

A
GEOGRAPHICAL, STATISTICAL, AND HISTORICAL

DESCRIPTION

OF

HINDOSTAN,

AND THE

ADJACENT COUNTRIES.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY WALTER HAMILTON, ESQ.

VOL. I.

LONDON.

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

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of the territory has remained so completely unnoticed, that the circumstances of many of the Company's old districts of great wealth and population are less known to the public than those of remote tracts, the very names of which are recent discoveries.

To the foregoing description of the manuscript records, as not having direct reference to the subject, one remarkable exception occurs, which is, the survey of the districts of Dinagepoor, Rungpoor, Purneah, Boglipoor and Bahar, by Dr. Francis Hamilton (late Buchanan), who was deputed by the Bengal government, in the years 1807, 8, 9, 10, and 11, to ascertain and report on their internal condition, which task he executed with such singular ability and success, that it is to be regretted his reports were not immediately published by the East India Company, not only for the instruction of their own servants, but as models for future investigations of a similar nature. The mass of valuable information thus collected is comprehended in twenty-five folio volumes, accompanied by most elaborate statistical tables, and contains copious illustrations of the manners, customs, religion, &c. of the inhabitants. Frequent reference to them will be found in the following work, the plan of which, however, and the vast space embraced, precluded all circumstantial delineation of particular portions.

Among the other manuscript reports, but on a much less expanded scale, the following may be noted, viz. Mr. Sisson, on the Rungpoor district and the adjacent tribes of Bootan, Assam, the Garrows, and Morung; Lieutenant A. Ross, on the Alpine tract comprehended between the Sutuleje and Jumna; Mr. N. Macleod, on Lassa and Tibet; Colonel Alexander Walker, on Cattywar and the Gujerat peninsula; Captain Macmurdo, on Cutch and Cattywar; Mr. Thackeray, on Canara, Malabar and the Balaghaut Ceded Districts; Sir Henry Wellesley, on the Ceded Districts of Oude; Lieutenant White, on the Agra and Delhi provinces; Mr. C. Lloyd, on the district of Moradabad; Captain Canning on the Birman Empire; and Sir David Ochterlony, on the petty Seik States. The valuable printed reports by Sir Henry Strachey, Sir Thomas Munro, Mr. Hodgson, Mr. Thackeray and others, will be found in the Appendix to the 5th Report.

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they hear parties, examine witnesses, and take depositions in writing. These documents are sent to the Viceroy, and the judges transmit their opinions along with the evidence, which the Viceroy either confirms or rejects, and, in case of conviction, orders execution or pardons the criminal.—(*Symes, &c.*)

SYRIAM.—In the year 1744 the British factory at this place was destroyed by the contending parties during the wars of the Birman and Peguers, which were then, as they have always been, carried on with the most savage ferocity. The town is situated close to Rangoon, in lat. $16^{\circ} 49' N.$ long. $96^{\circ} 17' E.$

PERSAIM (*or Bassien*).—In 1757, a piece of land opposite to Persaim was granted by Alompra to the East India Company, for the purpose of erecting a factory. Lat. $16^{\circ} 50' N.$ long. $95^{\circ} E.$

ARRACAN (*Rakhang*).—A large province of the Birman empire, which extends along the eastern side of the Bay of Bengal from the river Nauf in Chittagong, as far south as Cape Negrais, where the ancient Pegu empire commenced. Arracan is, in fact, a continuation of the Chittagong plain, bounded on the east by a high range of mountains, which, towards the south, approaches so near the sea, that though its length may be estimated at 500 miles, in many places the breadth from the shore does not exceed 10, and nowhere more than 100 miles. From the side of Chittagong, entrance into Arracan must be effected by a march along the sea beach, interrupted by several channels, which chiefly owe their waters to the action of the tide. From the quarter of Negrais and Bassien, Arracan can only be invaded by water, owing to the numerous rivers that intersect the country adjacent to the sea. Cheduba, Ramree, Arracan, and Sandow, form distinct jurisdictions, and comprehend the whole of the Arracan territory. The sea coast of this tract is studded with islands of different sizes and numerous clusters of rocks, that lie at a small distance from the shore, many of which exhibit a striking resemblance to the forms of different animals. Behind these islands the country, as viewed from the sea, appears agreeably diversified with hill and dale; the former covered with trees, and numerous torrents descending from the hills flow to the west. By Abul Fazel in 1582, this country is described as follows:—"To the south-east is a large country named Arkung, to which the port or bunder of Chittagong properly belongs. Here are plenty of elephants, but great scarcity of horses."

