



Jean-Baptiste Tavernier

TRAVELS IN INDIA  
BY  
JEAN-BAPTISTE TAVERNIER  
BARON OF AUBONNE

Translated from the original French Edition of 1676 with a  
biographical sketch of the Author, Notes, Appendices, &c.

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of the Musalmāns, who hold images in abhorrence, has allowed this painting to remain, and it can only be explained because the Emperor his father and he himself had learnt from the Jesuits some principles of mathematics and astrology. But he had not the same indulgence for them in another matter, for on going one day to see a sick Armenian, named Cotgia,<sup>1</sup> . . . whom he much loved, and whom he had honoured with splendid appointments, and the Jesuits, who had their house close to that of the Armenian, happening to ring their bell just then, the noise proved displeasing to the Emperor, and as he thought it might inconvenience the sick man, in a rage he commanded it to be removed and hung on the neck of his elephant; this was promptly done. Some days after, the Emperor seeing the elephant with this heavy bell suspended from its neck, thought that so great a weight might injure it, and he therefore ordered it to be carried into the office of the Couteval,<sup>2</sup> which is a sort of barrier where a provost administers justice to those of the quarter, and it has remained there ever since. This Armenian had been brought up with Shāhjahān, and, as he was very clever and an excellent poet, he was high in the good graces of the Emperor, who had given him valuable governorships, but had never been able, either by promises or threats, to induce him to become a Musalmān.

## CHAPTER VIII

*Route from Agra to Patna and Dacca, towns of the Province of Bengal; and the quarrel which the author had with Shāista Khān, uncle of the King.*

I STARTED from Agra for Bengal on the 25th of November 1665<sup>3</sup> and halted the same day at a poor caravansarāi distant

<sup>1</sup> There is a hiatus here in the original, probably Tavernier was uncertain as to the name, Cotgia (for Khwāja, 'lord') being a title.

<sup>2</sup> Kotwāl, i. e. police-magistrate or provost.

<sup>3</sup> Tavernier, p. 301 ff. below, describes how he witnessed the Mogul's festival on the 4th to the 9th of November, and then saw the jewels. Soon afterwards he must have left Delhi so as to reach Agra for this start. (See *Joret*, op. cit., p. 193.)

3 coss<sup>1</sup> from Agra. The 26th [November] I reached Beruzabad, 9 coss. It is a small town, where, on my return, I received 8,000 rupees of the balance of the money which Ja'far Khān owed me for the goods which he had brought from me at Jahānābād.<sup>2</sup> The 27th [November] to Serail Morlides, 9 coss; 28th [November] to Estanja, 14 coss; 29th [November] to Haii-Mal, 12 coss; 30th [November] to Sekandera, 13 coss; 1st of December to Sanqual, 14 coss.<sup>3</sup>

On this day I met 110 wagons, each drawn by 6 oxen, and there was upon each wagon 50,000 rupees. It was the revenue of the Province of Bengal, which, all charges being paid and the purse of the Governor well filled, amounted to 5,500,000 rupees.<sup>4</sup> At one league on this side of Sanqual you cross a river called Sengar,<sup>5</sup> which flows into the Jumna, only at a distance of half a league. You cross this river Sengar by a stone bridge, and when you arrive from the Bengal side, to go to Sironj and Surat, if you wish to shorten the journey by ten days, when quitting the road to Agra you must come as far as this bridge, and cross the river Jumna by boat. Nevertheless the route by Agra is generally taken, because by the other there are five or six days' stony marches, and because one must pass through the territories of Rājās where there is danger of being robbed.

The 2nd [December] I came to a caravansarāi called Cherourabad,<sup>6</sup> 12 coss. Half-way you pass Jahānābād, a small town near which, about a quarter of a league on this side, you pass a field of millet, where I saw a rhinoceros eating stalks of this millet, which a small boy nine or ten years<sup>7</sup> old

<sup>1</sup> Mundy halted at Nūr Mahall kī Sarāi, 1 kos from Agra.

<sup>2</sup> See, for account of this purchase, p. 112.

<sup>3</sup> The route is: Firozābād; Sarāi Murlidās; Etāwa; Ajitmall; Sikandra; Sanklā Jamwārā, 10 miles from Ghātampur. Mundy's stages were Firozābād; Shikohābād; Jaswantnagar; Etāwa; Bakhar Khānpur; Jānaki Sarāi; Sikandra; Bhognipur; Shankar kī Sarāi; Ghātampur.

