

RESEARCH PAPER: ASIA/PACIFIC

Locating an Antiquarian Initiative in a Late 19th Century Colonial Landscape: Rivett-Carnac and the Cultural Imagining of the Indian Sub-Continent

Bishnupriya Basak

In this paper I seek to understand antiquarian practices in a colonial context in the Indian sub-continent with reference to J.H. Rivett-Carnac who was a member of the Bengal Civil Service. Covering varied subjects like 'ancient cup marks on rocks,' spindle whorls, votive seals or a solitary Buddha figure, Rivett-Carnac's writings reflect an imagining of a native landscape with wide-ranging connections in myths, symbolisms and material cultures which cross-cut geographical borders. I show how an epistemology of comparative archaeology was formed through the ways in which he compared evidence recorded from different parts of India to those documented in Great Britain and northern Europe. This was held together by ideas of tribal/racial migrations. I am arguing that a distinctive form of antiquarianism was unfolding in an ambiguous, interstitial space which deconstructs any neat binaries between the colonizer and the colonized. Recent researches have argued for many antiquarianisms which this paper upholds. With his obsession of cup marks Rivett-Carnac built a new set of interconnections in late 19th century Britain where the Antiquity of man was the pivot around which debates and theories circulated. In the colony, we see some of his predecessors concerned with the megalithic tombs scattered in different parts of central and southern India. Rivett-Carnac's methodology was less rigorous and 'scientific' as compared to his peers or predecessors. His obsession with cup marks followed him—as he states in his autobiography—throughout his life.

Introduction

History of Archaeology in the Indian sub-continent is a field that shows only limited attempts at historical research of the discipline, as compared to the burgeoning research in field archaeology. The existing scholarship may be seen as broadly covering three overlapping areas—antiquarian initiatives which fell outside the realm of the Archaeological Survey of India; changing paradigms of research in technology, subsistence systems and the like; and the history of institutions.¹ The practice of an *official* archaeology within the ambit of the Archaeological Survey in the colonial context has engaged historians of the discipline in delineating the pre-occupations of the Director-Generals of the Survey, interpreting their attitudinal differences to the ancient past of the colony (Lahiri 1998; Lahiri 2000; Singh 2004; Ray 2008). Still others look at the decentralizing initiatives within the Survey (Basak 2007). The 'investigative modalities'² in the spheres of survey, and museum building have been emphasized in some of these writings within a larger design of the colonial project and the forms of knowledge it generated. Other institutional endeavours within the colonial fold like those of the Princely States and the Asiatic Society (Kejariwal 1988) have also been highlighted. The three

overlying areas are mainly contextualized in the colonial with a spill-over in the national/regional context.

In this paper I seek to understand antiquarian practices in a colonial context in the Indian sub-continent with reference to J.H. Rivett-Carnac.³ A member of the Bengal Civil Service, he wrote extensively on material remains, traversing a wide geographical tract from Chota Nagpur, Bihar plains to north, northwest and central India. His subjects were varied—'ancient sculpturing on rocks', 'mason's marks on old buildings', 'rude stone monuments', flint implements, spindle whorls, votive seals or a solitary Buddha figure. I am arguing that his imagining of a native landscape was reflective of wide-ranging connections in myths, symbolisms and material culture which cross-cut geographical borders, yet retained a distinctiveness in its fold with a thread of universal history underlying this narrative. A curious ambiguous, interstitial space unfolded that belied any form of categorization and signified a situation which deconstructs any neat binaries between the colonizer and the colonized.⁴ Post-colonial theory has been directed at deconstructing binaries between the colonizer and the colonized, the concept of 'ambivalence' having emerged from this.⁵

I have chosen to focus on Antiquarian practices as these reveal interesting yet complex relationships between oral tradition, monument, object and text, raising many epistemological questions on the nature of archaeological

knowledge and offering a wider scope for understanding the history of the discipline. Of late the stature of antiquarian practice has attracted much more attention than before, in which an expanded vision of its practice is envisaged (Schnapp 2014; Schnapp et al 2014). Rivett-Carnac's forays into diverse fields contribute to this vision.

Much of the European antiquarianism up to the end of the 19th century focused on how pre-literate societies encountered by the Europeans in the native lands played a crucial role in the European's understandings of their own pre-literate ancestors. But, despite sharing a colonial or imperial heritage there is considerable diversity within this phenomenon with differences embedded in social and cultural contexts (Murray 2014), so that we may talk of many antiquarianisms. In the course of the present study I will discuss this, comparing Rivett-Carnac's methodology with that of two other scholar-administrators (the phrase emanating from professional engagements of these individuals in colonial services), predating him.

Locating Rivett-Carnac in His Times: in the Metropolis and the Colony

Born in 1838 in London Rivett-Carnac was connected to the ancient Suffolk family of Ryvet, on the paternal side. On his maternal side the connection stretched back to the ancient noble French family Barons of Castelnau and St Croix de Boriac in Languedoc, whose name is well-known in the history of the Huguenot struggle in France. Through his wife he was connected to a Scottish lineage.

Given such an illustrious background it was only natural that he would opt for the Indian Civil Service. His first appointment was as Assistant Magistrate, Midnapore in 1861, followed within a year by a promotion to the post of Secretary to the Income Tax Commission. His rise in officialdom was meteoric, and he was soon selected to

officialiate as Under Secretary in the Home Department with charge of the Foreign Department's office, much to the chagrin of his contemporaries and seniors. Soon after in June 1862 he became Assistant Secretary to the Chief Commissioner and Assistant to the Governor-General in the Central Provinces. The last took him to the wilderness of an unknown land, which also gave him opportunity to pursue his antiquarian interests.

