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(3) Initials of the Referencer Q

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Public DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No. 1160

Press
Mis.

Original

Dated 5-6-

1826.

Not to be folded or roughly handled

5TH JUNE 1886, No. 1160, PUBLIC.

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.

PUBLIC DEPARTMENT.

READ—the following papers :—

From J. BURGESS, Esq., LL.D., C.I.E., Director-General, Archæological Survey of India, to the Chief Secretary to Government, dated Hospet, 16th April 1886, No. 240.

Two years ago, I was led to understand by the then Curator that an open area between the wings at the back of the Central Museum would probably be roofed in for the Amaravati sculptures. I concluded from this that they would not be arranged for some time. But since then, I was surprised to learn that they had been already "fixed," and,—I was told by those who had seen them,—in a manner that would certainly "disappoint" or "vex" me, or "which must meet my disapproval." These ominous hints led me to visit the Museum the other day, when, I am sorry to say, they were more than realized; and I think it but right that I should thus point out to Government the irreparable damage that has been done to one of the most valuable collections in India.

2. The sculptures have not only been "fixed up" in the most unsatisfactory disarrangement, but have been embedded deep in masses of Portland cement, out of which they can never be extracted. This strong, coarse cement is laid over and hides every part of the slabs except the mere sculptured surfaces. Thus the pillar slabs of the outer rail had lenticular mortices in their edges to receive the tenons on the ends of the rail discs, and it was a matter of the utmost importance in any arrangement of these slabs to leave these mortices visible with the tenons of the rails inserted, so that it might be seen at a glance how this remarkable railing was constructed, how closely the discs adjoined to the pillars, and what spaces were left between the discs. What has been done is to set up some of the rail pillars, embed them in a casing of cement, and by their sides—but far too far off for their tenons to reach the sockets—a set of the discs, and to cover these up—even the flanges and tenons which made their place and use intelligible—in a thick, smooth wall of cement. Anything more barbarously stupid is hard to conceive. In two cases, inscriptions had been noticed on the corners of flanges, and holes are left in the cement, about four inches thick, going into these inscriptions. Being high up, they look at first sight like ventilation holes, or for sparrows' nests, but by the use of a ladder, a visitor may discover that they are to show a few letters on the stone. At the end of this row, where the edge of a rail-pillar was exposed, even the mortice hole in it has been wantonly filled up and the whole side of the slab plastered over with cement, obliterating most effectively all indication of the mode of structural arrangement.

3. I need not detail a tenth of the barbarisms that have been perpetrated in the ill-advised arrangement of these once priceless sculptures. In the front row, an attempt has been made to group together a series of slabs from the central stupa and of *early* style. The intention was good: but not having the slightest knowledge of style in sculpture, the arranger has placed among them a slab from the inner rail, of the very *latest* date in the whole series, and next to it again a slab which any eye might see is one of the *earliest* of all, long prior to the great railing. Then fragments of coping of special interest for their very early style have been built into the sides of

a large trough across the floor—whether intended as a bath or a pitfall for those who carry their eyes too high, is not clear. In its sides fragments are built which ought to have been placed 5 or 6 feet high. But enough: I have seen many museums, but never one in which a valuable collection was arranged with so little knowledge and care, nor so needlessly injured by casing in a cement that can never be removed.

4. With a little plaster of Paris to repair breaks on the separate stones—chiefly tenons and sides of mortices—and a very little common sense, directed by competent knowledge, the collection might have been displayed to great advantage and made most instructive. This is now impossible.

5. Why was this done without consulting any one who knew about such work and could have arranged the sculptures instructively? Report—no better index, perhaps, of truth than smoke is of fire—says, “it is regarded as a masterpiece of Scotch diplomacy to frustrate my designs of having them removed!!” Notwithstanding some paragraphs I had seen a while ago in the local press to the like silly purport, I could hardly believe my ears. My “designs” were freely and fully communicated to Government long since; and if any one is so ignorantly credulous as to imagine that I could remove a single slab without the approval of His Excellency and his Council, he is to be pitied. If there was “design” in the case, it seems to have been to tie the hands of Government by means of Portland cement. But at what a cost! Few museums have received so important a collection of sculptures; none has shewed itself so unworthy by such wanton and ignorant abuses of such a trust.