<sup>4</sup> Tieffenthaler places the revenue of Bengal at 13,006,590 rupees in Akbar's time, and he says that it was 40,000,000 rupees according to Manucci (ii. 414), in the time of Shāhjahān; subsequently it fell to 8,621,200 rupees (*Géog. de l'Ind.*, p. 443). See Bernier, 457; Elliot-Dowson, *Hist. of India*, vii. 138.

<sup>5</sup> Saingour in the original.

<sup>6</sup> Korā Jahānābād.

<sup>7</sup> Tame rhinoceroses, to which a good deal of freedom was allowed,

presented to him. On my approaching he gave me some stalks of millet, and immediately the rhinoceros came to me, opening his mouth four or five times; I placed some in it, and when he had eaten them he continued to open his mouth so that I might give him more.

The 3rd [December] I came to Serrail Chageada, 10 coss; the 4th, to Serrail Atakan, 13 coss; the 5th, to Aurangābād,<sup>1</sup> a large town, 9 coss. Formerly this town had another name, and it is the place where Aurangzeb, who reigns at present, gave battle to his brother Sultān Shujā', who held the government of the whole of Bengal. Aurangzeb having been victorious gave his name to the town, and he built there a handsome house with a garden and a small mosque.

The 6th [December] to Alinchan<sup>2</sup>, 9 coss. About two leagues on this side of Alinchan you meet the Ganges. Monsieur Bernier,<sup>3</sup> Physician to the King, and a man named were formerly not uncommonly kept by the Rājās. Sometimes, as at Baroda, they were performers in the fighting arena, and on such occasions were commonly painted with divers bright colours. Elsewhere Ball has shown that the Kartazon of Megasthenes and the 'Horned Ass' of Ktesias were probably this animal (J. W. McCrindle, *Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, 59); in the latter case the colours which have puzzled so many commentators were, he believed, artificial pigments applied to the hide of the rhinoceros seen by Ktesias, as they are on elephants at the present day (*Proceed. Roy. Irish Academy*, 2nd ser., vol. ii, no. 6, 1885). Chardin describes and figures a rhinoceros from Ethiopia which he saw at Ispahān. He says he did not know whether the animal was found in India (*Voyages*, Amsterdam ed., 1711, vol. viii, p. 133).

<sup>1</sup> The original name of the place was Khajuhā or Khajwā, which was changed to Aurangābād, 'place of the throne,' after the battle in which Shujā' was defeated, on January 5, 1659. See Jadunath Sarkar, *Hist. of Aurangzib*, ii. 143 ff. A Sarāi and hall (bāradari) erected in honour of his victory, are fine buildings, which have been restored (*Imperial Gazetteer*, xv. 219 f.). The marches from Korā Jahānābād are Sarāi Shāhzāda, Hatgāon, Aurangābād.

<sup>2</sup> Alamchand.

<sup>3</sup> M. Bernier, the well-known historian of the Mogul Empire, was born at Joué-Etiau, in Anjou, in September 1620. In 1654 he went to Syria and Egypt, and from Cairo, where he remained for more than a year, he went to Suez and embarked for India, where he took service as physician to the Great Mogul (*Travels*, Introd. xxi). In 1688 he returned to France, and died in 1688. It is curious that he is not mentioned in the *Ency. Brit.* On his meeting with Tavernier see Bernier, Introd. xxi. 113. Bernier does not mention Rachepot.

Rachepot, who was with me, were surprised to see that this river, so much talked about, is not larger than the Seine in front of the Louvré, it being supposed that it equalled in width, at the least, the Danube below Belgrade. There is actually so little water between the months of March and June or July, when the rains commence, that boats are not able to ascend it. On arrival at the Ganges, we each drank a glass of wine which we mixed with water—this caused us some internal disturbance; but our attendants who drank it alone were much more tormented than we were. The Dutch, who have a house on the banks of the Ganges, never drink the water of the river, except after it has been boiled; as for the native inhabitants, they have been accustomed to it from their youth; the Emperor even and all his court drink no other.<sup>1</sup> You see every day a large number of camels which do nothing else but fetch water from the Ganges.

The 7th [December] we came to Halabas,<sup>2</sup> 8 coss. Allāhābād is a large town built on a point of land where the Ganges and the Jumna meet one another. It has a fine castle built of cut stone, with a double ditch, and it is the dwelling of the Governor. He is one of the greatest nobles in India, and as he is troubled with bad health he employs some Persian Physicians, and he then also had in his service M. Claude Maille of Bourges,<sup>3</sup> who practised both surgery and medicine. It was he who advised us not to drink any of the Ganges water,

<sup>1</sup> When Akbar was at Agra or Fatehpur Sikri he used to get Ganges water from Soron in the Etah District, when in the Panjāb from Hardwār (*Ain*, i. 55).

