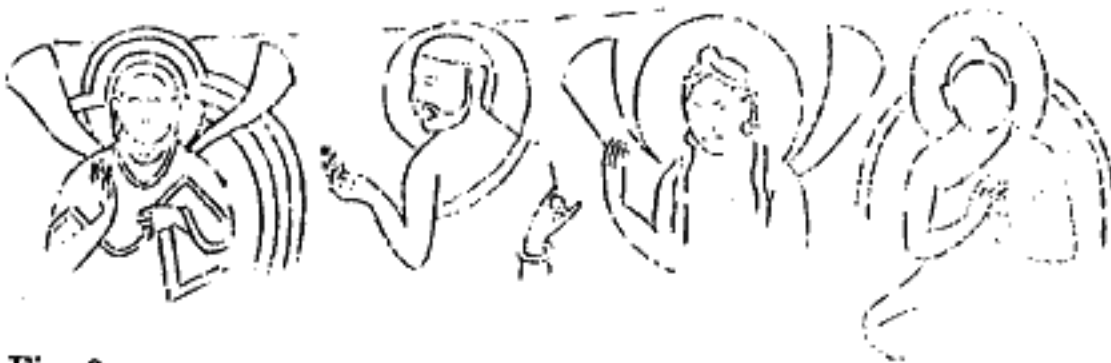


Fig. 3.



cast metal plates being fixed on it ; as there would have been, in such a case, no need to finish the details with stucco. There are stairs cut in the rock, by means of which visitors can ascend, and look out at the head of the statue, and the opening above the crown is represented in the drawing. Captain Talbot states that the passage to the top is still accessible, and from the context of his brief statement we are led to suppose that it was by this means Captain Maitland was able to measure the statue with a tape.

Plate VII. gives us what, in comparison to the colossal figures beside it, we must call a small statue. Still it is described by Captain Talbot as being between 25 and 30 feet high ; he thinks that it had been prepared for stucco, which had never been put on ; but the greater probability, judging from the size of the holes to be seen all over the figures, and the strength of the wooden pegs they would have held, that this figure might have been covered with metal. The holes show that it never had details either of face or drapery, and such being the case, these would be all given on the outer covering of metal. If this has been the case, it reduces the Chinese Pilgrim's blunder to smaller dimensions ; he would thus be only wrong as to which figure, but right that at least one of them, was metallic. The relative position of this figure is on the left of the smaller statue ; it is included in the general view of the caves.

The remains of painting found in the Jalalabad Valley were very few and fragmentary, but judging from what there was, as well as by the forms in the sketches of Captain Maitland from Bamian, we see that what is known as the Greek influence was confined to the architecture and sculpture, and that the style of painting had never been affected by it. The paintings in the Tibetan monasteries of the present day bear a strong resemblance to these fragments from Bamian, and the art on them is no doubt a continuation of the older school. In one of the fragments, Fig. 3, Plate VIII., there is a form already referred to by me when dealing with Captain Talbot's drawings. It is the form given in Plate I. Figs. 7, 9, and 14. In the painting it is

shown as supported on two pillars. I have a piece of sculpture from Hada, in which this same arrangement is represented, but with the difference that the columns have well-defined Corinthian capitals.

WILLIAM SIMPSON.

[N.B.—A second letter from Capt. Talbot has come to hand since receipt of the others. As it gives probably the first account of the "Takht-i-Rustam" in this locality, it is now published with the drawings which accompanied it. Haibak, I may mention, is on the road from Bamian to the Oxus, and as there are many groups of caves along the whole route, the paper in question appears an appropriate *addendum* to those preceding it.—W.S.]

LETTER.