6. A number of stones, some of them of interest, still lie about uncared for, and perhaps the important inscription of Pulumáyi, by which the age of the stupa is fixed, is still among them. All the Government can now do seems to be to give orders that such as have been spared shall not be injured hereafter.

7. This letter, to such as have no interest in art or archæology, may seem strongly expressed, but, after all the trouble I took to have these marbles conveyed to Madras in safety, it may be imagined how vexing it is to see them so ruined—and for a silly whim.

From G. BIDIE, Esq., M.B., C.I.E., Acting Surgeon-General with the Government of Madras, to the Chief Secretary to Government, dated Ootacamund, 19th May 1886, No. O-80.

In returning the letter referred under your No. 808 C., of 10th May 1886, regarding the Amaravati sculptures which have been erected in the Madras Museum, I have the honor to submit the following remarks on Dr. Burgess' animadversions.

2. The original idea was to erect them in the open space between the two back wings of the Museum buildings and to protect them by a glass roof, but this was found impracticable on architectural and other grounds.

3. It was then resolved with the concurrence of Government to exhibit them in the interior of the Museum, and as the marbles would have been liable to injury and of very little interest to the general public if simply deposited in an unconnected state, it was decided to set them up in a way that would give some idea of their original use and position and protect them from further injury.

4. Before commencing the task, the Engineer and myself not only carefully consulted all the literature on the subject, but also examined the marbles minutely, and it was then obvious that we had a very heterogeneous collection to deal with precluding any arrangement that would defy criticism, and we could therefore only do our best to place them as nearly as possible in position and to preserve in view all sculptures and inscriptions.

5. At the same time, it became obvious that, in erecting the slabs, it would be utterly impossible to trust to the mortices and tenons for support, as not one of them was quite entire. If a mortice existed, the tenon would be gone, or *vice versa*, and so, to secure the safety of the stones, it became necessary to fill up the interstices with cement or to leave them on the floor disconnected. It may be also mentioned that special arrangements were necessary to give security in consequence of the very great

weight of some of the stones. I can safely say that the precautions adopted were deemed absolutely necessary for their safety by the Architect, Colonel Morant, R.E., whose respect for these valuable antiquities was just as great as my own.

6. As regards the remarks in paragraph 3, we were not unaware of the different dates of the few fragments of the stupa, &c., placed together, but the space at our command did not admit of a separate and chronological arrangement.

7. And, after all, the value of the collection throughout does not, to the man of science, depend so much on the mode of its grouping, as on its sculptures and inscriptions, all of which have been most religiously preserved. The stones as now arranged constitute a very attractive and instructive collection to 99 per cent. of the Museum visitors, and the archæological one per cent. will, it is to be hoped, as a rule, see and understand the difficulties we had to encounter and be grateful that he has got so much. It may also be mentioned that scientific visitors from various parts of the world have already, not once but often, expressed their approval of the collection as it now stands. Having thus referred to Dr. Burgess' chief objections, it does not appear necessary to notice his other remarks, except the one in paragraph 6 that a certain number of stones “lie about uncared for.” This is incorrect, as all are most carefully preserved.

ORDER—dated 5th June 1886, No. 1160, Public.

