

Home (1918) Department.
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[Despatch Abstract.]

Conservation notes.-

Recording ----- on the Amaravati Stupa
in the Guntur district submitted by the Superintendent,
Archaeological Survey.

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HOME (EDUCATION) DEPARTMENT.



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Subject.

"Inspection Notes"

Submitting printed copies of -----on the
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1918.

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No. 303.

Station Madras, Dated the 8th May 1918

From (Name) A. H. Longhurst, Esq.,

(Designation) Superintendent, Archaeological Survey

Southern Circle, Madras,

To The Secretary to the Government of Madras,

HOME (EDUCATION) Department.

Stonehouse Hill, Ootacamund

Sir,

I have the honour to submit herewith in duplicate,
copies of my "Inspection Notes on the Amaravati Stupa" in the
Guntur District, dated the 15th April 1918.

2. Copies of the Inspections Notes in question have been
forwarded to the Director General of Archaeology, Superin-
tending Engineer, II Circle, and the Collector of Guntur Dis-
trict for information.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your most obedient servant,

A. H. Longhurst
Superintendent.

3

INSPECTION NOTES ON THE AMARAVATI STŪPA, GUNTŪR DISTRICT.

GENERAL REMARKS.—All that now remains of this famous Buddhist monument is the site, a small ruined stūpa and the basement of a little brick temple still stand just without the south gateway and a number of mutilated sculptures and carved stones which were not considered worth removing to the museum by those who formerly excavated the site may still be seen. The site consists of a large open flat circular grass space surrounded by a ruined stone paved processional path which was once enclosed on its outer side by a massive stone railing composed of big upright granite blocks connected together with stone rails of the usual Buddhist type. The site of the masonry stūpa that once stood in the centre and which was enclosed by the beautiful white limestone railing, the bas-reliefs of which are so familiar to the educated public, is no longer discernible. Broken portions of the railing and a few carved slabs alone remain on the site but all traces of their original positions have vanished. On the outer side of the processional path a ditch about 4 feet deep and 6 feet wide was foolishly dug all round by some former explorer of the site and left open, with the result that during the rains the ditch is full of water and the huge upright blocks of granite that once formed the posts of the railing that enclosed the site have fallen over into the ditch and are now buried in earth and debris. On the outer side of the ditch is an embankment about 12 feet in height which is continued all round the circular site. The flat central space is covered with dumps of broken stone and brick bats unearthed during the excavations and a margosa tree has been planted in the approximate centre of the site, presumably, so that visitors may know that the tree indicates the position of the stūpa that once stood on this spot. Margosa trees have also been planted at the four cardinal points, where the old gateways used to be, and also all round the greater length of the processional path. This was a mistake because the trees are now of considerable size with roots in proportion which offer serious obstruction to all future excavation around this area. On the north-eastern side of the site and on top of the embankment is an oblong open enclosure constructed by the Public Works Department for the custody of the few remaining sculptures and carved stones. Alongside of the enclosure is a shed for the watchman who is permanently retained to look after the site on behalf of the Government. The general appearance of the site is that of a disused stone quarry overgrown with rank vegetation and which has been converted into a public latrine by the local villagers and pigs who live in the huts which surround the site on the east and northern sides respectively. It is obvious that this unsatisfactory state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue and that the site of this famous monument at least must be clearly demarcated and steps taken to preserve the remaining antiquities and carved blocks of stone on the spot. As these notes are written mainly for the guidance of the Public Works Department officer who may be deputed to carry out the repairs, proposed below, I will describe each item separately:—

(1) *The ditch.*—Before any repairs can be carried out, the ditch which surrounds the outer side of the stone paved processional path should be filled in with brick bats and earth up to the level of the path. As mentioned above, there are a number of big granite blocks which once supported the stone railing lying at the bottom of the ditch. As most of these are broken and owing to their vast weight and the trouble and expense that would be involved in attempting to refix them in position, they may be allowed to remain where they are. But on the eastern side of the path there are eight of these blocks in fair condition and here too the ditch is not so deep as elsewhere. These eight blocks should be refixed in an upright position against the old brick foundations of the stone paved path. When in position, they should be supported all round with a well-rammed filling of broken stone and brick bats so as to prevent settlement. There is any quantity of material for this work stacked on the spot. The earth required for levelling up the ditch can be obtained from the mound which surrounds the outer side of the ditch.

(2) *Loose blocks of stone.*—When the ditch has been filled in, all the big blocks of stone lying on the path or outside the site which are of interest and worthy of preservation should be moved into the central area. The same remarks apply to the larger stones within the Public Works Department enclosure. When the repairs proposed in these notes have been completed, this enclosure will no longer be required, so the brick piers supporting the wooden fencing may be demolished and used as building material in carrying out the present work. The object of moving all the large and heavy stones of interest into the central space at this stage of the work is because subsequently the whole site will be enclosed by a brick wall 3' 6" in height with a gateway on the south side. Once the compound wall is built it will be a difficult matter to bring inside any of these huge blocks of stone. If the officer in charge of the work will kindly inform me when he is ready to have the stones in question moved within, I will visit the site and point out on the spot which particular stones are worthy of preservation, as there are quite a number of broken stones in the Public Works Department enclosure which are of no archaeological value whatever and which may as well be broken up and used as building material in carrying out the present repairs. Why some of these useless stones were laboriously dragged up the high embankment and carefully placed within a somewhat costly enclosure while the really valuable pieces of sculpture, many bearing inscriptions, were left lying unprotected on the open site below remains a mystery.

