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**A few  
suggestions  
as to the best  
way of making  
and utilizing ...**

**Arthur Coke  
Burnell**

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*From the author*

(Not printed for Sale.)

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**FEW SUGGESTIONS**

AS TO THE

**BEST WAY OF MAKING AND UTILIZING**

COPIES OF

**INDIAN INSCRIPTIONS.**

BY

A. C. BURNELL,

M. C. S., M. R. A. S.

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**MADRAS:**

HIGGINBOTHAM AND CO.

1870.

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*9 Jan 1871*

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## A FEW SUGGESTIONS AS TO THE BEST WAY OF MAKING AND UTILIZING COPIES OF INDIAN INSCRIPTIONS.

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THAT we know little or nothing about the History of India, comparatively speaking, has long been an admitted fact; and this has naturally induced those interested in the subject to regard with close attention the inscriptions which still exist in almost every part of India. The list of students of these inscriptions is by no means a short one, though scarcely a hundred years have elapsed since the beginnings of a rational study of Sanskrit. The Portuguese at Goa took some inscriptions on stone to their native country, but Sir CHAS. WILKINS was the first to explain one (at Cintra) about the end of the last century. The earlier volumes of the Asiatic Researches contain several interpreted by WILKINS, JONES, and COLEBROOKE, and in the later volumes H. H. WILSON contributed many valuable articles on this subject. The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal about 40 years ago made (by the articles by J. PRINSEP, Dr. MILL, and others) immense progress, and of later years the same Journal, the Journals of the Royal Asiatic Society, and of the Bombay Society have often done much to advance the study of the Sanskrit inscriptions of India, and the names of Mr. NORRIS, Professor DOWSON, Mr. THOMAS, Mr. BAYLEY, Dr. BHAU DAJI, and BABU RAJENDRALAL MITTRA need scarcely be mentioned as most diligent and successful decipherers. In the South of India an immense number of inscriptions exist in the so-called Dravidian languages many



of which are not inferior in antiquity or interest to most of the Sanskrit and Prakrit inscriptions of the North ; nor have they been neglected, though with the exception of a few articles (in the Madras Journal) published by Sir W. ELLIOTT and containing the results of his own researches and those of the late F. W. ELLIS, nothing has been, as yet, made public. Colonel MACKENZIE, however, at the beginning of this century made an immense collection of copies of inscriptions, and to the disinterested labour of Mr. C. P. BROWN, we owe the existence of copies of this collection, which though purchased by Government for an enormous sum, had been neglected and suffered to rot from want of a little care. What remains of the originals and all Mr. BROWN's copies are at Madras. Copies of inscriptions collected by Sir W. ELLIOTT in the Canarese country were presented by him to the R. A. Society of London.\* Of late years General CUNNINGHAM has made large collections of copies of inscriptions in the North of India, but his Archæological reports containing the result of his enquiries, having been printed by Government, are entirely inaccessible to the public. Apart from these partial and local collections an attempt was made about 30 years ago by the late Monsr. JACQUET to commence a "Corpus" of Indian Inscriptions, and had not an untimely death interrupted his scheme, much might have been done.

This brief notice will show what has been effected ; but large as the amount of work appears, it is beyond doubt that the real work of collection and decipherment of Indian Inscriptions is as yet scarcely begun. Most also of what has been already done will certainly have to be done again.

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\* A large volume of Photographs of inscriptions from Mysore and Dharwar has been published by Dr. Pigou and Colonel Barr, but unfortunately few of these are clearly legible, and many seem to be of small value. The book is also very costly. The same remarks hold good of Captain Tripes' Photographs of the inscriptions at Tanjore.

That the Indian Inscriptions are infected with the exaggeration and palpable falsehoods which too often mark attempts at History in the East is certain, but apart from that it is obvious that many facts cannot be misrepresented : such are names of places and of peoples ; facts respecting religious worship ; tenures ; and often, dates. Though therefore the result of the study of the Inscriptions must often be a negative one, it must be recollected always that even a negative result has its proper value, and that though inferior in interest to positive results, yet nevertheless science cannot dispense with it. What yet remains to be done, is to make available to the scientific public copies of all existing inscriptions ; and this involves a uniform system of preparing such copies. Scattered as inscriptions are over the whole of India, it is at present chimerical to attempt to study them ; to say nothing of the want of time for such work experienced by all Students resident there. To make and collect copies is however a mechanical task, which may be easily done ; and now that a little interest is awakened regarding the ancient civilization of the many races of India, a few suggestions as to the best way of doing so may not be thought inopportune, especially by those who see that a work of this kind if not soon done, can perhaps never be done at all.\* The first question is—How to make the copies ? Many ways have been tried ; rubbings by heelball on paper, impressions on linen made by a pad daubed with printing ink, sketches, drawings, photographs, &c. ; &c. Considerable experience† and a number of experiments have convinced me that all

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\* Inscriptions are daily being destroyed during repairs of temples, and by the country people taking stones from ruins. Copper çasanas find their way to the melting pot.

† Cf. also the remarks of Prinsep and Mill, and recently of Dr. Bhau Daji as to the great alterations required by improved transcripts of inscriptions long known and published. The great objection to photography as a means of reproducing inscriptions consists in the imperfections of the paper used, and the difficulty (or impossibility) of managing the light.

these methods, are defective, and that only two ways are really trustworthy; one applicable to inscriptions on stone, and the other to those on metal.