His Excellency the Governor in Council is quite satisfied with the reasons assigned by Surgeon-General Bidie for the course which was adopted in dealing with the Amaravati sculptures. He has read, if not with surprise, at least with regret, the extraordinary attack which the Director-General, Archæological Survey of India, has seen fit to make on the Madras Museum and its late Superintendent. Dr. Burgess holds the anomalous position of Archæological Surveyor in a province which he seldom visits, and in which his interest has been chiefly manifested by fault-finding. It was left to the local authorities, in the absence of the responsible adviser of Government in such matters, to make the best use possible of the Amaravati remains. This has been done, and His Excellency in Council is inclined to think that the wholesale condemnation compressed in Dr. Burgess' letter would meet with no sympathy from the archæological one per cent. or any other proportion of Museum visitors; it certainly has neither his concurrence nor approval.

2. It should not be forgotten also that, though Dr. Burgess has, after a protracted absence, actually visited the Museum, he has not apparently grasped the facts relating to the sculptures which he came to see, for he describes in his 6th paragraph a state of things which has no existence. The lack of accuracy in observing facts perhaps accounts for Dr. Burgess' acceptance as such of the items of gossip which he has thought fit to incorporate in his strongly-expressed letter.

(True Extract.)

Chief Secretary.

To the Director-General, Archæological Survey of India.
 „ Acting Surgeon-General G. Bidie, C.I.E.
 „ the Revenue Department.
 „ the Superintendent, Government Central Museum.

Exd. A. Raitt.

Govt. of (1886) Madras.

PUBLIC.

Issued

Recd.

Encl.

G.O., 5th June 1886, No. 1160.

JUNE.

Amaravati Sculptures.

Passing orders with reference to Dr. Burgess' remarks regarding the — which have been erected in the Government Central Museum, Madras.

No 240 of 1886.

CURR. NO. 157

Kaspet, Bellary District
18th April 1886

The Chief Secretary to Government
Madras.

Sir. Two years ago I was led to understand by the then Curator that an open area between the wings at the back of the Central Museum would probably be roofed in for the Amaravati sculptures. I concluded from this that they would not be arranged for some time. But since then, I was surprised to learn that they had been already "fixed," and, I was told by those who had seen them, in a manner that would certainly "disappoint" or "worry" me, which must meet my disapproval. These ominous hints led me to visit the Museum the other day, when, I am sorry to say, they were more than realized; and I think it but right that I should thus point to Government the inestimable damage that has been done to one of the most valuable collections in India.

The sculptures have not only been "fixed up" in the most unsatisfactory disarrangement, but have been embedded deep in masses of Portland cement out of which they can never be extracted. The strong coarse cement is laid over thick every part of the slabs except the more sculptured surfaces. Thus the pillar slabs of the outer rail had loose mortices in their tops to receive the tenons on the ends of the rail discs, and it was a matter of the utmost importance in any arrangement of these slabs to leave these mortices visible with the tenons of the rails inserted, so that

it might be seen at a glance how this remarkable railing was constructed, how closely the discs adjoined to the pillars, & what spaces were left between the discs. What has been done is - to set up some of the rail pillars, embed them in a casing of cement, and by their sides - but far too far off for their tenons to reach these - a set of the discs; and to cover these up - even the flanges & tenons which made this place surely intelligible - in a thick smooth wall of cement. Anything more barbarously stupid is hard to conceive. In two cases inscriptions had been noticed on the corners of flanges and holes are left in the cement, about four inches thick, going in to these inscriptions. Being high up they look at first sight like ventilation holes, or for sparrows' nests, but by the use of a ladder a visitor may discover that they are to show a few letters on the stone. At the end of this row, where the edge of a rail pillar was exposed, even the mortice hole in it has been wantonly filled up and the whole side of the slab plastered over with cement, obliterating most effectively all indication of the mode of structural arrangement.

3. I need not detail a tenth of the barbarisms that have been perpetrated in the ill advised arrangement of these once priceless sculptures. In the front row an attempt has been made to group together a series of slabs from the central stupa of early style. The intention was good: but not having the slightest knowledge of style in sculpture the arranger has placed among them a slab from the inner rail, of the very latest date in the whole series, and next to it again a slab which any eye might see is one of the earliest of all, long prior to the great railing.