On the eastern side of the site, lying partly on the processional path, is a big block of grey limestone measuring $13' \times 6' \times 1'$. It is carefully cut and dressed and decorated with two little pilasters representing conventionalised Persepolitan pillars. As there is no longer anything to indicate the original position of this huge block of stone which originally stood in an upright position and perhaps formed part of one of the gateways, it may remain lying flat upon the ground but it should be moved 8 feet to the west and placed on a bed of well-rammed broken brick to prevent it from sinking into the ground and eventually getting buried and lost to view. To the north of the west gateway is also a huge block of white limestone lying on the path. It appears to have formed a part of that gateway. This too should be treated in the same manner and moved 8 feet to the east. Just outside the north gateway is a big slab of limestone measuring roughly $4' \times 3' \times 6''$ and decorated with portions of two human figures. Near this entrance are also two long slabs of stone, one measuring $9' \times 2' \times 9''$ and decorated at its base with a semi-circular lotus medallion and the other $6' \times 2' \times 8''$ is a plain slab that once formed part of the inner railing. These three slabs should be removed within the central space. I have mentioned these five particular blocks of stone in detail as they represent the only really large and heavy stones to be shifted and laid on specially prepared beds of brick filling, so that provision for this item may be made when framing an estimate of the cost of the repairs. The blocks of stone now in the Public Works Department enclosure can be removed when required by hand and no special provision for the work need be made as it is a simple matter that can be undertaken by ten coolies working daily for three days.

(3) *Trees*.—The margosa tree in the centre of the site, the one growing in the south gateway and those which are found to offer obstruction to the work of repairing the paved processional path should be removed and the roots destroyed.

(4) *Stone linga*.—On the eastern side of the processional path stands a large limestone linga $1' 9''$ in thickness and 4 feet in height above ground. It is octagonal on plan with fluted sides which terminate at the centre of the crown. It is carved out of a large limestone pillar, perhaps a portion of a Buddhist stambha that once stood near the east gateway. It is broken near the top on one side and was set up in its present position by Mr. Rea. It should be moved into the central space and left lying flat on the ground with its broken surface below. This linga has no real connexion with the site which was merely used subsequently by the Hindus as a quarry on the decline of Buddhism. Lingas and Hindu idols carved out of slabs and blocks of limestone taken from this site are quite a common feature of the district. Lying beside the big linga is a smaller one carved out of a double or engaged Buddhist pillar. It is broken and unfinished but interesting as it affords direct evidence as to the manner in which the Hindus utilized some of these Buddhist remains in the service of their own religion. This little linga should be placed alongside of the big one within the central area. There are also three Hindu-looking sculptures in the Public Works Department enclosure, these too might be placed alongside of the two lingas so as to group all these later antiquities together in one spot. With regard to the three Hindu-looking sculptures, it would appear that these were discovered by Mr. Rea while excavating a mound three miles to the west of Amaravati known as the Kuchi-Dibba. However, like the rest of the sculptures discovered at the Kuchi-Dibba, they were evidently carved out of slabs of limestone removed from the Amaravati stupa. I was unable to ascertain the locality from whence the Buddhists obtained this beautiful limestone the best of which resembles white marble in appearance and withstands the action of the sun and rain excellently. Some of the bas-reliefs adorning the existing small stupa near the south gateway which were executed over a thousand years ago are as clear and sharp to-day as they were then. One reason for their surprisingly good state of preservation is the fact that the more important bas-reliefs were highly polished. There is no limestone quarry in the neighbourhood but there may be one somewhere in the range of hills on the northern side of the Kistna in the Nizam's dominions. The enormous size of some of the blocks of stone seems to indicate that the latter was brought to Amaravati by means of the river and not across country and it was dressed and carved on the site. This we know from some of the unfinished sculptures where the design is merely indicated in rough outline with a sharp chisel.

(5) *Processional path*.—The existing path surrounds a flat open circular space measuring 165 feet in diameter and the path itself is 12 feet in width and consists of a layer of bricks and broken stone bedded in mud mortar and paved on top with cutstone slabs 3 inches in thickness. The sizes of the paving slabs vary, but some of them are 12 feet in length and about 2 feet in width. The outer side of the path was originally enclosed by the big granite railing mentioned in paragraph 1 above, and which now lies at the bottom of the ditch. On its inner side, the path was apparently bounded by an ornamental limestone railing similar in style to the broken pieces of railing that still exist on the site. However, all traces of the position and extent of this inner railing has gone, so no attempt need be made to try and reproduce it now. But if the site is to be of any interest to the educated public, it is essential that the path be restored and the position of the outer railing be represented by a brick wall. In any case, a compound wall is necessary to protect the valuable antiquities within the central area and the new wall may as well follow the same line as the old railing which originally enclosed the site as any other line and thus serve two useful purposes instead of one. In paragraph 1 above, I have proposed that eight of the granite blocks of the outer railing on the eastern side of the path should be refixed in their original positions. This will, to some extent, obstruct the uniform appearance of the new wall, but it is of no consequence; in fact it is an advantage, as the granite blocks can be built into the new wall and will thus indicate to

