

Chess King

Collector of the truly choice
In chessmen;
Sharp of eye, appreciative
Knew how to be in charge
And use his skills for good.

Splendour in crystal rock
Worn across lost boards
By a millennium of fingers
Graced his holdings;
Regal in regal surroundings
Catching the light
As they caught candlelight and taper
Chessmen, you might say,
As good as they come;

But none could touch the beauty
Of those wondrous ivory pieces
Tiny and intricate,
Polychrome over their smooth whiteness
Surpassing the chessmen of all Sind
For centuries;
Shattered then at an invader's hand
Strewn irretrievable about the garden
In fragments
As if to nourish the greenery
With only a whisper left
Of their former, ageless Majesty.

Dr Irving Finkel
Department of the Middle East
The British Museum