Then fragments of coping of special interest for their very early style have been built into the sides of a large trough across the floor - whether intended as a bath or a pitfall for those who carry their eyes too high, is not clear. In its sides fragments are built in which ought to have been placed 5 or 6 feet high. But enough: I have seen many museums, but never one in which a valuable collection was arranged with so little knowledge & care, nor so needlessly injured by casing in a cement that can never be removed.

4. With a little plaster of Paris to repair breaks on these separate stones - chiefly tenons and sides of mortices, - a very little common sense directed by competent knowledge the collection might have been displayed to great advantage and made most instructive. This is now impossible.

5. Why was this done without consulting anyone who knew about such work & could have arranged the sculptures instructively? Report, no better index perhaps of truth than smoke is of fire, says "it is regarded as a masterpiece of Scotch diplomacy to frustrate my designs of having them removed."!! Notwithstanding some paragraphs I had seen a while ago in the local press to the like silly purport, I could hardly believe my ears. My "designs" were freely & fully communicated to Government long since: and if any one is so ignorantly credulous as to imagine that I could remove a single slab without the approval of His Excellency & his committee, he is to be pitied. If there was "design" in the case it seems to have been to tie the hands of Government by means of Portland cement. But at what a cost! Two museums have received so important a collection of sculptures, none has shown itself so unworthy by such wanton & ignorant abuses of such a trust.

Public DEPARTMENT.

No 8080:

Dated 18th May 1886.Referred to the acting
Surgeon-General for
Remarks.

(By order)

Lieut. Col. Luff
Under Secretary.The Hon. Mr. Minister
in Reply to: The Governor
FW
25/5/86

From

The Director General
Archaeological Survey
of India

No. 240

Dated 15th }
Received 19th } April 1886.

Enclosures —

SUBJECT.

Amaravati Sculptures
in the Central Museum

OFFICE OF SURGEON-GENERAL

WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS,

Port St. George, 19th May 1886.

No. 8080

From G. Bidie Esq. M. B., C. I. E.

THE SURGEON-GENERAL WITH THE

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS,

Port St. George.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT

Public DEPARTMENT.

Sir,

In returning the letter referred under your
No. 8080 of 10th May 1886 regarding the Amaravati
Sculptures which have been erected in the Madras
Museum, I have the honor to submit the following
remarks on Mr. Burgess's animadversions.

1. The original idea was to erect them in the open
space between the two back wings of the Museum
buildings and to protect them by a glass roof,
but this was found impracticable on architectural
and other grounds.

2. It was then resolved with the concurrence of
Government to exhibit them in the interior of the
Museum, and as the marbles would have been liable
to injury and of very little interest to the general public
if simply deposited in the unadorned state, it was
decided to put them up in a way that would give
some idea of their original use and position and
protect them from further injury.

3. Before commencing the task the Engineer
and

and myself not only carefully consulted all the literature on the subject, but also examined the marbles minutely and it was then obvious that we had a very heterogeneous collection to deal with precluding any arrangement that would defy criticism, and we could therefore only do our best to place them as nearly as possible in position and to preserve in view all sculptures and inscriptions.

5. At the same time it became obvious that in erecting the plabe it would be utterly impossible to trust to the mortices and tenons for support as not one of them was quite entire. If a mortice existed the tenon should be gone or vice versa; and so to secure the safety of the stones it became necessary to fill up the interstices with cement or to leave them on the floor disconnected. It may be also mentioned that special arrangements were necessary to give security in consequence of the very great weight of some of the stones. I can safely say that the precautions adopted were deemed absolutely necessary for their safety by the Architect, Colonel Mordaunt R.E., whose respect for these valuable antiquities was just as great as my own.

6. As regards the remarks in para 3 we were not unaware of the different dates of the few fragments of the Stupa & placed together, but the space at our Command did not admit of a separate and chronological arrangement.