It would be worthwhile to look at the intellectual backdrop in the metropolis to situate Rivett-Carnac. In late 19th century Britain *Antiquity of man* was the pivot around which debates and theories circulated, the evidentiary sources derived from multiple disciplines like geology, palaeontology, prehistoric archaeology, and ethnology.⁶ It has been argued that this marked a disjuncture between Archaeology—which was foregrounded by the new search for human origins—and Antiquarianism that flourished before (Briggs 2007). Briggs argues that antiquarianism associated with Stukeley's obsessive Druidism and archaeo-astronomy was on the wane, which was centred principally on barrow-digging.⁷ Barrows and cup-marks formed the chief obsession of Rivett-Carnac as I shall show below.

The existing scholarship on these developmental aspects of archaeological research in the metropolis is rich and varied and does not demand any elaboration here. What I do wish to emphasize is that Rivett-Carnac built on a different set of interconnections than those that were prevailing in the late 19th century Victorian scholarship. His more important writings were focused principally on these earthen mounds and their markings which he located in different parts of the Central provinces (**Figure 1**), at a time when many of his peers were embroiled in debates concerning the new science of man which became the foundational basis of Victorian Anthropology. Given this

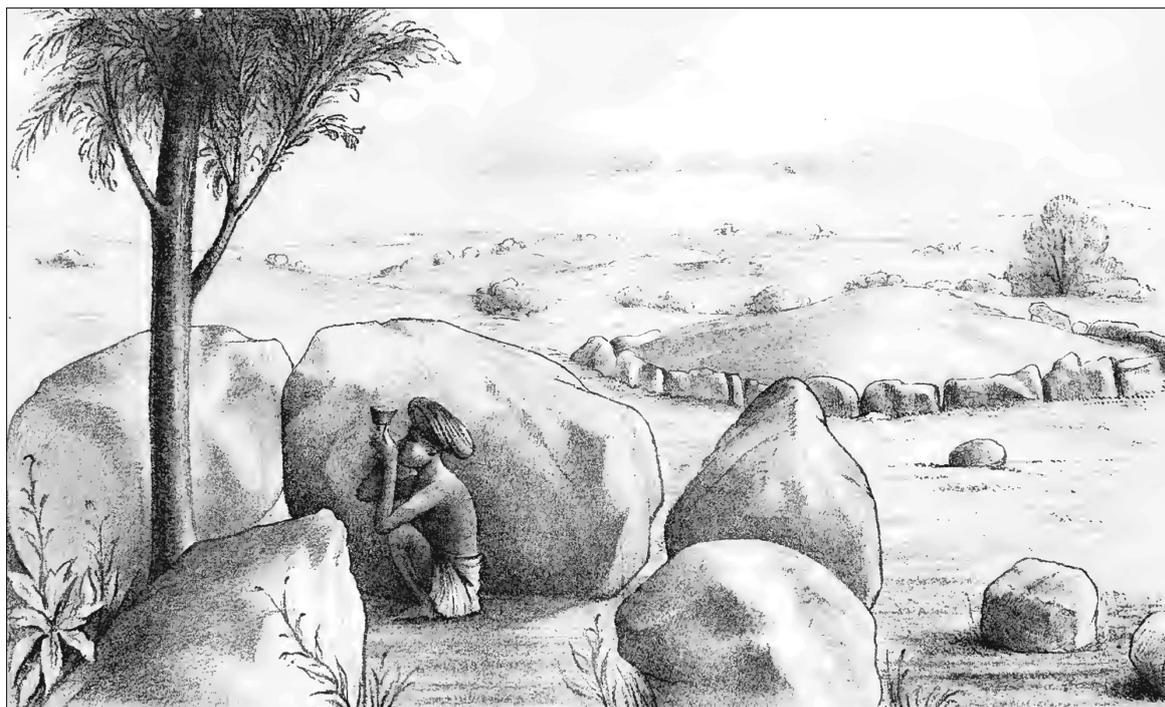


Figure 1: Prehistoric remains from Central India.

backdrop I turn to his peers pursuing antiquarian research in the sub-continent.

I have argued elsewhere⁸ through writings of colonial scholar-administrators appearing in the Proceedings and Journals of the Asiatic Society of Bengal (late 18th to early 19th centuries) how an ambivalent hybrid space was created in locating the antiquity of man in the sub-continent. Through situating this in the historicizing process(es) of human antiquity in Victorian Britain I have shown how the new disciplinary alliances of prehistoric archaeology, ethnology, geology and philology invented the notion of early man in the subcontinent when often the latter was considered as the cradle of human civilization. At a time when Rivett-Carnac was writing—a few of his writings were published in the proceedings and journals of the Society—notes, articles on ethnology, prehistory and ethnography formed the core of the Society's publications. There were also a few others like William Crooke (1848–1923) belonging to the Colonial Service who left behind very important information on the ethnography of tribes and other social groups particularly of North and Central India. Like Rivett-Carnac he was pre-occupied with more recent times.

I shall discuss in brief the work of Colonel Meadows Taylor (1808–1876) and Colonel Colin Mackenzie (1754–1821), two earlier scholar-administrators whose antiquarian researches perhaps formed a prelude to Rivett-Carnac's slightly later initiative. Both concentrated on megaliths and barrows in peninsular India, tracts not too far from Central India which became the locus of Rivett-Carnac's activities. In Taylor we note notions of race and racial movement centring on megalithic monuments. He found close parallels between the Iron Age Megalithic monuments, datable to the early half of the first millennium BCE (Paddayya 1995, 2018b) and those reported from France and England. On the basis of these affinities, he ascribed their authorship to the Scytho-Druids, who, according to him, spread both westwards and eastwards from a common point in Central Asia. We will see how similar ideas resonate in Rivett-Carnac's writings.