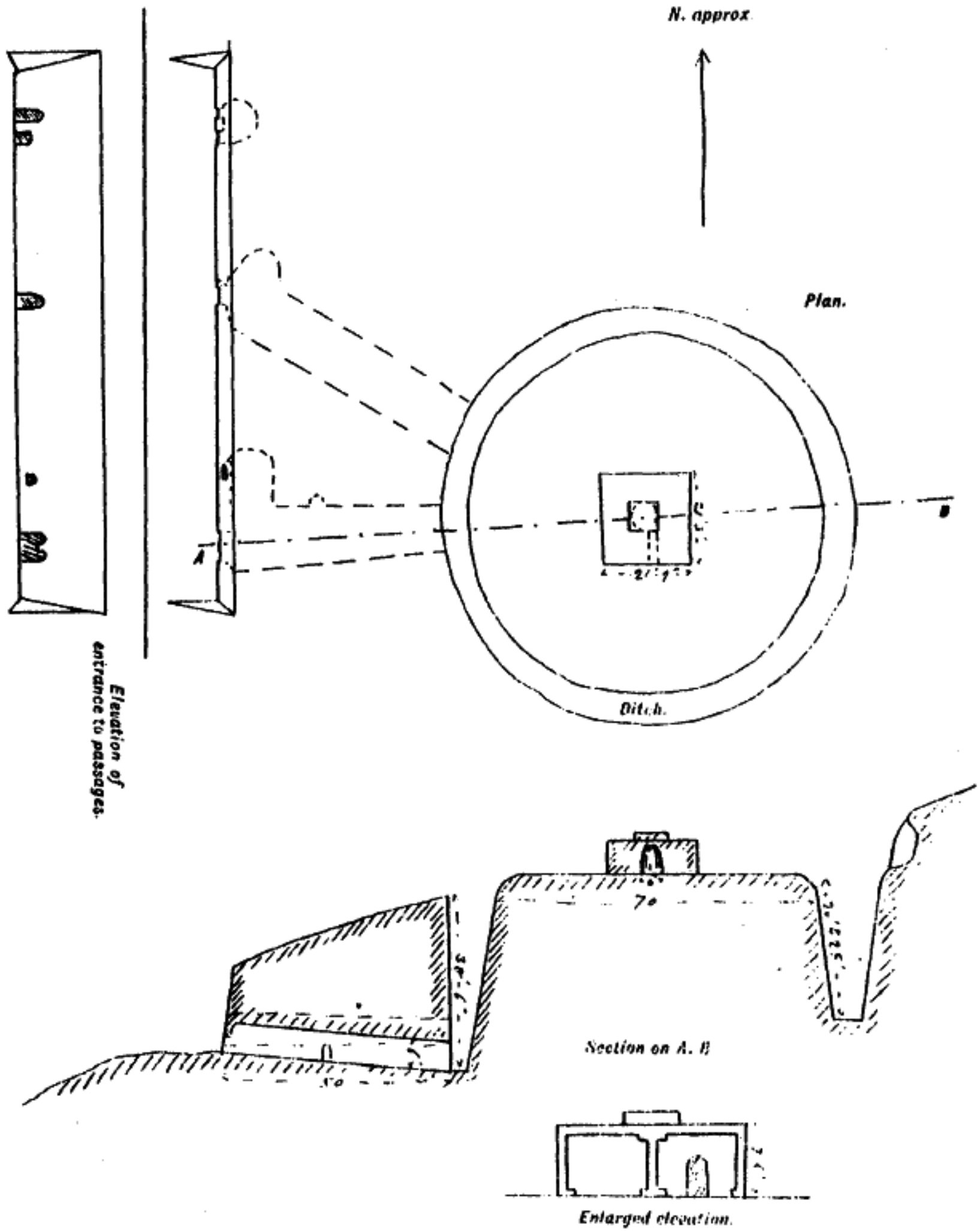
Camp, Kilif, March 2nd.

MY DEAR SIMPSON,

I hope my letter from Bamian way reached you safely and proved interesting. I have not much more to add. At Haibak, about two miles west of the fort, is a very curious place called Takht-i-Rustam. Possibly it has been fully described before; but in case it has not, I send you a plan and description. [See figures on opposite page, Pl. IX.]

It is entirely cut out of the rock; there has been no building up whatever. Simply the top of a rocky hillock has been cut into the shape I describe. It is not situated on quite the highest point of the hillock, and could never have been intended for a fortification of any sort.

It consists of an annular ditch cut out of the rock to a varying depth on the west side, at perhaps its deepest point. I found it to be $38\frac{1}{2}$ ft. from the top of the counterscarp, to use a military term. The conical mass of rock left standing in the centre has been levelled to form a circular platform about 70 ft. in diameter, the top of the scarp being neatly bevelled off. In the centre of the platform stands a rectangular house, also cut out of the solid rock. A doorway and passage from the south side leads into a circular domed



Takhti Rustan near Haibak.

M. G. Talbot, Capt., R.E.

chamber 6 ft. in diameter and 6 ft. 6 ins. high. You will see that in my drawings there is a discrepancy as to the situation of the passage. I am pretty sure that the enlarged elevation shows the position of the doorway correctly, and also that the plan is correct as to the way the passage leads into the chamber. I must therefore have got my dimensions wrong, or the chamber cannot be situated exactly in the centre.