48. 13
7. And after all the value of the collection throughout does not to the man of science depend so much on the mode of its grouping as on its sculptures and inscriptions, all of which have been most religiously preserved. The stones as now arranged constitute a very attractive & instructive collection to 99 per cent of the Museum visitors and the archaeological percent will it is to be hoped as a rule see and understand the difficulties we had to encounter and be grateful that they have got so much. It may also be mentioned that scientific visitors from various parts of the world have already, not once but often, expressed their approval of the collection as it now stands. Having thus referred to Dr. Burgess's chief objections it does not appear necessary to notice his other remarks, except the one in para 6 that a certain number of stones "be about uncared for". This is incorrect as all are most carefully preserved.

I have the honor to be

Sir,

Your Most Obedt. Servant

Edw. M. B. L. E.

Ag. Surgeon-General.

Govt. of Madras

From

C. No. 1547.
The Director General.Archaeological Survey of
India.

FOR ORDERS.

D. Burgess's proposals regarding the final disposal of these sculptures were contained in his letter printed in G.O. 28th April 1884 no 843 ("two years ago"), in which they were approved and the Super of the Museum asked to report the cost of carrying them out. It was pointed out by D. Burgess at the time that the work would require "a small care and ingenuity", and that skilled workmen must be engaged to cement together such of the slabs as were broken; otherwise it would be better not to attempt it at all.

D. Burgess accordingly submitted proposals in his letter printed in G.O. 8th July 1884 no 1525, with which he forwarded a letter from Major Stewart, Consulting Architect to Govt. It was proposed that the stones should be moved to their places by mechanical means, that where ~~was~~ cracked or chipped they should be "repaired with cement in such a way as very closely to imitate the marble" and that the work should be entrusted to Major Stewart. These proposals were approved and sanctioned in the order quoted, an order

which unfortunately was
by some oversight not
communicated to Dr. Burgess.
Nothing was said either
then or subsequently as to
any proposal to embed
the slabs in walls of
cement as has actually
been done, nor were Govt.
informed as to the manner
in which it was proposed
to arrange the stones. The
letter from Major Morant
said could be "easily decided
by and by." In para 4 of his
annual report on the museum
printed in G.O. 2nd Dec. 1895-
no 1342. Burgess, Dr. Bidie
reports that the work has
been done and that "all
difficulties were successfully
overcome by the care and
skill of Lieut. W. Morant."
The report mentions that
some of the slabs which adorned
the lower part of the dagoba
itself "were put up on a
brickwork structure shaped so
as to give some idea
of their original position,"
but nothing was said as
to embedding them in ce-
ment. Dr. Burgess was
apparently unable to visit
the museum until "the
other day" and was not
aware until recently of
what had taken place.
He now brings to the
notice of Govt. what he
describes as "the irreparable
damage that has been
done to one of the most
valuable collections in
India." The nature of this

damage is set forth in
Dr. Burgess's letter which, he
says, "to such as have
no interest in art or archae-
ology may seem strongly
expressed, but after all
the truth. I took to have
these marbles conveyed to
Madras in safety, it may
be imagined how vexing it
is to see them so ruined."
The casing of cement can
never, in his opinion, be
removed and "all that
Govt. can now do seems to
be to give orders that
such (slabs) "as have been
exposed shall not be injured
hereafter."

As the work was done
by the Consulting Architect, it
would perhaps be well to
ascertain from the officiating
C.A. (Mr. Ross Thompson)
whether it is absolutely im-
possible to free the sculptures
from their casing. Of
course no steps should be
taken in the matter without
Dr. Burgess's knowledge.

Before disposing of this violent
attack on Dr. Bidie I think
the Govt. would like to hear the
Surgeon Genl. a suggestion
as a first step, that Dr.
Burgess's letter be referred
to for remarks.

Yes
W.D. By all means
C.C.
14/5

13/5/96

Amarnath Sculpt
Central Museum

to 808c

18 May 1886.

FOR ORDERS.