Mackenzie's topographical surveys and discovery of various classes of antiquarian remains (Paddayya 2013; Paddayya 2018b), his interesting alliances with native informants (Dirks 1994) are well-known. For the megalithic monuments he had a comprehensive approach — a thorough documentation with proper plans and drawings and recording of finds after opening of the mounds. Mackenzie's maps, it has been argued, are reflective of a scientific gaze complemented by picturesque gaze. The Druidical association of the monuments remained a recurring theme—here we see linkages between ancient cults and prehistoric monuments.

Such interconnections between assumed racial drifts, races, cults and archaeological monuments reverberate in Rivett-Carnac's writings. However, his methodology was less rigorous than his predecessors and more oriented towards attempts at deciphering the cup marks on the earthen mounds or barrows of which he drew several sketches (**Figure 2**). His description and documentation of the other antiquarian remains also showed less rigour, not attaining the standards of a 'scientific' analysis. I am

arguing that this formed another strand of antiquarianism which demands a differential evaluation that I seek to highlight through the different themes of his writings.

Imagining a landscape of connectivity *Of ancient sculpturing, stone monuments and earthen mounds*

'...to trace these barrows and rocks together with their markings from Madras, through Central India and the Himalayas, and thus on through Central Asia to the Crimea and South eastern Europe. From thence there will be but little difficulty in completing the chain, through the continent of Europe, to our own islands.' (Rivett-Carnac 1879a: 13).

(Figure 3)

This was Rivett-Carnac's principal objective in studying the barrows and monolithic monuments — to chart the migratory route of the primitive tribe. He began with the Central Provinces — the central part of India — which were 'the happy hunting ground of the antiquary, and there I imbibed my first taste for prehistoric research under the distinguished missionary, Mr. Stephen Hislop.' (Rivett-Carnac 1910: 85).

In his writings, letters and memoirs we also discover a web of relations between individuals who displayed an obsessive interest in cup marks on stones and rocks and barrows. Markings found on tumuli or earthen barrows and carvings on rock were defined as 'cup marks' by antiquarians working with ancient monuments in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Sir Alfred Lyell, who was an important personality in the Bengal Civil Service advised Rivett-Carnac in choosing the Central provinces.⁹ Hislop introduced him to a group of prehistoric tumuli near Nagpore which became his later pre-occupation. We find lengthy correspondence between Rivett-Carnac and some of his peers in England and Scotland who offered many meanings for the cup marks, drawing on connections between the ones traced in these countries and those found in the sub-continent. A few of them implored Rivett-Carnac to probe into the symbolic significance of these markings.¹⁰

So we find Rivett-Carnac embarking on this journey. The hilly tracts of Central India were considered to have been the home, from time immemorial of the Bhils, the Gondhs and 'other wild tribes.' Rivett-Carnac assumed that these indigenous groups had retreated to these hilly lands following the onslaught of invaders, much like the retreat of the ancient Britons to Wales and other remote regions. Inspired by Simpson who had written on 'Archaic sculpturing on cups, circles and c., on stones and rocks in Scotland, England and other countries' Rivett-Carnac documented many such markings and carvings during his sojourn in the Central provinces. His attention to these markings had been drawn by Hislop while in Nagpore. He writes in his *Memoirs* that his interest in these markings was seriously aroused when he visited Alnwick castle during one of his trips back home. A folio volume that was prepared under the orders of the Duke of Northumberland led him to



Figure 2: Cupmarks on rocks.