I presume that this is a sort of tope, and that the chamber contained an image of Buddha, but you know my opinion is not worth much, and as I send you all I know about it, you can draw your own conclusions.

This central platform and house is quite perfect, and made with great care and neatness. Access is had to it from the north side by means of holes cut in the escarp, similar to those in a gymnasium for escalading exercise, which enable anybody to climb up from the ditch, which is here less than 20 ft. deep, I should guess. The bottom of the ditch is irregular in width and slope. The ditch is deepest on the west side, and slopes up to the east from both sides. The scarp is perfect in all but one place, where a small portion of rock has fallen away. On the east side are the remains of caves cut in the counterscarp, looking inwards, and on about the level of the platform. Most of them have fallen in.

Access is had to the ditch by two passages cut in the rock on the west side. The northern of these issues is some 6 ft. above the level of the ditch, for what object I cannot conceive; the other issues are at the level of the bottom of the ditch.

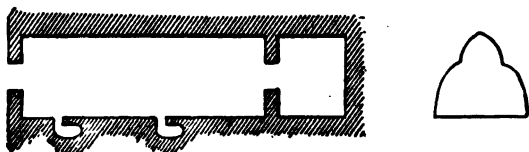
These passages issue from the ditch on to a platform cut out of the rock. The rock is of a grey colour, and does not look very hard, but has weathered well. I am not geologist enough to say what it is.

At the foot of a neighbouring hill, some 300 yards off, are some half dozen more caves facing towards the Takht. I should be glad to hear if you know of any similar place.

Near the road from Haibak to Tâshkurghân is a place called Hazârsam, or 1000 caves. It consists of a large

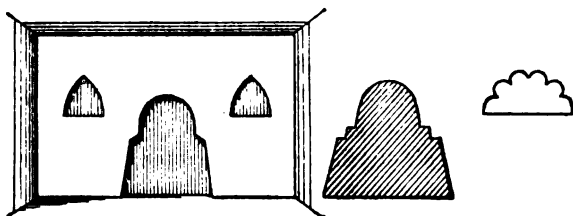
number of caves excavated in low cliffs, 10 to 20 ft. high, surrounding a depression in undulating ground. It is 18 to 20 miles from Takht-i-Rustam. Many of the caves have fallen in. Those that remain seem to be nearly all of one plan—a large outer room leading by an archway into a smaller room approaching a square in plan. In some cases the outer room has small rooms leading off from it; and in several cases contiguous outer rooms are connected with one another by side passages in an irregular sort of way. Altogether they seemed to be nearer the pattern of Vihara caves than anything else I have seen.

[The larger of these figures represents the plan of the cave.



The smaller approximately illustrates a niche which the writer noticed at the inner end of the inner chamber.]

The outer doorways have most fallen in, and in none could I trace any definite shape; but the doorways into the inner rooms are mostly perfect and vary in shape: as a rule they have a niche on each side of them. I show two patterns of doorways and the position of the side niches. The niches also vary in shape: some are as I have tried to draw.



You must understand that when I draw an arch, I mean it to be symmetrical, though I fear I am not often successful.

The walls of both outer and inner rooms were originally covered with plaster, of which a good deal remains, showing ornamental designs and remains of colour. In one case I noticed something very like a *fleur-de-lis*. My usual complaint of want of time holds good here: I only had half an hour to visit these caves. It would have taken a whole day to do them properly. There are a great number of them.

Yours very sincerely,

M. G. TALBOT.

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON BAMIAN BY CAPT. P. J. MAITLAND.

The Bamian valley is about half a mile broad and well cultivated, but there is no town or even central agglomeration of houses, only small villages scattered up and down the valley. To the north is a fairly continuous wall of cliffs averaging about 300 feet in height; to the south is a central plateau separated by the glens called Dahaneh-i-Tájik and Dahaneh-i-Saidabad from the cliffs limiting the western and eastern part of the valley. On the edge of the central plateau is a small, conical, clayey hill, covered with the ruins of Ghulgulah. This is probably the ancient Bamian.

