

THE
HISTORY, ANTIQUITIES,
TOPOGRAPHY, AND STATISTICS
OF
EASTERN INDIA;

16423

COMPRISING THE DISTRICTS OF

BEHAR, SHAHABAD, BHAGULPOOR, GORUCKPOOR,
DINAJEPOOR, PURANIYA, RONGGOPOOR, AND ASSAM,

IN RELATION TO THEIR

GEOLOGY, MINERALOGY, BOTANY, AGRICULTURE, COMMERCE, MANU-
FACTURES, FINE ARTS, POPULATION, RELIGION, EDUCATION,
STATISTICS, ETC.

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BY

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AUTHOR OF THE "*History of the British Colonies*," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

PURANIYA, RONGGOPOOR, AND ASSAM.

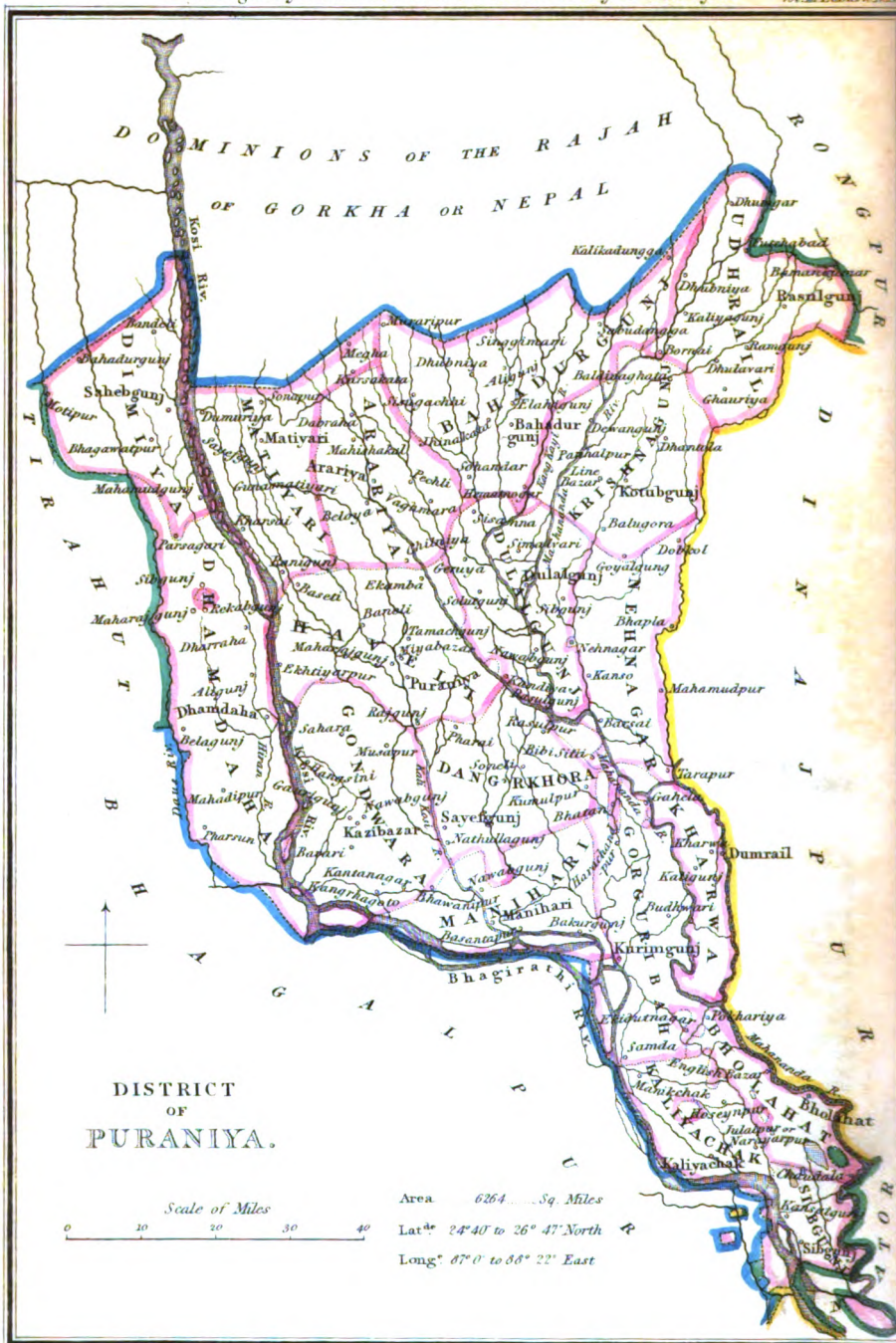
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HISTORY, TOPOGRAPHY, ANTIQUITIES, &c.

OF

EASTERN INDIA.

BOOK I.

DISTRICT OF PURANIYA.

CHAPTER I.

TOPOGRAPHY, SOIL, ELEVATION, RIVERS, LAKES, &c.