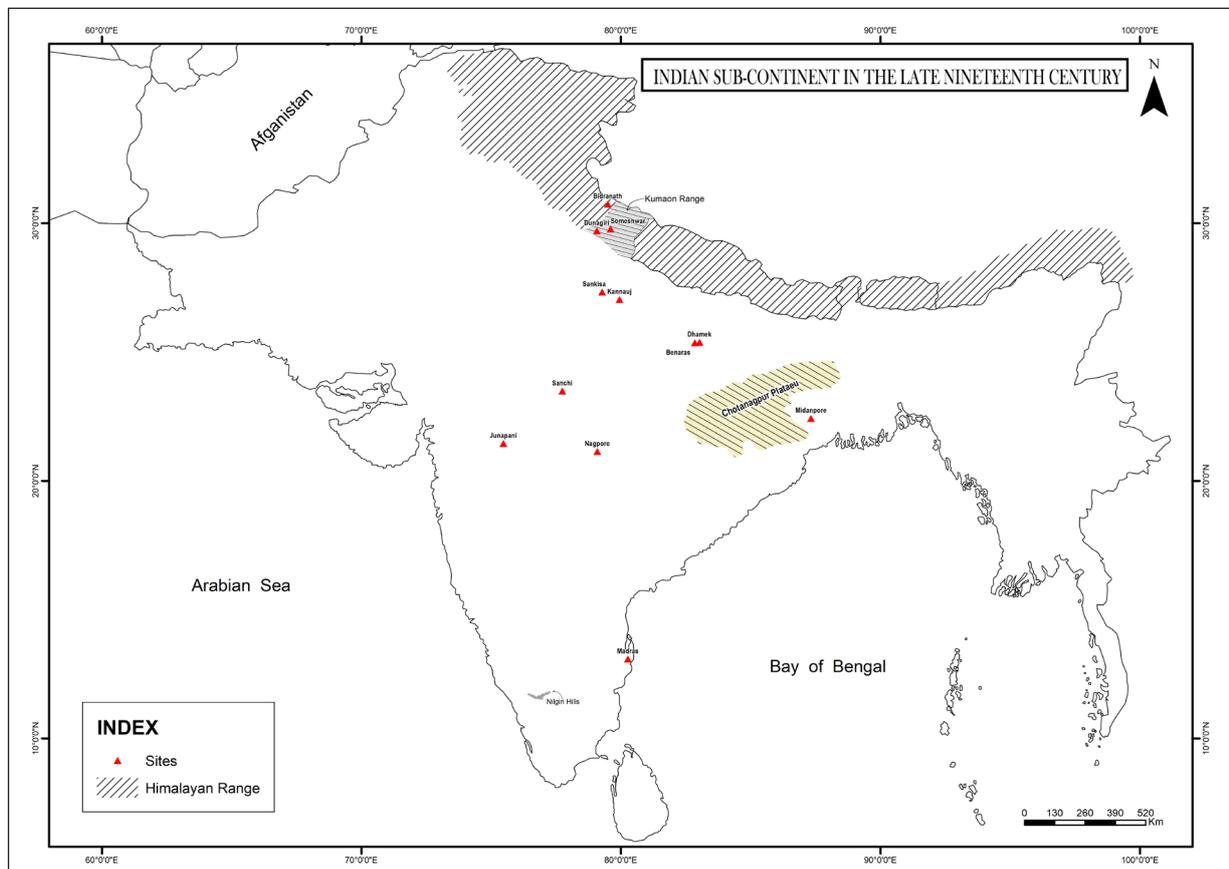


Figure 3: A map of the Indian sub-continent with regions and places mentioned.

probe into the resemblance between these cup marks and other rock carvings traced in many Northumberland rocks and monoliths to those found in India.

While on an autumn holiday in the Kumaon hills in Northern India he documented a number of stone circles, monoliths and markings on them similar to those observed in Northern Europe (Rivett-Carnac 1879a). He traced a sacred route to the celebrated shrine at Bidranath¹¹ and on the way noted a temple of *Mahadeo* (the Hindu God Shiva)-Chandeswar. In the vicinity rocky outcrops with 200 cup marks were recorded displaying many permutations with grooves and gutters. Apart from the chief Mahadeo/Shiva shrines there were 37 minor shrines within the enclosed area. They consisted of a rough pedestal formed of loose stones, surrounded by a Mahadeo (as represented by a monolithic stone/*linga*/phallus) and Yoni (representation of the female reproductive organ, symbolic to the female principle). The inner space was considered to have been the burial place of 'men of great sanctity'. The shape of such a 'rustic temple' resembled the Stonehenge and Avebury monuments in southern England, according to Rivett-Carnac.

On the route between Dunagiri and Sameswar¹² he came across more monoliths resembling the Chandeswar Mahadeo Circles. He postulated some strange connection between sun and moon worship of Mahadeo and Yoni. He saw many such resemblances with mass of boulders lying round a mound, close-by. On the summit was a shrine consisting of a box which Rivett-Carnac likened to a kistvaen. Within this was a small phallus/*linga*. An outer and inner circle of stones with cup marks on the boulders was recorded as well, the entire plan similar to the Chandeswar shrine. He classified these rock markings typologically. Little niches in the Mahadev shrines with stone receptacles meant for holy water were compared with those seen in European churches. No information was available on the origin of the cup marks; only the old men of the village were quoted as saying that these were the work of the 'giants' or the 'goalas' (herdsmen) of the past. Whatever their origin, an 'extraordinary resemblance' was observed with similar remains in Northumberland, many parts of Scotland, Ireland, Brittany, Norway and Denmark. Conventional symbols of the Mahadeo and Yoni noticed on the monoliths exhibited strong similarities, he believed, with similar monoliths in Europe. The resemblance was striking even in the alignment of stones.

He considered such monumental ruins in Europe to be indicative of primitive forms of worship related to *lingam* worship, which had once spread all over the globe, and later only got confined to the Indian sub-continent. These were also signatures of a nomadic race which had left Central Asia at a very early point in history and migrated to different directions of the world. Under the threat of a 'more civilized and powerful race'—the Aryans— they were forced to retreat to the hilly lands and inaccessible spots in which these stone vestiges were found.

Rivett-Carnac's travels in search of ancient sculpturing were not restricted only to the Central provinces and Northern India. A local tradition concerning the

construction of the circles on the summit of the hills in Salem district—now falling in the state of Tamil Nadu—was also collected (Rivett-Carnac 1879a). The tumuli here were considered to be the burial places of the non-Aryan aboriginal inhabitants of the South, who were represented in modern times by the Dravidians, belonging to the same branch of the racial family as the Turanians. Following from this he argued that none of these structures in the Indian plains were later than 13th century CE, and on the Nilgiri hills (in South India), no later than 15th–16th century CE. In local Tamil usage they were known as the *Pandu-kuris*, made by the legendary Pandava kings of the Mahabharata, the great epic.