<sup>2</sup> Allāhābād, Ilāhābās of Akbar, at the junction of the Jumna and Ganges.

<sup>3</sup> M. Claude Maillé of Bourges. As we shall see (p. 231 below) a man of this name who had escaped from the Dutch service was, in the year 1652, a not very successful amateur gun-founder for Mir Jumla; he had after his escape set up as a surgeon to the Nawāb, with an equipment consisting of a case of instruments and a box of ointments which he had stolen from M. Cheteur, the Dutch Ambassador to Golkonda. Tavernier does not mention his identity with this physician which, however, seems more than probable. He states that M. Cheteur left a surgeon named Pitre de Lan with the king of Golkonda. (See p. 241 below. Also see Smith's note on Sleeman, *Rambles*, ed. 1915, p. 560.) Manucci calls him Clodio Malier or Menolhaō (i. 86, iii. 173).

When a man dies all his relatives and friends should come to the burial, and when they place the body in the ground they take off all the bracelets on their arms and legs and bury them with the deceased.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### *Concerning the Kingdom of Siam.*<sup>1</sup>

THE greater part of the Kingdom of Siam is situated between the Gulf of the same name and the Gulf of Bengal, adjoining Pegu on the north and the peninsula of Malacca on the south. The shortest road and the best which Europeans can take to reach this Kingdom is to go from Ispahān to Hormuz, from Hormuz to Surat, from Surat to Golkonda, and from Golkonda to Masulipatam, where they should embark for Denouserin,<sup>2</sup> which is one of the ports of the Kingdom of Siam. From Denouserin to the capital town, which bears the name of the Kingdom, there are about thirty-five days' journey; one part is traversed by ascending a river, and the remainder in a cart or upon elephants. The road both by land and water is uncomfortable, because on the land portion one must always be on guard against lions<sup>3</sup> and tigers; and by water, as the river makes rapids in many places, it is difficult to make the boats ascend, but this is accomplished by the aid of machinery. It is the route which I recommended, on the return from one of my voyages to India, to three bishops whom I met on the road. The first was the Bishop of Beryte,<sup>4</sup> whom I met at Ispahān; the second the Bishop of Megalopolis,<sup>5</sup> when crossing the Euphrates;

<sup>1</sup> One of the most important early accounts of Siam is that of Simon de la Loubère, *Du Royaume de Siam*, Amsterdam, 1691, of which an English translation, by A. P. Gem, R. S. S., was published in London, 1693, under the title of *A New Historical Relation of the Kingdom of Siam*. The references in the notes are to the latter work.

<sup>2</sup> Tenasserim, which, however, was included in the Kingdom of Pegu, though at times conquered and held by Siam (Yule, *Hobson-Jobson*, 914).

<sup>3</sup> There are no lions in Siam.

<sup>4</sup> Beyrout, in Syria.

<sup>5</sup> Metellopolis of Finlayson, *Mission to Siam*, 257: perhaps Megalopolis in Arcadia.

the third the Bishop of Heliopolis,<sup>1</sup> who arrived at Alexandria as I was leaving it for Europe. The whole of Siam abounds with rice and fruits, the principal of which are called mangoes, durions, and mangoustans.<sup>2</sup> The forests are full of deer, elephants, tigers, rhinoceros, and monkeys, and everywhere is to be seen an abundance of bamboos, which are large and very tall canes, hollow throughout, and as hard as iron.

At the ends of these canes nests, of the size of a man's head, are suspended; they are made by ants from a fat earth which they carry up. There is but a small hole at the base of these nests, by which the ants enter, and in these nests each ant, like honey bees, has his separate chamber. They build their nests on the canes, because if they made them on the ground, during the rainy season, which lasts four or five months, they would be exterminated, all the country being then inundated. One must take precautions after night-fall against snakes. There are some snakes which are 22 feet long and have two heads,<sup>3</sup> but the head at the extremity which answers to the tail, and where the snake ends, does not open the mouth and has no movement. There is also in Siam a very venomous animal which is not more than a foot long. Its tail is forked and has two points, and its form is somewhat like what we picture the salamander.<sup>4</sup>

The rivers of this Kingdom are very beautiful, and the

<sup>1</sup> Heliopolis or Bambyke, near Carchemish on the Euphrates. Le Blanc identified Hieropolis with Aleppo (*Voyages*, Paris Edition, 1648, p. 8).

<sup>2</sup> Mangoes, durians, and mangosteens.

