

*Memorandum on the life-sized Statues lately exhumed inside the Palace of Delhi.—By C. CAMPBELL, Esq., C. E.**Delhi, June 5th, 1863.*

1. We have now collected together and sorted all the fragments, and find that they comprise, apparently, portions of no less than 3 groups, all imperfect, as follows.

Elephants	Feet,	11 fragments.
„	Legs,	18 Ditto.
„	Trunk,	21 Ditto.
„	Head,	4 Ditto.
„	Body and	} 63 Ditto.
„	Howdah,	

And in addition several hundred fragments that cannot now be identified.

Of human figures, there are 3 portions of a body, 4 fragments of arms, and one complete head.

These are in a very rude style of art; one of the hands is comparatively perfect and has the thumb on the exterior, *i. e.* where the little finger ought to be, and vice versâ. An attempt has been made at some former period to repair these groups; this is evident from many of the fractures having been cut square, and new pieces of stone fitted in, whilst from the fact of these new pieces having remained uncarved, it is clear that the attempt was soon abandoned.

2. There can be no doubt that these are the identical figures seen and described by Bernier, who visited Delhi at the commencement of of Aurungzebe's reign. His description is as follows.

“The entrance of the fortress (palace) presents nothing remarkable besides two large elephants of stone, placed at either side of one of the principal gates: on one of the elephants is seated the statue of Jemel, the renowned Rajah of Chittore; on the other is the statue of Polta his brother. These are the brave heroes, who, with their still braver mother, immortalized their names by the extraordinary resistance which they opposed to the celebrated Akbar; who defended the towers besieged by that great Emperor with unshaken resolution; and who, at length reduced to extremity, devoted themselves to their country, and chose rather to perish with their mother in sallies

against the enemy, than submit to an insolent invader. It is owing to this extraordinary devotion on their part, that their enemies have thought them deserving of the statues here erected to their memory. These two large elephants, mounted by the two heroes, have an air of grandeur, and inspire me with an awe and respect which I cannot describe."

Of their removal from this position nothing is known; from the state of the remains it was evidently attended with violence, and is probably therefore due to the iconoclastic tendencies shewn by Aurungzebe, in the latter part of his life. The attempt at restoration would be made during the reign of one of his successors, when it may have been proposed to complete the group, by the addition of a third elephant, bearing the effigy of the heroic mother of the two Hindoo princes.

On the abandonment of the design, the fragments would be left to lie neglected and uncared for; many would be stolen or employed in the decoration of new buildings, until what was left was buried in the ruins of the house where they lay, and from the debris of which they have just been recovered.

3. The question now arises; are the statues lately exhumed the same as those described by General Cunningham as existing at Gwalior? That they are independent works by Mahommadan artists is very unlikely, although it is of course *possible* that they may have been made by order of the Emperor Shah Jehan when the new city and palace were designed by him; but why, in this case, should the effigies of princes of a hostile race and faith have been selected as subjects? and how account for the absence of any mention of them in the records that have descended to us? It is much more probable that they were the work of Hindoo artists, brought from a conquered city for the adornment of the new palace of Shah Jehan; if so, did they come from Chittore? I think not, for, had they existed there for any time, they must have been as well known as the Gwalior ones, which does not seem to have been the case.

4. It must be borne in mind that they are not *statuary portraits* like those executed by European artists, but mere effigies like "Gog and Magog" in the London Guildhall, and they probably bore as much resemblance to Jemel and Polta as to Maun Sing, or any other Hindoo chief.—Bernier's statement is no proof of their being actually

meant as likenesses of the two brothers, and merely shows that at the time of his visit, they were popularly known by general repute as representing the two Chittore princes, but leaves untouched the assumption that they may have been in existence for centuries, may have been known at Gwalior as memorials of the popular hero there, —Raja Maun Sing—and on their removal to Delhi, may have been re-named by Shah Jehan, in memory of some incident in his early youth, connected with the fall of Chittore.

5. In his memorandum, General Cunningham has shewn that the art of sculpture had long flourished at Gwalior, and that more than one statue of a life-size existed there. Of the most famous of these, he has traced the history down to the reign of Shah Jehan, and proves that it had disappeared from Gwalior in the next reign. Its disappearance he connects with the iconoclasm of Aurungzebe, but if that Emperor destroyed it at *Gwalior*, how came the fragments to find their way to *Delhi*? Their removal must have occurred during the troubled reigns of the successors of Aurungzebe, who had but little leisure or inclination for adorning their capital with expensive restorations of ruined statues, brought from so great a distance.

6. The history of the Gwalior statues then, ends abruptly in the latter part of Shah Jehan's reign; that of the Delhi ones commences as abruptly about the same time: what is more probable than that the two groups are identical, and that they were removed from Gwalior by Shah Jehan, who would gladly avail himself of this opportunity of transferring to his new palace and capital, works of art so celebrated? the only ones of their kind, apparently, that existed in his dominions, and the removal of which, in their uninjured state, would be a comparatively easy task; how the change of nomenclature may have arisen, I have already pointed out.



Campbell, C. J. 1865. "Memorandum on the life-Sized Statues Lately Exhumed Inside the Palace of Delhi." *The journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 33(II), 159–161.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/119070>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/367609>

Holding Institution

American Museum of Natural History Library

Sponsored by

Smithsonian Institution Libraries

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: Not in copyright

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.