'To call anything a work of the Pandus is equivalent to terming it 'Cyclopean' in Greece, a work of 'Piets' in Scotland, or a work of Nimrod in Asiatic Turkey.' (Rivett-Carnac 1879a: 13)

More barrows from Nagpore in the Central Provinces were documented (Rivett-Carnac 1879b), the most extensive group situated near Junapani; the intriguing nature of their origins continued to haunt him. Comparisons were drawn with the tumuli in Brittany and other parts of France. Here he undertook some digging that yielded broken urns, pottery and iron implements. Cross-cultural comparison was drawn of artefacts—a knife, battle-axe found at Junapani with a metal celt found in Ireland which was linked stylistically with a copper celt found in an Etruscan tomb. More links were forged:

'It is probable then, that the carving on the Sanchi Tope is intended to represent a metal hatchet such as that discovered in the barrow and marked No. 5 and it suggests itself that the tumuli at Junapani are the remains of an aboriginal tribe, whose presence on the Sanchi sculptures, in contradistinction to the followers of Buddha, is distinctly traced by Mr. Fergusson.' (Rivett-Carnac 1879b: 8)

A social significance was also ascribed to the barrows on the basis of their appearance and location — 'the centre tomb was perhaps that of a chieftain.' Therefore, it was decided to open the structure. Customs were also sourced back to classical texts:

'A small brooch, or buckle, or ornament, resembling in shape a bow and arrow...I cannot find the passage in Herodotus, but, if I am not mistaken, it is mentioned either by him or one of the old writers, that a custom prevailed among the Scythians or nomadic tribes of that class, of burying with their dead their weapons, or horse trappings, or the miniature of their weapons.' (Rivett-Carnac 1879b: 10)

Speculations continued to be made about the meaning of the cup-marks. They could resemble some form of script. Alternatively, they may denote the age of the deceased warrior or the number of his children, or the number of enemies slain by him.

Thus 'Wherever I went I rode my "cup-mark" hobby', Rivett-Carnac wrote in his memoirs (Rivett-Carnac 1910: 422). He always hoped to find these carvings in a landscape of stone and rocks. When he visited Spain later in his career, he followed his hobby. His wife spotted marks of a similar kind on the rough boar-shaped rocks brought from Avila. The subject was taken up by some of the leading members of the Royal Academy of Spain. His belief in cup marks was stretched to the stone placed below the Coronation Chair on which His Majesty was crowned and which was similarly used by the English monarchs for hundreds of years. He mentioned several legends that had grown around this stone, which was much revered, and held by some to be the stone of Jacob's dream. This stone was taken out and examined which revealed a 'mark', or a 'depression', that was interpreted as a cup mark.

We therefore find an imagining of the sub-continent's landscape coalescing through far-flung out connections sought in material remains, oral traditions and folklore. A comparative method of discerning affinities between archaeological objects and monuments located in disparate spaces, common to archaeological research of his times, formed the core of his methodology.

Spindle whorls and Snake worship—more networks

Rivett-Carnac continued to exercise his comparative method in the case of a few other objects, deriving in the course of it further connections and networks. He drew resemblance between spindle whorls found in Sankisa, Behar and other Buddhist ruins in north western India with those described by Schliemann in his work 'Troy and its Remains' (Rivett-Carnac 1880).

The ways in which they were discovered are interesting:

'When we were encamped at Kanouj, Sankisa and Behar Khas in the Fategarh district, the village urchins were encouraged to bring to us everything in the shape of 'antiquities' that could be grubbed out from these extensive ruins and from neighbouring mounds.' (Rivett-Carnac 1880: 127)

Unlike his predecessors, Taylor or Mackenzie, Rivett-Carnac lacked in an understanding of archaeological cultural periods and their stratigraphy. Hence only on grounds of apparent physical similarities between objects found from the Indian sites and Hissarlik or Troy in Anatolia Rivett-Carnac believed that historical links could be forged. The manner of unearthing ancient objects by driving shafts through mounds and ruins was his recommended method—which was an unscientific form of practice, although not uncommon in those times. Thus, his comments were indefinite and imprecise —

'the sites, as is well known, present many features of resemblance to those which Dr. Schliemann dug through at Hissarlik...Here, as at Hissarlik, these sites bear the traces of several distinct colonies. There can be little doubt that if shafts were to be carried through the ruins there after the manner adopted by Dr. Schliemann at Hissarlik, the traces

of several distinct periods might be unearthed.' (Rivett-Carnac 1880: 127–128)

The objects were classified typologically, and direct analogies were drawn with the Trojan samples. It was further argued that they were votive offerings. All were fitted into the frame of a grand design of connections:

'And does not the continual recurrence of what we call the Buddhist symbols on the Hissarlik finds, suggest the possibility of Hissarlik and Sankisa having been colonized by branches of the same race, be it Buddhist or not one of which striking west from some point in central Asia, found its way to the shores of the Mediterranean, whilst another, taking a southerly course, established itself in the Gangetic valley?' (Rivett-Carnac 1880: 136)

Thus, an imagining of a historical and cultural space, unhindered by geographical barriers was emerging through such linkages.

Connections were consolidated around serpent worship as well (Rivett-Carnac 1879c). Serpents occurred on the prehistoric cromlechs and menhirs of Europe. He put forth a query—was the serpent symbol associated with Lord Siva in India transmitted to Europe from the East by tribes whose remains were interred beneath the tumuli? This set him on a search for snake symbols in Benaras, which was the chief centre of Siva-worship in India. These symbols were sought in the phallus, temples and a shrine where a metal cobra was placed with erect head and expanded hood above a stone/metal image of Mahadeo/Siva. A serpent or *nag* was seen surmounting the hump of a bull's figure, which was depicted as Nandi, Siva's bearer. The hump was identified as Mahadeo. The article is replete with descriptions of the serpent in actual and symbolic forms in shrines, in a bracelet, in the handle of a spoon, in a sacrificial lamp, in a canopy of a shrine of a female deity Annapurna devi. All the specimens were of metal and bought from the local market. Rivett-Carnac visited one of the oldest seats of serpent worship in the city—the serpent-well or the *Nag-kuan*. Cup marks existing at the well were meant for collection of libations to be poured over Mahadeo on *Naga Panchami*. He saw close parallels with cup marks seen in the walls and foundations of churches in Zurich and rest of North Europe. More representations of the Nag or the cobra were noted by him in the palace of the rajas of Nagpore and that of the Bhonslahs.

