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TO THE
COURTS OF SIAM AND
COCHIN CHINA

JOHN CRAWFURD

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
DAVID K. WYATT

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no opportunity of seeing the fresh plant, or of determining its botanical character; but were informed that it is a spontaneous product of the mountainous and uncultivated parts of the country.

The teak-tree (*Tectona grandis*), which abounds so much in the forest of Siam and Pegue, is, as far as we could learn, a stranger to every part of the Cochin Chinese territory. Both Tonquin and Cochin China appear to be deficient in large and good timber; but this observation does not apply to Kamboja, which is abundantly supplied. Two descriptions of timber, called in the Anam and Chinese languages, Chao, or Sao, and Go, both of very large size, are the most in use and most esteemed. The first is used in house building, and in the construction of junks. The whole of the gun-carriages of the arsenals of Hué and Saigun are also of this timber. In point of durability and strength, it does not appear to be much inferior to teak itself, but it is less buoyant.* The Go, called by Loureiro, *Nuclea orientalis*, is a hard, black, and heavy timber, admitting of a fine polish. This is used for furniture, and especially for those large broad benches which are in such general use with the Cochin Chinese.

From all accounts, the zoology of Cochin China does not differ very remarkably, at least in its ordinary features, from that of similar Indian climates. The quadrupeds of the country are the bear; the dog, resembling that of China, but smaller, and used, as in that country, as food; the tiger, of the same size, strength, and ferocity; as in Bengal with the spotted leopard, the cat, the elephant, the hog; the rhinoceros, of which the horn, on account of its supposed medicinal virtues, is in much request; the horse, several species of deer, the ox, and the buffalo. Those accustomed to Hindostan, miss in this country, as in Siam, the jackal, the fox, the hare,

* Such was the information obtained by us from personal inquiry on the spot; but it is necessary to add, that Loureiro includes teak among the plants of Cochin China, and expressly states that it is the same which is called in the text, Chao, or Sao. He calls it *Tectona Theka*, giving its Anam name Cay Sao, or Sao-wood, with its Malayan synonymie jatus from Rumphius.

the ass, and the sheep. The animals domesticated by the Cochin Chinese are the elephant, the horse, the buffalo and ox, the goat, the hog, the dog, the cat: and among poultry, the goose, duck, and common fowl.

The elephant of Cochin China appeared to us to be a very fine animal, and equal fully to those of the eastern parts of Bengal. The forests of Kamboja produce the greatest numbers, and those of the best quality. I am told that in that country the price of a new elephant does not exceed forty or fifty quans. The white elephant is not, as in Siam, Pegue, and Ava, an object of veneration. There were none at Hué or Saigun; nor could I learn that the forests, from which the principal supply is derived, produced any of this variety. The Cochin Chinese use the elephant in war, but, from the natural timidity of the animal, probably to little purpose. The horse of Cochin China is a small, shabby-looking pony, inferior in size and beauty to the small horses of the Indian islands. They are used only for riding, and do not, indeed, appear to be fit either for agricultural labour, or for the purposes of a cavalry.

The buffalo was the animal which we constantly observed used for field labour, although it is not improbable but the ox may be so applied in parts of the country where the soil is drier and lighter. We found the buffalo at Saigun to be the same large and powerful animal as in Siam and in the Indian islands; but as we proceeded northward, and especially about Hué, it was a much inferior animal, in all respects; a fact which seems to indicate that this quadruped exists in perfection only in countries close to the Equator. The ox is a small animal, uniformly of a reddish-brown colour, and destitute of the hump so remarkable in the cattle of western India. Neither the flesh of the buffalo nor ox is used by the Cochin Chinese as food; and, as I have already noticed, they hold milk in abhorrence. A small variety of goat is tolerably frequent; and we saw, both at Saigun and Hué, a few shabby and diminutive sheep, which were kept more for curiosity than use.

The hog is a great favourite with the Cochin Chinese. In the wild

people as a misfortune; and I have been assured, that the corruption of the lower Mandarins has known no bounds since they have lost the restraint imposed upon them by his vigilance and severity. His Majesty is naturally jealous of his influence and popularity.

The Minister, after these observations, proceeded to inform us, that certain presents had been prepared, by order of his Majesty, for the Governor-general, and some for the Mission, and that they would be presented to us to-morrow morning at the palace, where we should be received in state by the Minister of Ceremonies, who would be in attendance for the purpose. I had full time to deliberate upon the subject of these intended presents; and had resolved to decline accepting those for the Governor-general, as a necessary consequence of his Excellency's presents having been declined on the part of the Cochin Chinese Court. It was at the same time necessary, in doing so, to avoid, as far as possible, giving offence to the pride and pretensions of the Cochin Chinese. With this view it was stated, that presents were now superfluous, as a friendly acquaintance had commenced; while to receive them would be contrary to custom and to our instructions, except in the event of those brought by us being accepted by the King. A direct refusal of them was as far as possible avoided, and the presents for the Mission were accepted with due acknowledgments. The Minister answered, that the presents tendered for the Governor-general of India were mere trifles, not given for their value, but as tokens of his Majesty's friendship. He showed great anxiety that the presents should be accepted; but, on our part, persevering in our first resolution, he at last waived the point; and it was agreed, that we should repair on the following morning to the hall of ceremonies to receive the presents for the Mission only. We hoped, that in this manner a question respecting which we had anticipated considerable difficulty, had been amicably and temperately disposed of.

Drafts of the different papers were now exhibited to us. The first

of these was the letter for the Governor-general. It was explained by our own Chinese interpreter; and the language of it appeared, as far as we could judge through this medium, unexceptionable. It was not a letter direct from the King, but from the Minister, by command of his Majesty. It stated—that a letter in the English language, understood by nobody at Court, but translated by our interpreter, had been received from the Governor-general of British India—that this letter expressed a desire that a commercial intercourse should take place between the Cochin Chinese and the English; and that it disclaimed all desire for lands or establishments in Cochin China. His Majesty's answer to this was, that the wish expressed by the Governor-general had given him satisfaction, and that he had issued the necessary orders for the admission of English ships into the ports of his kingdom. The letter then proceeded to give the reasons for the King's declining to receive the presents of the Governor-general, being the same which I have already mentioned, and concluded with the list of the presents sent to his Excellency as tokens of his friendship. These last were as follow: three pairs of elephant's teeth; four rhinoceros' horns, set in gold feet; cinnamon of the first quality, three catties; of the second quality, five; and of a third quality, ten; agila wood, of the first quality, five catties; and of the second, ten catties; and three piculs of sugar-candy. These are the customary presents sent to foreign princes by the Court of Cochin China. The amount determines the rank of the person to whom they are sent, or at least that conceded to him by the etiquette or vanity of the Cochin Chinese. The cinnamon of the first quality here mentioned, I may observe, is reserved exclusively for His Majesty, and it is death to a subject to trade in it. An incredible value is put upon this commodity, viz. twenty dollars the tael, or three hundred and twenty dollars the catty, of one and one-third pound avoirdupois.

The subject of commerce was then introduced. The Minister observed, that His Majesty had granted permission to English ships to visit three ports of the kingdom only, viz. Saigun, Han or Tonran, with Faifo, and the