In order.

D^r Bidie's remarks
on D^r Burgess's letter
have been received and
are submitted.

SP
21.5.86

Am: W. Master
The Right Hon^{ble}
The Governor.

Encl. to 10 1886-61
75-6-86

Excellent

MSB

And now we should
also take Indian
attention and we
must be from 10 months.
Remarkable behaviour
MSB

~~No 1161 & 5 June 86.
To the Secy. Genl. & India
Hon. Secy. (Archaeology).
Sir, I am forwarding a copy
of the proposals of this
Govt. of 1160 of this date &
for the appointment of 42.
the Govt. Genl. is of the
and directed to draw attention
to the 1161 in C. to the~~

note

might we say
somewhat as
follows 1160.

5 June 86
D^r E. the Secy. Genl.
is quite satisfied
with the reasons
assigned by Sir
General Bidie for
the course which
was adopted in
dealing with the
Amarnath Sculpt
figures. He has
read, if not with
surprise, at least
with regret, the ex-
traordinary attack
which the Director
General, Archaeolo-
gical Survey of India,
has seen fit to make

on the dead & the
seem & its late master.
Dr Burgess holds
the anomalous
position of Archaeo-
logical Surveyor in
a Province which
he seldom visits
and in which his
interest has been
chiefly manifested
by fault-finding.
It was left to the
local authorities,
in the ~~the~~ absence
of the responsible
adviser of Govern-
ment in such
matters, to make
the best use pos-
sible of the Anas-
tasi remains.

98
intransference to the
language in which
the Director, Genl. G.
the Archaeological Survey
has thought fit to
address this Govt. in
his letter read therein.

(Amended)

282

5/16

27
This has been done
and Dr. E. M. is
inclined to think
that the wholesale
condemnation
expressed in
Dr Burgess's letter
will meet with no
sympathy from
the Archaeological
one per cent or
any other propor-
tion of Museum
visitors; it certainly
has neither his
concurrence nor
approval.

It should not
be forgotten also
that though Dr
Burgess has after
a protracted absence

4516
 Actually visited the
 museum he has
 not apparently
 grasped the actual
 facts relating to
 the sculptures & he
 came to see, for
 he describes in his
 6th paragraph a
 state of things which
 has no existence.
 The lack of accuracy
 in observing facts
 perhaps accounts
 for Dr. Burgess's ac-
 ceptance as such
 of the items of gossip
 which has thought
 fit to incorporate
 in his 'strongly ex-
 pressed' letter.

J. W.
 27/5
 W. H.

The Dr. Burgess, in his letter of 27/5, has
 written to the effect that he has
 been to the museum & has seen the
 sculptures.

Note - attention
 of Dr. Burgess to
 the matter

J. W.
 2/6

Des 27/6

Copy to the Govt. of India. Amie.
 Dpt. (Archaeology).

Order - 80.

PRESS.

Public DEPARTMENT.
G.O. DATED 5 June 1886.
No. 1160-1161

First copy sent to Press.

Returned for signature.

Despatched in print.

[Despatch Abstract.]

Ancient Sculptures
 Taping order in the refer
 to Dr. Burges's remarks
 regarding the — which
 have been erected in the
 East Cent. Museum, Madras.

Letter drafted.

Forwarding copy of
 of the order in the refer to the remarks
 of the Genl. Archaeological Survey
 regarding the — erected in the
 Madras Museum or drawing at-
 tention to the interference of the
 language in which the things have
 through the to address the Genl.

72 923007/86 2/32982

11

PRESS.

<i>Publ</i> DEPARTMENT.	
G.O. DATED	5 June 186
No.	1160

First copy sent to Press.

Returned for signature. 12/6

Despatched in print. 26/6/86



[Despatch Abstract.]

Amaravati Sculptures

Passing orders with reference
to Dr. Burges's remarks
regarding the which
have been erected
in the Govt Central
Museum, Madras.