visitors the nature of the original boundary of the site. When the upright granite blocks are fixed in position, the spaces between the blocks can be closed with a brick filling and cement coping of similar dimensions as the rest of the wall. The brick wall should be $1' 6''$ in thickness and $3' 6''$ in height from the level of the stone pavement to the top of the cement coping. The only spot where the old stone paving is intact is between the south and west gateways. This portion should be taken as a guide for the restoration of the rest of the pavement. For some absurd reason, the greater portion of the old pavement was broken up and stacked in a big heap in the central area. So far as possible, these broken slabs should be used in repaving the path. On the inner side of the path there should be below ground a dwarf brick wall 9 inches in thickness and the same height as the top of the paving slabs, so that the inner and outer walls will thus form retaining walls for the concrete foundations within and on which the paving slabs will be laid. When the inner and outer retaining walls are built, the 12-ft. space in between should be filled up with a layer of concrete so as to make the bed for the paving slabs of a uniform level all round. It will be necessary to remove and refix most of the existing old slabs during this work. The slabs should be bedded in mortar and the joints and spaces in between them pointed with good cement so as to make the pavement thoroughly watertight. As there are not sufficient slabs available for repaving the entire length of the path, the remainder may be terraced with good strong cement. I will supply the Public Works Department with a plan and section showing the construction of the new walls and paths so that an estimate may be framed accordingly.

(6) *Drainage*.—When the pavement is finished, the central space should be levelled and sloped for drainage so that all surface water flows from the centre, where the central margosa tree now stands, all round towards the paved pathway. In order that the water may not remain on the path, a number of drainage exits should be made at regular intervals through the outer wall all round the site. The central space, when finished, should appear as a flat circular well-kept grass plot 165 feet in diameter surrounded by a paved pathway 12 feet in width enclosed by a circular brick wall $3' 6''$ in height. The dwarf retaining wall on the inner side of the path mentioned above should be given a coating of cement on top which should be flush with the level of the pavement and the grass plot on its inner side, so that surface water may flow from the plot within straight across the path and out through the drainage holes in the base of the outer brick wall.

(7) *Water and lime*.—The water required for the repairs may be obtained from the well in the compound of the travellers' rest-house which is situated within a hundred yards of the site. Some time back, a murder was committed at Amaravati and the murderer very inconsiderately threw the body of his victim into this well. Since then, it has been used only for watering the trees in the compound. It will thus do the well good to have its supply liberally drawn upon. In the past, it was the custom for any one at Amaravati who wanted lime for building purposes to visit the stupa and remove the beautifully carved limestone rails and slabs and convert them into building lime by burning them. There are still any number of useless broken blocks of limestone on the site that might be used in this manner if necessary as they are not required for any other purpose. But it may be cheaper and take less time to cart prepared lime to the spot from Guntur or elsewhere. This is a matter for the Public Works Department to decide.

(8) *Old brick work*.—Between the south and west gateways, where the old paving of the processional path still exists, there are the remains of a brick wall about 1 foot in height and 8 yards in length standing on the pavement and originally against the outer stone railing. It looks as though this wall was once carried round the whole site and that it was provided with little niches for the accommodation of Buddhist images and small votive stupas presented by pious pilgrims as memorials of their visit to this famous monument. This bit of old wall should be repaired and retained as far as possible intact when the new outer wall is being constructed. There is also a small portion of an old brick wall in the centre of the west gateway which marks the site of a little brick temple that once stood there. However, as the paving at this spot will have to be taken up and relaid, these brick remains will have to be removed and they need not be rebuilt; as there is nothing left to guide one as to the dimensions of the original shrine, so it is now impossible to reconstruct the plan of the building.

(9) *Gateways*.—Originally, there appear to have been gateways at the four cardinal points giving access to the processional path within. The stone pavement of the south and west gateways still exists, but all trace of the north and east gateways has vanished and it is no longer possible to reproduce them on plan. As a gateway is necessary on the south side so as to connect the site with the main road, the plan of the south gateway should be restored and the area enclosed by brick walls. The positions of the other three gateways can be indicated by a pair of piers in the new wall at each spot. I will supply the necessary drawings for this work and also for the repairs to ruined brick temple and little masonry stupa just outside the south gateway. It will be necessary to cut away and remove the embankment which now encloses the south gateway and connect this entrance with the main road on the south. The rest of the embankment should be sloped and dressed so as to give a uniform appearance all round the site.

MADRAS,
15th April 1918.

A. H. LONGHURST,
Superintendent, Archaeological Survey, Southern Circle.

Observation notes. If one DEPARTMENT

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