Firstly for inscriptions on stone, I recommend impressions on stout unsized paper, such as is now manufactured at Paris for the use of Egyptologists. The inscription must first of all be quite cleared of dust or mud or other obstructions, and this may be best done by a hard clothes-brush. The paper is then to be rapidly but uniformly wetted in a tub of water, and applied to the inscription and forced into the irregularities by repeated and forcible strokes with a hard brush, an ordinary clothes brush is as good as any for the purpose. If the stone be clear of dust the paper adheres, and when dry, falls off forming (if at all well done) a perfect mould of the inscription. Paper large enough to cover most inscriptions is easily to be had; in the case of very large ones, it is necessary to lap over the edges of the sheets and apply a little gum and water or weak paste to them, and also to prevent those sheets first applied from falling, and thus spoiling the rest. A few poles or sticks leaning against the corners in large, or the gum used for joining in small inscriptions, will be found enough. When properly dried copies made in this way (in French, "estampages"), may be rolled up or put in blank books without the slightest injury, and even will stand damp. M. MARIETTE-BEY and Dr. BRUGSCH both assured me in Egypt last year, that they never found this plan fail.

The second process is applicable to inscriptions on plates of metal; I devised it several years ago and never found it fail. The plate or plates should be carefully cleaned with a dry brush, and the letters occasionally must be cleared out with a blunt graver. The native process of rubbing the plates with acid, and then putting them in the fire to loosen the encrustations should never be resorted to as it invariably injures them fatally. From the cleaned plate an impression (reversé) is to be next taken by passing a roller

charged with ink over the plate, and then printing from it as from an ordinary copper plate. From this impression another may be taken by means of an ordinary copper plate press ; and with a little practice a perfect facsimile may be thus obtained, the letters being white, and the rest of the plate appearing a dark grey. Photozincography and many other methods exist by which "estampages" and facsimiles made by the last process may be multiplied to any extent.

It is obvious that only a limited number of copies can be taken by the above processes, but more than half a dozen can never be required, as it would be useless to publish collections of Indian inscriptions collected indiscriminately, and it would be equally useless to deposit copies at other public libraries than those at the three Presidency Towns, the India Office, British Museum, Royal Library at Berlin, and National Library at Paris. Should (as is much to be desired) a local Museum and Library be established at the chief town of each district, copies of the inscriptions in each district might be deposited there ; but as things are at present, half a century might pass before any one in India interested himself in such subjects as local Archæology.

The last point is the arrangement of the copies. I think that the only plan would be to number each one carefully as finished, and to preserve them in portfolios. A separate list should then be made giving the number and following particulars respecting each inscription—(1) District where found ; (2) place, and distance, in miles and direction by compass, of place from the chief town in district ; (3) nature of material on which the inscription is written ; (4) if found in a temple, exact position therein ; (5) if in a temple, the worship then practised there. The copies of inscription as yet collected are sadly deficient in these particulars, and valuable geographical information is thus often lost and the historical information rendered of little use. It would (except in experienced hands) be quite

useless to attempt to classify the inscriptions by the character in which they are written ; and it would be most absurd to classify them (as was done sometime ago in the case of the Madras MSS.) by the material.

That even the best known inscriptions in India have only been copied in the very roughest possible way may not be a generally known fact, but such is the case. The great inscription of Kapur-di-giri (near Peshawur) which is of surpassing interest, is only known by a badly executed impression on cloth wrongly pieced together. Mr. EDWIN NORRIS' wonderful skill and acuteness have restored and deciphered it, but an estampage (made as above directed) would be still of the greatest value. The Açoka inscriptions (except that at Girnar, which was properly copied nearly 30 years ago by General LEGRAND JACOB and Professor WESTERGAARD) have been equally neglected ; one of these exists (I believe) near Ganjam. These inscriptions are the great fact in early Indian History, and yet our knowledge of them is most imperfect.

A single instance may show how much curious information even trivial inscriptions will give. The temple of Tirukazhukunram some 36 miles S. of Madras is well known, as few residents in the neighbourhood have not been there to see the kites come and be fed at noon. This curious usage (the temple is now devoted to the worship of çiva) has never been explained. An inspection of the inscriptions there shows that the temple was once Jain, and thus the practice becomes intelligible. However on reading Târanathâs, History of Indian Buddhism (in Tibetan) I found this temple mentioned there as a famous Buddhist shrine by the name of Paxitîrtha, or (in the Tibetan corresponding name) Bird-convent. This succession of cults is of the greatest interest and shows that modern Hinduism has been chiefly developed in South India. As regards the Dravidian inscriptions one of the first points to be attended to is the system of dates. The word used is "ându," but no probable expla-

nation has, as yet, been offered of this term.\* When this is explained (and there ought to be many Tamil Scholars able to work out the problem), as almost all Tamil inscriptions are dated, it is not difficult to see how great their value will be.

The origin of the older form of character used in most of the Açoka inscriptions has yet to be explained. I say older, because the characters used at Kapur-di-giri (of Phœnician origin) exhibit the system of marking the vowels used in the other, and which is also used in the old Tamil character. It is by no means certain that the Old Tamil alphabet is derived from that of the Açoka inscriptions.

A last point which may be solved by Indian Inscriptions, is the origin and age of the decimal system of notation, which as Woepcke has proved, came (through the Arabs) from India to Europe. May not the cipher represent the large cowry used by native Astronomers in the decimal places, in their certainly very ancient method of calculation by cowries ?

September 1870.

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\* How plainly wrong the dates of Tamil inscriptions have been given is evident from the early dates which have been repeatedly assigned to the inscriptions in possession of the Jews and Syrians at Cochin ; yet the last are witnessed in Cufic Arabic, Pehlewi, and Persian in the Hebrew character ; so they cannot be older than the 7th or 8th century A. D.

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