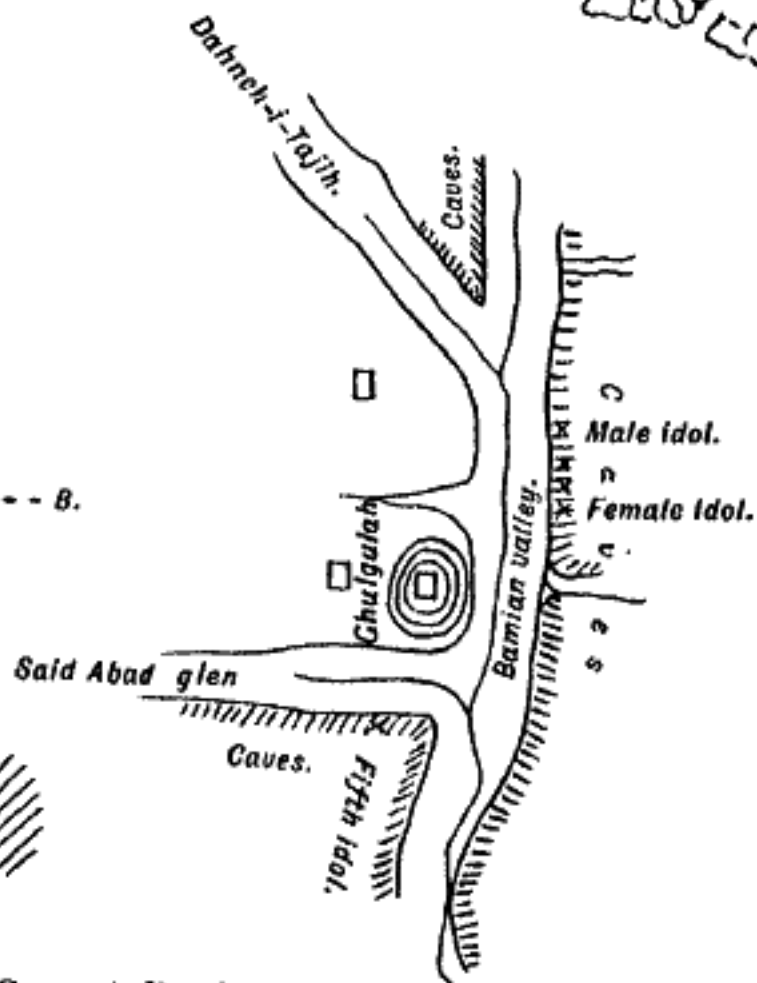
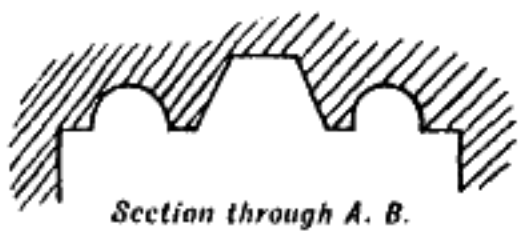
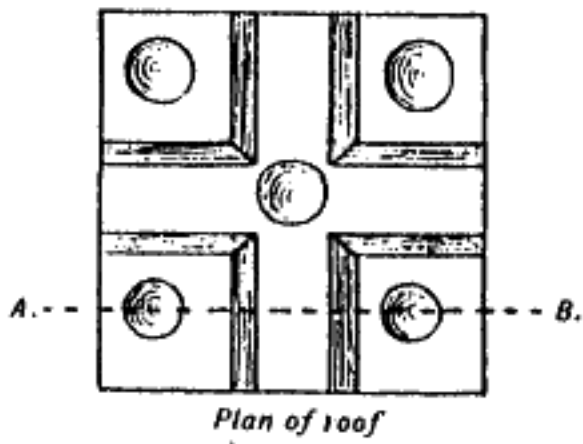
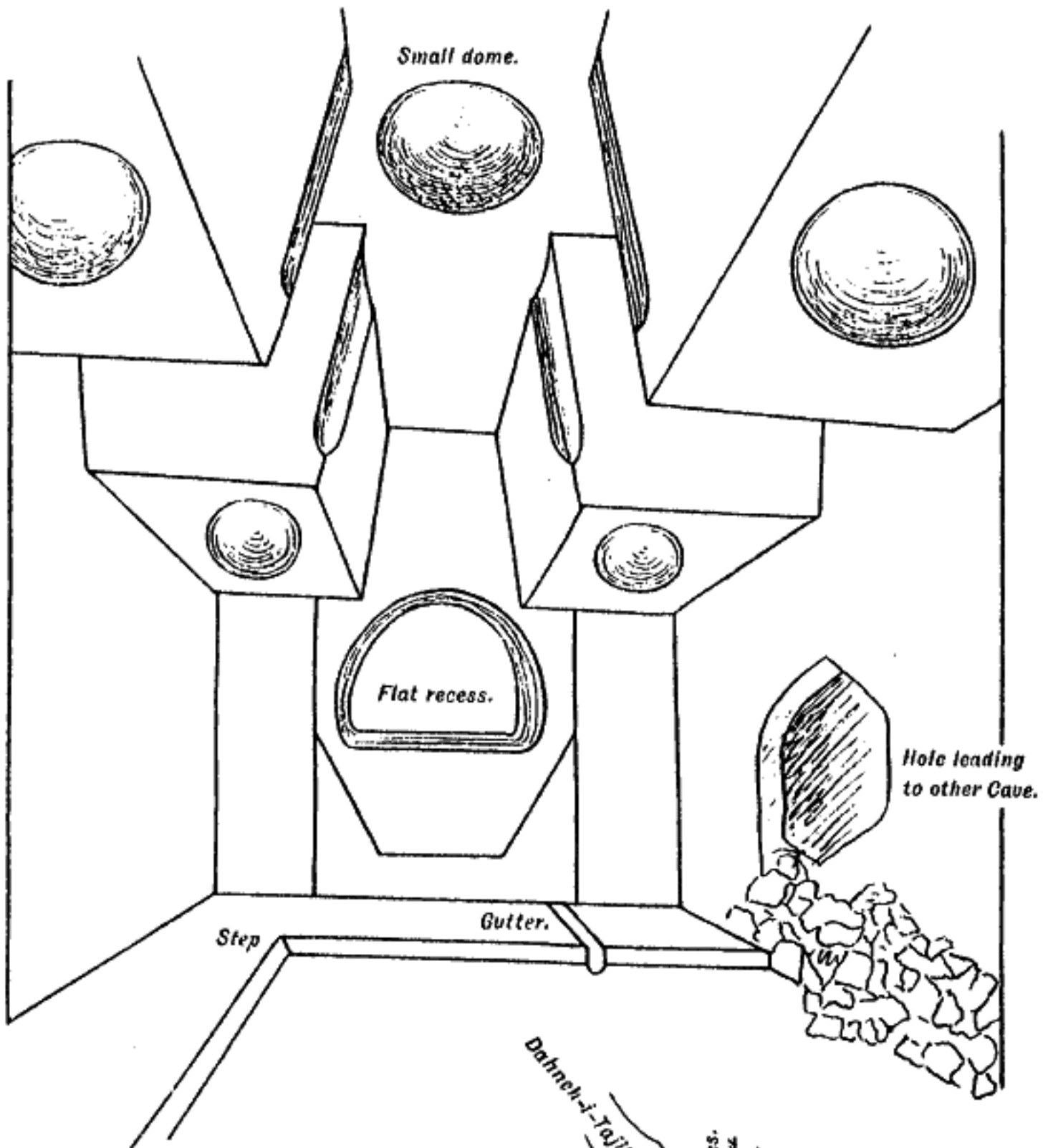
The cliffs are everywhere pierced with numerous caves, but the greatest number is found on the north side of the valley, and here are also the famous idols, the Bút-i-Bamian. The cliffs round these are literally honeycombed with caves, which are found even in the *débris* slope at the bottom. They are almost all inhabited by Tajiks, or used as store-rooms, and the entrance is frequently protected by a low mud wall.