The snake worship was further described as a ritual performed on the occasion of the *Naga Panchami* or as a ritual present among the Kunbis or the cultivating class. Ethnographic details abound in this article in his description of the Baris too who were habitual cultivators of the cobra-creeper and thereby were believed to have been on terms of friendship with the serpent. Strange connections were drawn between serpent worship as practiced by this community and their worship of ant hills, which were infested with snakes. Frequent associations were drawn between the conventional symbols of Siva worship seen

in the serpent and its forms and serpents represented in menhirs of northern Europe. He believed that phallic worship still existed among the people of the Pyrenees—an idea that reverberates through his other writings. He acknowledged receiving ample support for his hypothesis from Swedish and French antiquarians.

Stone carvings, Mason marks, Buddha figure and flint implements

Rivett-Carnac's notes on other antiquarian remains reflect another objective—to obtain 'information regarding the habits, the circumstances and the state of civilisation of the people, by whom they are fashioned.' (Rivett-Carnac 1879d: 1).

The descriptions are at best speculative. By the yardstick of drapery and jewellery a broken red sandstone fragment 'would appear to belong to the period of Hindu luxury and power, immediately preceding the Mahammodan invasion' (Rivett-Carnac 1879d: 1).

But here too his chief concern of building a network of connections remained. Greek influence for some figurines was surmised on the basis of 'the type of face', discovered from Punjab, where he believed, there existed a distinctive Greek influence. A Buddha figure discovered from the ruins of Dhamek stupa was described in detail, but lacking in the stylistic parameters of a specialist (Rivett-Carnac 1879e). Further, mason's marks, classified into different groups like the swastika, the Buddhist sacred tree, the symbol \tilde{n} wherever noticed were compared with marks on many monoliths in Europe and an affinity was established (Rivett-Carnac 1878). Following Alexander Cunningham and James Fergusson—two stalwarts who had set the standard of antiquarian research in the 19th century—he analysed the marks in an effort to determine the class of buildings to which the stones utilized by the 'Muhammadans' for their mosques originally belonged.

In his description of flint implements found from central India (Rivett-Carnac 1879f) Rivett-Carnac principally dealt with the Lieutenant Downing Swiney's collection. Swiney was a cadre of the Royal Engineers and had collected the specimens when stationed at Jubbulpore. Hammers, knives, polygonal arrowheads constituted the collection. By including another category of celts in the collection two issues were raised—that they were man-made; and that they were used for a definite purpose. Rivett-Carnac's writings on prehistory were of course very limited.

Conclusion—an ambiguous space?

Following his varied interests did not rob Rivett-Carnac of his pre-occupation with 'ancient' cup marks on the rocks. An epistemology of comparative archaeology was consolidated through his methodology of comparing evidence recorded from different parts of India to those documented in Great Britain and northern Europe. However, this epistemological space was not a sanitized unambiguous one with clear-cut connections established between objects belonging to disparate cultures linked through typological/stylistic affinities, as was the norm of the comparative method prevalent in the 19th and early 20th

centuries. The material linkages were also located in the multiple layers of folklore, rituals and oral tradition of the 'native'—in *lingam* worship and local tales of *goalas* or herdsmen as builders of the barrows, in rituals of serpent worship. Therefore, meanings that accrued were fluid and indeterminate. Descriptions of serpents in actual and symbolic forms were enmeshed in rituals of snake worship of a cultivating tribe. Strange associations were forged between them, such as phallic worship and serpent forms occurring on menhirs of northern Europe.

This space was part of a wider space in the subcontinent, in which such ambiguities were witnessed. An interesting anecdote occurring in Rivett-Carnac's autobiography hints at this, when district officers were instructed 'to forward the interests of science by obtaining for the museums and investigators the skulls of the aboriginal tribes' (Rivett-Carnac 1910: 86). Such practices were condoned by him, without being an active participant. This is an instance of how colonial science had its genesis, a subject discussed at length by Prakash (2000).

This then was a strand of antiquarianism with an universal historical frame lying in an ambiguous space. It was born out of a fervent passion for all objects and places of historical value, layered with a consciousness for preservation. 'What I wanted was to have measures thought out and adopted in the future for the preservation of all remains of interest' (Rivett-Carnac 1910: 337). Despite lacking in the rigours of archaeological context and stratigraphy such a study is indicative of an early imagining of a native land nurtured outside the purview of an *official* archaeology.

Notes

- ¹ See Sengupta and Gangopadhyay's 'Introduction' (2009) in their edited volume *Archaeology in India: Individuals, Ideas and Institution* for a modest treatment of this and also for a useful compendium; Paddayya (2018a) for some enlightening and representative writings.
- ² The phrase has been used by Cohn (1997) in his interpretation of a totalizing mission of the Colonial project whose aim was, by employing a variety of state facilities or 'investigative modalities' to create a vast body of comprehensive knowledge, or the Imperial archive, which did not exist physically, but remained, metaphorically a larger-than-life idea of a world unified by information.
- ³ As primary sources I consulted his writings appearing in various journals, an autobiography, *Many Memories*, and private papers, which constitute mostly correspondence with various individuals, either involved in some capacity with the Imperial government in India or settled in Great Britain or Europe. The National Library of Scotland (henceforth NLS), Edinburgh houses these papers covering a period between 1862 and 1922 (AC108381-13). A collection of his correspondence (1864–1908) with Sir Alfred Lyall of the Bengal Civil Service is kept in the British Library, London (MSS Eur F132 13a, part 1 and 2: Folios 1–186: 186–373).