Although the position of the Great Arracan river is favourable, and report speaks well of its depth of water and safety of entrance, yet no authentic or accurate account has as yet been obtained of it, notwithstanding, it is certain that the English had a factory here in the 18th century. This situation for a harbour has a great many apparent advantages. In the first place, it is a fertile and well inhabited country, abounding in cattle, goats, fowls, fish, and all kinds of pro-

vision. It has great store of timber, similar to that procured in Chittagong, which, although not the best for ship building, yet would suit for repairs in time of urgent necessity; besides, its vicinity to Pegu rendering the accumulation of teak timber particularly easy. Owing to the position of the Arracan chain of hills, there is strong reason to suppose that that valuable wood is also produced among them, and might be floated down the Arracan river. But the great advantage of this river is its easy communication with Bengal both by land and by sea, so that it could be supplied with stores and provisions in small sloops or boats during the north-east monsoon, and from Chittagong there is a road that can be travelled at all seasons of the year, which ensures the practicability of supporting the station, which is only about 70 miles distant from the frontiers of Chittagong. The Arracan river, however, has this disadvantage, that during the whole of the south-west monsoon, it must be approached with great caution, as at a considerable distance from its entrance, both to the northward and southward, there are many dangerous rocks and sands, the positions of which are not well ascertained. Owing also to the strength with which the monsoon blows on the eastern shore, and the heavy sea that is thrown in from the great length of range; and, above all, to a current, which during the season has been found to follow the course of the prevailing winds, there is reason to believe that a ship could not get out of the Arracan river during the whole of the S. W. monsoon, but probably many of these dangers might be obviated were the coast better known.

Respecting the interior of Arracan very little is known; but it is supposed to be very similar to that of Chittagong, which it so greatly resembles on the sea coast. A considerable intercourse subsists between the maritime tract and the Bengal districts, especially Chittagong, into which ponies, elephants' teeth, wax, gold and silver are imported from Arracan, where the Raja or Viceroy for the time being is always the chief merchant. In peaceable times, there are from 40 to 50 boats, of 500 maunds burthen, equipped annually by merchants who travel across the country from Ummerapoor, Chagaing, and other cities in the Ava dominions, for the Bengal trade. Each boat may be valued at 4000 rupees capital, principally in silver bullion. One half of these boats return with red betel nut, and this trade is so systematically established, that they even farm the betel nut plantations about Luckipoor. The principal exports from Arracan besides bullion are salt, bees wax, elephants' teeth, and rice; the last of which is produced in great abundance, and the contiguous islands are uncommonly fruitful. Many Birman boats also navigating during the north-west monsoon proceed from Bassien, Rangoon, and Martaban, along the Arracan coast, and make an annual voyage to Chittagong, Dacca, and Calcutta, where

they dispose of their cargo, and return with Indian and European commodities. Prior to 1764, the Dutch used to purchase rice and slaves here. Latterly, on account of the increasing tyranny of the Birman government, this province has so greatly deteriorated, that in 1812 it was stated by Colonel Morgan, the commanding officer in Chittagong, that the Birmans had no means of subsisting any considerable body of troops within 150 miles of the Chittagong southern frontier, as nearly the whole of the cattle had been driven off, maimed, or slaughtered, by the insurgent Kingberring. The jack, mangoe, betel nut, and other fruit trees, had been cut down, and all the grain either destroyed or removed.