Facing the cliff the larger of the two big idols is to the left, the other to the right. They are about a quarter of a mile apart and supposed to be male and female, and their heights are respectively 180 and 120 feet. Their names are, as reported by former travellers, Sal Sál for the male and Sháh Mameh for the female figure. The idols are standing figures, sculptured in very bold relief in deep niches. Between the two large idols are, or rather were, two smaller ones, also in niches. These are equidistant from the large idols and

from each other, that is to say, there is about 150 yards between each of the niches, large and small. One of the smaller niches is about 60 to 70 feet high, and is now empty, though a close inspection shows fragments of the idol that once filled it. The second small niche is still occupied by a sitting figure, which is about 40 feet high and known as the Bacheh, or child. The general shape of the niches is the same in all cases, but that of the large female figure is evidently unfinished, and the shoulders are not marked, nor the edges smoothed off.

The depth of the niches of the two large idols is about twice the thickness of the figures standing in them: the latter are therefore fairly well protected from the weather, and this accounts for their excellent preservation, nearly all the damage done to them being due to the hand of man. The whole interior of the niches, and particularly the arches over the heads of the idols, have been painted with what appears to be allegorical designs. Although much damaged, in fact, obliterated, where they could be easily got at, enough remains to show the general style of the work, which is exceedingly well executed, and forcibly reminds one of what is generally understood to be Byzantine art.

The idols themselves are rather clumsy figures, roughly hewn in the tough conglomerate rock, and afterwards thickly overlaid with stucco, *in which all the details are executed*. The whole arrangement clearly shows that this was not done at a later period, but is part of the original design of the figures. The stucco appears to have been painted, or at least paint was used in some places. The features of the figures have been purposely destroyed, and the legs of the larger one have been partly knocked away, it is said by cannon-shot fired at it by Nadir Shah. Both idols are draped in garments reaching to below the knee. The limbs and contour of the body show through, and the general effect of muslin is excellently imitated in the stucco. The arms of both are bent at the elbow, the forearms and the hands projecting, but the latter are now broken off. The feet have also been battered out of shape.



Cave at Bamian.

Narrow stairways hewn in the interior of the rock lead up from cave to cave to the heads of the idols, and even to the summit of the hill.

The caves, though so numerous, are not large. By far the greater portion of them are chambers 12 to 14 feet square, with domed roofs. I think as a rule several chambers open into each other, and have a wide portico in front by which light is admitted to the doorways. These have generally round arches. There are certainly no pointed arches anywhere, but some of the openings may be square-headed. The domes are set on the four-sided chambers in a remarkable manner, the square being reduced to an octagon by cornices springing by tiers from the angles in unmistakable imitation of brick-work. (See Plate X., also Plate I. Figs. 17, 18 and 19.) It is a very curious fact that at Kandahar domes are to this day commonly built on brick-built square chambers in exactly the same fashion. One of the roofs seen was of a different kind, flat and divided into four by deep wide cuts, crossing each other in the centre. Small cupolas were hewn in the centre of each of the spaces and at the intersection of the cuts. The largest cave of all is said to be between the feet of the great idol, but like several others it is used for government stores, and was filled with lucerne, etc. We saw no Vihara caves, but some are said to exist. As above mentioned, the majority of the caves are inhabited. A few years ago it is said they all were. The interiors are plain, without sculptural ornamentation, and now completely smoke-blackened. The whole, however, were plastered with stucco and painted. In one of the upper caves, near the head of the female idol, some designs are still visible.

A short distance east of the female idol, near the foot of the cliff, is a mound, which seems to be the remains of a Buddhist tope.

A design on the arch over the female idol can, to a certain extent, be made out with a field-glass. Within a circle is a figure in a long robe with a spear, apparently slaying something. The two upper corners without the circle are filled

with figures of angels or cherubs, waving scarves at each other. They might well date from the last century. On either side is a border with male and female busts or half-figures in circles, and all adorned with halos. Outside the central design on the left-hand side is a very curious figure of a human-headed bird.

On the east side of the Saidabad glen is an idol, which does not appear to have been noticed by former travellers. It is somewhere up the cliff, which is pierced with numerous caves. The niche is 40 to 60 feet high, and the figure in it has its head covered with a sort of cap or tiara. The two big idols may possibly have been adorned in like manner; the top of their heads is now unnaturally flat, suggesting the idea that something has been cut off.

It should be mentioned that the caves are very dark, only a small doorway admits light, and without candles, or rather good lanterns, nothing can be seen. The stairways are always very narrow and steep. There is almost invariably a shallow recess opposite the doorway. No traces of doors were seen.

NOTE.—These letters have been following one another at intervals during the last two or three months, and this latest communication from Captain Maitland it was necessary to give at the last moment, as it becomes the text to his own sketches; more particularly as it adds to our scant knowledge of Bamian. With the letters Captain Maitland has sent drawings of the peculiar roof partially described by Captain Talbot (see p. 326), and these make the form of the roof now perfectly clear; but it is a form quite new to us, and as yet I would not venture on an opinion as to its origin. When Captain Maitland speaks of the "male" and the "female" in relation to the two large statues, it should be understood that he is only using these terms as they have long been applied to them by the natives of the locality. We have the authority of Hiuen Tsiang that the smaller figure, the so-called "female idol," was Buddha, and Captain Maitland's drawing of it perfectly confirms this. The statement that the stairs lead up to the summit of the cliff becomes a slight confirmation of my guess that the mounds on the summit are the remains of Stupas.—W.S.