- ⁴ For a further elaboration of these ideas please see Homi Bhabha (1994), especially 'Of mimicry and man' and Gyan Prakash, 'Staging Science' (2000), in a collection of his essays. I find their postcolonial critique still extremely relevant even in an era when much history writing seeks to build on connected global histories (Simpson 2018) and understanding the decolonial.
- ⁵ Bhabha (1994), especially 'Of mimicry and man'.
- ⁶ There are many works on the history of archaeology dealing with these issues. I refer particularly to three of these: Bowdoin Van Riper (1993); Cohen (1998); O'Connor (2007). And for specific issues to J. Schofield et al. (2011); Sera-Shriar, E 2018, especially 'Introduction: from the beginning', pp. 1–13.
- ⁷ However, in recent years barrow-digging has received a more sympathetic analysis (Parsons 2012) who believes that there are many justifiable reasons to study barrow diggers. Although their excavation techniques were rudimentary, the quantity and quality of artefactual evidence cannot be overlooked by anyone interested in prehistoric burial practice.
- ⁸ Paper read at an authors' workshop held recently (August 23rd–25th in Calcutta), in connection with a project on *Contemporary History of Modern Bengal*. To be published shortly in two volumes from the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Kolkata.
- ⁹ 'There is much to be done in the Archaeology Branch of the Central Province Gazetteer, and the history should be written in two parts, or three at most—for the whole provinces' MSS Eur Folio 56, British Library.
- ¹⁰ We come across three names here—Campbell, Greenwell and Lord Argyll. One cannot be sure as to whether Campbell could be identified with the one hailing from Islay to whose house Rivett-Carnac and his wife were once invited for lunch. The Duke of Argyll, a high ranking officer in the Imperial government, had extended his utmost support to Rivett-Carnac in various matters relating to the India Office. A reference to the distinguished personality in the *Memoirs* clearly reflects their relationship. The correspondence may be referred to in Letter dt. 30 December 1867, AC108381-13, Manuscript section NLS; AC108381-13, Manuscript section NLS; Letter dt. 23rd September, 1901, AC108381-13, Manuscript section NLS; Letter dt. 18th August, 1902, AC108381-13, NLS; Letter dt. 8th October, 1903, AC108381-13, NLS.
- ¹¹ Bidranath or Badrinath/Badrinarayan temple is a Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Visnu, situated in the town of Badrinath, now in the modern state of Uttarakhand.
- ¹² Dunagiri and Sameshwar or Someshwar are temple sites in Uttarakhand.

Acknowledgements

The publication of this paper has been made possible by a grant from the Scouloudi Foundation in association with the Institute of Historical Research and I gratefully acknowledge the Journal's editing team as well as the special issue guest editors in putting together the application for this fund. The archival work in the British library

and the National library of Scotland was made possible by a short research grant from the Society of Antiquaries of London in 2015. The grant authorities are gratefully acknowledged. I also thank the Reviewers for their constructive comments.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

References

- Basak, B.** 2007. In pursuit of the Past: The development of an 'Official' and 'Academic' archaeology in Bengal. *Studies in History*, XXIII(2): 311–339. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/025764300602300206>
- Bhabha, H.** 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Bowdoin Van Riper, A.** 1993. *Men Among the Mammoths: Victorian Science and the Discovery of Human Prehistory*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Briggs, SC.** 2007. Prehistory in the Nineteenth century. In: Pearce, S (ed.), *Visions of Antiquity. The Society of Antiquaries of London 1707–2007*, 226–265. London: Society of Antiquaries of London.
- Cohen, C.** 1998. Charles Lyell and the evidence of the Antiquity of Man. *Geological Society, London, Special Publications*, 143: 83–93. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1144/GSL.SP.1998.143.01.08>
- Cohn, B.** 1997. *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*. New Delhi: OUP.
- Dirks, NB.** 1994. Colonial Histories and Native Informants: Biography of an archive. In: Breckenridge, CA and van der Veer, P (eds.), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*, 279–313. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.
- Kejariwal, OP.** 1988. *The Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Discovery of India's Past 1784–1838*. Delhi: OUP.
- Lahiri, N.** 1998. Coming to Grips with the Indian Past: John Marshall's Early Years as Lord Curzon's Director-General of Archaeology in India – Part I. *South Asian Studies*, 14: 1–23. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02666030.1998.9628548>
- Lahiri, N.** 2000. Coming to Grips with India's Past and her 'Living Present': John Marshall's Early Years (1902–06) – Part II. *South Asian Studies*, 16: 89–107. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02666030.2000.9628582>
- Murray, T.** 2014. Antiquarianism of and in Preliterate Societies: Colonial and Post-colonial contexts. In: Schnapp, A, et al. (eds.), *World Antiquarianism: Comparative Perspectives*, 11–34. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute.
- O'Connor, A.** 2007. *Finding Time for the Old Stone Age: A History of Palaeolithic Archaeology and Quaternary Geology in Britain, 1860–196*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Paddayya, K.** 1995. Theoretical Perspectives in Indian Archaeology. In: Ucko, PJ (ed.), *Theory in Archaeology—A World Perspective*, 110–149. London and New York: Routledge.
- Paddayya, K.** 2013. Colonel Colin Mackenzie and the Discovery of the Amaravati Site. In: *Essays in History*

