

from 2 to 2.5. The shells do not effervesce in acids, although some of them still preserve their external polish. Internally some of these stones, particularly the lighter, appear to pass into flint, whilst their external surface effervesces in acids.

Not far distant, lumps of a greyish yellow limestone, crystalline, and earthy, the latter containing shells nearly similar to those in the siliceous stone.

At *Shivalingapak* the wacken contains shells which preserve more of their carbonate of lime. Those appearances are the more singular, since the land at *Medcondah* is a continuation of the basaltic trap at an elevation of nearly 2000 feet above the level of the sea, distant from the *Manjera* 14 miles, and 200 feet above the bed of that river.

III.—On the reputed Descendants of Alexander the Great, in the Valley of the Oxus. By Lieut. Alexander Burnes, Bombay Army.

[Read at the Meeting of the Asiatic Society, 29th May, 1833.]

In speaking of the existence of Grecian colonies in the remote regions of Central Asia, said to be descended from ALEXANDER of Macedonia, it is necessary to premise, that I am not indulging in speculation, but asserting a lineage of various tribes of people, that is claimed by themselves, and merits therefore our attention. MARCO POLO is the first author who mentions the existence of such a people, and informs us that the MEER of *Badakhshán* laid claim to a Grecian origin. The emperor BABER corroborates the testimony, and the historian of his grand-son AKBAR, the renowned ABUL FAZL, points to the country of the *Siahposh Kafirs*, north of *Pesháwar*, as the seat of these so-called Macedonians. Mr. ELPHINSTONE has, I think, successfully refuted this supposition, for the *Kafirs* are a savage and mountainous tribe, without a tradition on the subject.

The great elevation of their country appears to me satisfactorily to account for all their physical peculiarities, nor can I look upon these people as any other than the aborigines of the plains, who fled to their present elevated abode in the wars that followed the introduction of Muhammedanism. *Kafir* means simply an infidel, and is applied by Muhammedans to all who disbelieve in their prophet. Mr. ELPHINSTONE confirms the statement of MARCO POLO by telling us, that the chief of *Darwáz*, in the valley of the Oxus, claimed a descent from ALEXANDER, which was admitted by all his neighbours. Such was the extent of information with which I entered the valley of that river, sufficient it

will be said to excite the utmost curiosity, and it will be seen that I found ample encouragement in the investigation of such traditions while in the very seats of their existence.

If it was believed that the chiefs of *Badakhshán* and *Darwáz* alone laid claim to these hereditary honors, what was my surprise to find that there were six other personages established in them, at least to the satisfaction of the people. The chiefs that extend eastward of *Darwáz*, and occupy the provinces of *Kálab-shagnán* and *Wákhan*, north of the Oxus, assert the same descent. The MEER or chief of *Badakhshán* receives in modern times the honors mentioned by the Venetian traveller. He has the title of *Sháh* and *Málik*, or king, and his children, that of *Sháhzádá* or Prince; but this ancient house has been subverted within these twelve years by the MEER of *Kúndúz*, and *Badakhshán* is now held by a *Türk* family. To the eastward of *Badakhshán*, and extending to *Kashmír*, lie the hill states of *Chitral*, *Gilgit*, and *Iskardo*, where the claims to a Grecian descent are likewise conceded to each of the princes. The first of these has the title of *Shah Kator*. The present ruler is of small stature, and possesses as great a celebrity in these countries for his long beard as the *Shah* of Persia. The chief of *Iskardo* occupies a singular fortress on the Indus and N. E. of *Kashmír*, which he has the hardihood to assert was constructed in the days of Alexander himself! This country borders on little Tibet or *Baltí*. Nor is this the ultimate limit of the tradition; for the soldiers of the *Túnganí* tribe, who are sent from the western provinces of China, and garrison *Yárkand* and the neighbouring cities, also claim a Grecian origin. They however seek with greater modesty a descent from the soldiers of ALEXANDER'S army, and not from the conqueror himself.

Such is a correct list of the reputed descendants of ALEXANDER THE GREAT, and it is in some degree confirmatory of their claim, that the whole of these princes are *Tájiks*, or the aborigines of this country before it was overrun by *Türkí* or *Tatár* tribes. But how shall we reconcile these accounts with the histories that have travelled down to our times, whence we learn that the son of PHILIP did not even leave an heir to inherit his gigantic conquests, much less a numerous list of colonies that have survived a lapse of more than two thousand years in a distant quarter of Asia? Whether their descent is viewed as true or fabulous, the people themselves acknowledge the hereditary dignity of the princes, and they in their turn claim every royal honor and refuse their children in marriage to other tribes. These *Tájiks*, being now converted to *Islám*, view ALEXANDER as a prophet, and to the distinction

which they derive from his warlike achievements, they add the honor of being related to one of the inspired messengers of the Deity. I have had opportunities of conversing with some members of the *Badakhshán* family, but there was nothing in form or feature which favored their Grecian lineage, nor is there any thing in the languages of any of these tribes (of all of which I have specimens), that indicate a connexion with Greece. The people are fair complexioned, and not unlike the Persians of modern times, while there is the most decided contrast between them and the *Türks* and *Uzbéks*.

We learn from the historians of ALEXANDER'S expedition that he warred in the kingdom of *Bactriana*. The city of *Bálkh*, that lies in the vicinity of these territories, is readily fixed upon as that capital of the Greek monarchs. Setting aside every local identity, the modern inhabitants will inform you that the country between *Bálkh* and *Cábul* has the name of "*Bakhtar Zemín*," or the *Bakhtar* country, in which we recognise *Bactria*. This fact renders it by no means impossible, that a Grecian colony had some time or other existed in the country. It may therefore be supposed, that the dynasty which succeeded ALEXANDER in his empire ascended the valley of the Oxus, the fertility of which would attract them. They would then be conducted by *Chitra* and *Ishardo* into *Baltí* or little Thibet, and the neighbourhood of *Kashmír*, and we may perhaps account for the early civilization of that beautiful valley in such a migration of Grecian colonists. The introduction of the religion of Muhammed into every country seems to have been fatal to historical annals of a prior æra, and I doubt not, that any traces which may have existed of the Macedonian inroad, or of the Seleucidæ, their successors, disappeared in that great revolution. The countries on the upper course of the Oxus lay beyond the line of *Tatár* invasion, and I infer from the modern language of *Badakhshán*, which is Persian, and its connexion with that country, that the tribes on the Oxus followed the destinies of the Persian empire. This would favor the supposition of their having been conquered by ALEXANDER. If we cannot bring ourselves to concede to these moderns the illustrious lineage of ALEXANDER THE GREAT, we must still receive their traditions as the most concurring proof of his having overrun these countries; and till some well-grounded argument can be brought forward to the contrary, I cannot for my own part deny the title of the chiefs to the honors which they claim. I received the information from natives of these countries, and as they entertained no doubt of its truth and authenticity, I have contented myself with recording that, upon which others will be able to enlarge and speculate.