The natives of Arracan Proper call their country Yekein; the Hindoos of Bengal, Rossaun. The latter, who have settled in great numbers in Arracan, are denominated by the original inhabitants Kulaw Yekein, or unnaturalized Arracaners. The Moguls know this country by the name of Rakhang, and the Mahommedans, who have been long settled in the country, call themselves Rooinga, or natives of Arracan. The term Mugh is never used by the natives of Arracan as applicable to themselves, and its origin has never been properly ascertained. The Rakhing is the original language of the inhabitants of Arracan, who adhere to the tenets of Buddha, and is the first of that singular class of Indo-Chinese languages which may be properly termed monosyllabic, from the mass of their radical words consisting of monosyllables, like the spoken dialect of China. Until the last conquest by the Birmans, the tribes of Arracan seem for a long period to have preserved their independence; their language is consequently purer than that of the Birmans, who sustained various revolutions. The national name of the Arracan race is Ma-rum-ma, which appears to be only a corruption of Maha Vurma; Vurma being an appellation peculiar to tribes of Khetri extraction. A native of Arracan cannot, without extreme difficulty, articulate a word which has a consonant for a final.

Until the Birman conquest, the ancient government of Arracan had never been so completely subdued as to acknowledge vassalage to a foreign power, although the Moguls and Peguers had, at different periods, carried arms into the heart of the country. During the reign of Aurengzebe, the unfortunate Sultan Shujah, his brother, was basely murdered by the Arracan Raja. The Portuguese sometimes as allies, at others as open enemies, gained an establishment in the country, which only decayed with the general ruin of their interests in Asia. In 1783, the province was conquered after a very feeble resistance by the Birmans, and was followed by the surrender of Cheduba, Ramree, and the Broken Isles. Many of the Mughls, preferring flight to servitude, took refuge among the Dumbuck hills, on the western border of Chittagong, and in the deep jungles and forests that skirt that frontier, where they formed themselves into

tribes of independent robbers. Many also settled in the Chittagong and Tiperah districts, while others quietly submitted to the yoke. When the conquest of Arracan had been thus completed, it was formed into a province of the Birman empire, and a Maywoon or Viceroy deputed to govern it. Sholamboos was the first invested with that office, and 1000 Birman soldiers were left to garrison the fort. Small parties were likewise distributed in the different towns, and many Birmans who had obtained grants of land came with their families and settled in the country, thereby consolidating the Birman supremacy. The dethroned Raja, Mahasumda, died a natural death, in the first year of his captivity, and thus the subjugation of Arracan was accomplished in a few months.

In this state of apparent tranquillity it remained until the year 1811, when a native of Arracan, named Kingberring (King-ber-ring), formed the design of embodying his followers and other refugee Mughls to invade his native province, which project he actually carried into execution in the month of May 1811. He was afterwards joined by many Arracangers, advanced into the interior, and in a short time subjected the whole to his authority, with the exception of the capital, to which he laid siege. While these achievements were going on, he addressed a letter to the British government offering to become their tributary, which was rejected; but in order to induce a supposition of a connexion or connivance, he had some of his followers clothed in red. Some time afterwards the Birmans collected forces sufficient to defeat Kingberring and disperse his followers, who fled towards Chittagong followed by the Birmans, who pursued them across the frontier, but were compelled to return by a British detachment sent against them. In 1812, Kingberring again emerged from his concealment, and once more attempted the invasion of Arracan, but even with worse success than before, being met and defeated by the Birman troops immediately after crossing the frontier. During the commotions no quarter was given; every suspected Mugh was put to death, and one dispatch mentions the total extermination of a village containing 2500 persons. On the decease of the Arracan Viceroy in 1813, the governors of Rane, Cheduba, and Sandoway, with some other functionaries, were directed by the Ava sovereign to officiate in the province until the arrival of a successor. This took place in 1814, in which year, in consequence of the intrusion of some Birman troops within the Chittagong boundaries, in pursuit of the insurgent Kingberring, a correspondence ensued between the magistrate of that district and the Arracan Viceroy, the commencement of whose letter, as a specimen of the Birman official style, is here inserted:—
“ My sovereign is of high destiny; he possesses gold, diamonds, and jewels, and the white elephant and the whole world. He possesses great resolution and great power; he possesses the spear; he is king over 100 kings, &c. &c.” The