- of *Archaeology—Themes, Institutions and Personalities*, 180–187. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- Paddayya, K.** 2018a. *Indian Archaeology and Heritage Education: Historiographical and Sociological Dimensions*. New Delhi: Aryan Books International.
- Paddayya, K.** 2018b. Beginnings of Cartography in India and its Application in early Antiquarian Investigations. In: Paddayya, K (ed.), *Indian Archaeology and Heritage Education: Historiographical and Sociological Dimensions*, 9–43. New Delhi: Aryan Books International.
- Parsons, J.** 2012. Crossing the Threshold: Recovery, Selection and Curation Practices of Nineteenth century Barrow-Diggers. In: Trigg, JR (ed.), *Of Things Gone but not Forgotten: Essays in Archaeology for Joan Taylor*. BAR 2434. Oxford: Archaeopress.
- Prakash, G.** 2000. Staging Science. In: Prakash, G (ed.), *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India*. New Delhi: OUP.
- Ray, HP.** 2008. *Colonial Archaeology in South Asia: The legacy of Sir Mortimer Wheeler*. New Delhi: OUP India.
- Rivett-Carnac, JH.** 1878. On Masons' Marks from old Buildings in the North-West Provinces of India. Reprint from *Indian Antiquary*, December, 1–8.
- Rivett-Carnac, JH.** 1879a. Rough notes on some Ancient Sculpturings on Rocks in Kumaon, India similar to those found on Monoliths and Rocks in Europe. In: Rivett-Carnac, JH (ed.), *Archaeological Notes on some Ancient Sculpturings on Rocks in Kumaon, India similar to those found on Monoliths and Rocks in Europe with other papers*, 1–15. Calcutta: reprint from Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal.
- Rivett-Carnac, JH.** 1879b. Prehistoric Remains in Central India. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, reprint, 1–14.
- Rivett-Carnac, JH.** 1879c. Rough Notes on the Snake Symbol in India in connection with the worship of Siva. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, reprint, 1–14.
- Rivett-Carnac, JH.** 1879d. Description of some Stone Carvings, collected in a tour through the Doab, from Cawnpore to Mainpuri. *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1–3.
- Rivett-Carnac, JH.** 1879e. Figure of Buddha recently found at Sarnath (from Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal 1878). In: Rivett-Carnac, JH (ed.), *Archaeological Notes on some Ancient Sculpturings on Rocks in Kumaon, India similar to those found on Monoliths and Rocks in Europe with other papers*, 36–38. Calcutta: reprint from Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal.
- Rivett-Carnac, JH.** 1879f. Flint Implements from Central India. In: Rivett-Carnac, JH (ed.), *Archaeological Notes on some Ancient Sculpturings on Rocks in Kumaon, India similar to those found on Monoliths and Rocks in Europe with other papers. Read in the meeting of the Antiquarian Society of the Central provinces of India held on 1st January 1866*, 16–28. Calcutta: reprint from Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal.
- Rivett-Carnac, JH.** 1880. Memorandum on Clay Discs called “Spindle Whorls” and Votive Seals found at Sankisa, Behar and other Buddhist ruins in the North western Provinces of India. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, XLIX(1): 127–137.
- Rivett-Carnac, JH.** 1910. *Many Memories of Life in India, at Home and Abroad*. Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons (Unabridged facsimile of the edition published by Elibron Classics in 2005).
- Schnapp, A.** 2014. Introduction: the Roots of Antiquarianism. In: Schnapp, A, et al. (eds.), *World Antiquarianism: Comparative Perspectives*, 1–10. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute.
- Schnapp, A, Falkenhansen, LV, Miller, PN and Murray, T.** (eds.) 2014. *World Antiquarianism: Comparative Perspectives*. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute.
- Schofield, J, Carman, J and Belford, P.** 2011. *Archaeological Practice in Great Britain: A Heritage Handbook*. World Archaeological Congress Cultural Heritage Manual Series. © Springer Science+Business Media, LLC. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-09453-3>
- Sengupta, G and Gangopadhyay, K.** (eds.) 2009. *Archaeology in India: Individuals, Ideas and Institutions*. New Delhi and Kolkata: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers and Centre for Archaeological Studies and Training, Eastern India.
- Sera-Shriar, E.** 2018. Introduction: from the Beginning. In: Sera-Shriar, E (ed.), *Historicizing Humans: Deep time, Evolution and the Race in the Nineteenth-Century British Sciences*, 1–13. Pittsburg: Pittsburgh University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv14h5j8.4>
- Simpson, T.** 2018. Historicizing Humans in Colonial India. In: Sera-Shriar, E (ed.), *Historicizing Humans*, 113–137. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv14h5j8.9>
- Singh, U.** 2004. *The Discovery of Ancient India, Early Archaeologists and the Beginnings of Archaeology*. New Delhi: Permanent Black.

How to cite this article: Basak, B. 2020. Locating an Antiquarian Initiative in a Late 19th Century Colonial Landscape: Rivett-Carnac and the Cultural Imagining of the Indian Sub-Continent. *Bulletin of the History of Archaeology*, 30(1): 1, pp. 1–9. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5334/bha-610>

Submitted: 20 October 2018

Accepted: 16 September 2019

Published: 06 January 2020

Copyright: © 2020 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.



Bulletin of the History of Archaeology is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by Ubiqity Press.