<sup>3</sup> This fable of two-headed snakes is common in India; sometimes it is said of the Dhamin snake—*Ptyas mucosus*. The statement that the head, at the tail end, has no movement, and that the mouth does not open, is a charmingly ingenuous admission. See Mundy, 308 f., with an illustration; *Bombay Gazetteer*, x. 48. Like the case of the Birds of Paradise, referred to on p. 13, the description illustrates the persistence of myths.

<sup>4</sup> This poisonous, forked-tailed reptile was certainly mythical. A species of *Eublepharis*? is called bishkhaprā by the natives of India, and though unprovided with fangs is believed to be very poisonous. (Yule, *Hobson-Jobson*, 95 f.) A. Hamilton describes a dangerous animal, 16 shaped like a lizard, and called Jackoa (Pinkerton, *Voyages*, viii. 453).

accomplish it in that time he would have them all executed. The physicians replied that they would answer to him for the cure of the ambassador, provided he consented to take the remedies which they would give him, and M. Croc resolved to consent. They gave him in the morning a decoction, and in the evening a small pill, and at the end of nine days a great fit of vomiting seized him. It was thought he would die of the strange efforts which he made; and at length he vomited a bundle of hair as large as a small nut, after which he was at once cured. The King afterwards took him to a rhinoceros hunt, and invited him to give the mortal shot to the animal. As soon as it was killed they cut off the horn, which the King also presented to the ambassador; <sup>1</sup> and at the conclusion of the hunt there was a great feast. At the end of it the King drank to the health of the General of Batavia and his wife, and ordered one of his own wives to kiss the ambassador. On his departure he presented him with a pebble of the size of a goose's egg, in which large veins of gold were to be seen like the tendons in a man's hand, and it is thus that gold is found in this country.

M. Croc, when at Surat as chief of the factory, broke the pebble in two, and gave half to M. Constant, who, under him, held the highest authority there. When he was returning to Holland, I offered him 150 pistoles for it in order to present it to the late Monseigneur le Duc d'Orléans, but he would not consent to part with it.

## CHAPTER XXI

### *Departure of the Author from the Island of Ceylon, and his arrival at Batavia.*

ON the 25th of July <sup>2</sup> [1648] we left Pointe de Galle on a different vessel from that by which we had arrived, because when it was examined, it was found that it could not make

<sup>1</sup> The horn of the rhinoceros was, and is still in South Africa and Hindostān, valued as an antidote to poison. See the authorities quoted in Fryer, ii. 298.

<sup>2</sup> The July of the original and the June of the edition of 1713 appear to be both wrong, as the month must have been May.

the journey without danger. Accordingly, all the goods were discharged from it and transhipped to that in which we embarked for Batavia.

On the 2nd of June <sup>1</sup> we crossed the line, and on the 6th reached the island called Nazacos.<sup>2</sup> On the 17th we sighted the coast of Sumatra, on the 18th the island of Ingagne,<sup>3</sup> and on the 19th the island of Fortune. On the 20th we saw several other small islands, and the coast of Java, and among these islands there are three which are called Prince's Islands.<sup>4</sup> On the 21st we saw the island of Bantam, and on the 22nd we anchored in the roads at Batavia. On the following day I landed, and went to salute General Vanderlin and M. Caron,<sup>5</sup> the Director-General, who was the second officer in the council.

On the 25th, two days after my arrival, the General sent one of his guards to invite me to dinner, where there were assembled M. Caron, two other councillors, the Avocat Fiscal, the Major, and their wives. Whilst we were at table they conversed about the news from foreign countries, and principally of the court of the King of Persia, and after dinner some began to play backgammon, while waiting till it became cool enough to take exercise outside the town by the river's bank, where there are very fine bathing places. The General went to his office, where he asked me to accompany him. After some conversation on indifferent matters he asked me for what purpose I had come to Batavia. I told him I had principally come to see so renowned a place; and as I had an opportunity of doing service to the Company at the request of the Chief of the factory at Vengurla, I had been

<sup>1</sup> In the 1713 edition this is given, probably incorrectly, as July. June appears to be correct.

<sup>2</sup> Not identified, but it may be remarked that *nusa* is Javanese for a small island, and like *pulo* is used as a prefix to the true name. (Crawford, *Dictionary*, 303.)

<sup>3</sup> Ball suggests that it may be Indragiri, a Malay State on the coast of Sumatra: but there is an island named Engano, about 200 miles SSE. of Nassau Island (A. Hamilton, in Pinkerton, viii. 449).

<sup>4</sup> There is a Prince Island in Sunda Strait, between Java and Sumatra.

<sup>5</sup> M. Caron, a renegade Dutchman, founded the first French factory in India, at Surat, in 1668. (*Imperial Gazetteer*, ii. 463, xii. 104.)