impunity granted on these occasions to the Birmans is entirely to be ascribed to the moderation and forbearance of the British government, which made every exertion and incurred a heavy expenditure by their endeavours to expel the refugee Mughls. The task, however, was difficult, owing to the physical nature of the country and its pestilential atmosphere, combined with the inveterate hatred which these fugitives, who are an athletic hard-working race, bear to the whole Birman nation, and the strong hopes they still entertain of restoring their country to its former independence.—(*Symes, Public MS. Documents, Morgan, Cox, Leyden, F. Buchanan, Towers, &c.*)

ARRACAN.—The capital of the Arracan province, situated about two days' journey from the mouth of the river of the same name. Lat. 29° 40' N. long. 93° 5' E. In 1812, the town of Arracan was described to Colonel Morgan by his Mugh Moonshees, as being built all around the fort except on the north-east face, where a large jeel or shallow lake approaches it. According to the same authorities, the fort is built in the form of an irregular square, and has three walls of hard stone, one within the other, in height about 36 feet, and 12 thick at the bottom, tapering to 5 at the top, and extending from height to height over even spots of ground; but the whole of these walls are without ditches. Four hills or elevations approach the walls of the fort; the largest and highest is called Rooce Tunge; the second in height, Harree-tunge; the third, Pointee-tunge; and the fourth, Baboo-tunge; the whole of which command the interior of the fort, which might be easily reduced by 2000 sepoy with a small battering train. At the mouth of the Oorotung, or Great Arracan river, there is said to be no bar, and it is reported to be a mile broad in the dry season; the depth from the sea up to Jehauz ghaut from 6 to 18 fathoms, and there are said to be no shoals capable of hindering the ascent of large ships with the flood tides. A light boat requires two days to row up from the mouth of the river to Jehauz ghaut.

This town and fort were taken by the Birmans in 1783, after a feeble resistance. They found a considerable booty; but on nothing was a higher value placed than an image of Gaudma (the Gautama of the Hindoos) made of brass and highly burnished. The figure is about ten feet high, in a sitting posture, with the legs crossed and feet inverted, the left hand resting on the lap, the right pendent. This image is believed to be the original resemblance of the Reeshee (saint) taken from life, and it is so highly venerated, that pilgrims have for centuries been accustomed to come from the remotest countries, where the supremacy of Gaudma is acknowledged, to pay their devotions at the feet of his brazen representative. There are also five images of Racshyas (the demons of the Hindoos) of the same metal, and of gigantic stature, the guardians of the

sanctuary. A singular piece of ordnance of most enormous dimensions was also found, composed of huge bars of iron beaten into form. This ponderous cannon measured 30 feet in length, $2\frac{1}{2}$ in diameter at the mouth, and 10 inches in the calibre. It was transported by the Birmans to Ummerapoor by water, as a military trophy; and Gaudma, with his infernal guards, were in like manner conveyed to the capital with much pomp and superstitious parade.—(*Symes, Morgan, &c.*)

CHEDUBA ISLE.—An island in the Bay of Bengal, lying off the coast of Arracan, about one degree and a half to the southward of the Great Arracan river. It is the most westerly of a cluster of islands, and is of a moderate height, with several hummocks on it. This island lies but a few miles from the main land, and within it there is said to be a good harbour; but it has the same disadvantage of a lee shore that the Arracan river has. Both Cheduba and the more eastern islands are inhabited, and in peaceable times produce such quantities of rice, that ships of any burthen may load that article here. The channel between this island and the main is annually navigated by trading boats, but it does not afford a safe passage for large shipping. It is governed by a Chekey, or Lieutenant, deputed by the Birman government, who was expelled in 1810 by the Arracan insurgents, but it was subsequently recaptured after a war-boat battle, in which the Birmans were victorious.—(*Symes, Elmore, &c. &c.*)

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