This district occupies the north-east corner of what is called Bengal; but it includes also a portion of the Mogul province of Behar. Its greatest length from Chunakhali to the boundary of Nepal is about 155 British miles, in a direction between south-south-east, and north-north-west, and its greatest breadth crossing the above line at right angles, from the source of the Nagor to the Daus river is about 98 miles. According to Major Rennell, its southern extremity opposite to Nawabgunj (Nabobgunge R.) on the Mahanonda, is in $24^{\circ} 34'$ N. latitude, and its northern extremity extends on the same river to $26^{\circ} 35'$. Its eastern extremity on the Karatoya is nearly north from Calcutta, and from thence it extends to $1^{\circ} 28'$ west from that city. It contains about 6264 square British miles.

The whole northern boundary, where the Company's dominions are joined by those of Gorkha, is irregular, and has never been well ascertained. The sub-division into Thanahs has been made with as little care as in Ronggopoor. Their jurisdictions are much intermixed, and of very unequal sizes, and population.

THE SOIL here in general is not so rich as that of Dinaj-poor, and has a greater resemblance to that of Ronggopoor. The clay is in general stiffer than that of the last mentioned

CHAPTER V.

NATURAL PRODUCTIONS OF PURANIYA.

Animals.—The only monkey that I have seen wild in this district, is the Markat, or *Simia Rhexus* of Audibert, mentioned in my account of Dinajpoor. In the ruins of Gaur there are a great many, and I saw them no where else ; but I am told, that in the marshy woods of the south there are many. Wherever they are numerous they do much harm ; but no one kills them.

For some years three or four wild elephants have frequented the woods in the southern parts of the district, and it is from thence, probably, that the two mentioned in my account of Dinajpoor made their incursion into the ruins of Peruya. Here they have been extremely destructive, so that, to the total disgrace of the police, they have every year destroyed some villages, and, unless checked, they seem to be in a fair way of ruining the whole of that vicinity. The farmers are so timid, and the Zemindars are on such mutual bad terms, that unless the magistrate interferes, there is not the smallest hope that the elephants will be disturbed. It would, however, be unreasonable, that any expense should be incurred, except by the Zemindars. These have plenty of tame elephants, and the whole of these being assembled, and a couple of good musketeers placed on each, in the course of a few days the wild ones might to a certainty be killed. Towards the northern frontier herds of 40 or 50 elephants make occasional incursions from Morang. The people make a noise, but never attempt to repel them by violence.

A rhinoceros lately made his appearance in the marshy woods of the south ; but fortunately he thrust himself into the premises of an indigo planter, and was shot.

The jackal (Seyal), and Indian fox (Khikir), are common. The former is supposed to steal both money and cloth, which

it conceals. This, I presume, is a fabrication of those who pilfer, in order to account for the disappearance of many things, that they have been suspected of taking. I heard of no wolves or hyænas. At Nathpooor, however, in the course of the beginning of the year 1810, some children were carried away in the night, as was supposed by some animal, and this was naturally thought to be a wolf; but the attacks were always in the dark, the people were too much terrified to pursue, and their search in the day was without effect; so that the animal was never seen. Formerly such accidents were common; but since the country in the neighbourhood has been cleared, the wolves have disappeared. They do not seem ever to have frequented the southern parts of the district.

Except in the ruins of Gaur, tigers and leopards are not common. By both Moslems and Hindus they are considered as the property of the old Muhammedan saints, who, it is imagined, are offended at their death: so that in general the natives are far from being pleased at the sport of tiger hunting, although they admire the courage of those by whom it is practised. I am indeed of opinion, that a few tigers in any part of the country, that is overgrown with woods or long grass, are useful in keeping down the number of wild hogs and deer, which are infinitely more destructive. The natives seem to be in general of this opinion, and the number of either people or cattle that the tigers destroy, even at Gaur, is very trifling. If the number of other wild animals, on which the tigers prey, was reduced, they no doubt would become destructive, and it would become of advantage to offer a reward for killing them: but in the present state of the country the reward now bestowed seems to be of very doubtful benefit, and wherever the country is cleared they disappear. Most of the heads paid for both here and in Dinajpooor, I believe, have been brought from Morang. I have been unable to learn any thing satisfactory concerning the Nakeswari-Vagh, mentioned in the account of Dinajpooor. The natives are so exceedingly indistinct in their nomenclature, every striped or spotted animal of prey being called Vagh, that I can place no reliance on what they say. I every where indeed heard of the Nakeswari, but from the natives descriptions, I suspect, that what they mean is the common leopard.

The Indian ichneumon is exceedingly common; but is rarely tamed. There are many otters, and the farmers sometimes kill them, and sell the skins to the northern mountaineers; but no persons make this a profession. The Indian bear is very uncommon. The porcupine is rather scarce, being too much pursued; for all the pure Hindus are desirous of eating them. Hares are much more numerous, being less disturbed, although they are occasionally eaten.

The proper deer, that I have seen in the district, are the axis or spotted deer, the porcine or hog-deer, and the cerf des Ardennes of Buffon. They are pretty numerous, wherever the country is overgrown with woods or bushes, especially towards the south, and on the frontier of Morang towards the branches of the Kankayi, and are very destructive: but are not so overpowering as in the eastern parts of Ronggopoor. The common antelope is abundant on the bare swelling lands of all the western parts of the district. It feeds chiefly on short grass, and is not nearly so destructive as the deer.

Although all the natives are fond of venison, and although there is no restraint, no one makes a profession of hunting for sale, nor do many keep nets, and the deer are too fleet for the usual manner in which the low castes destroy game.

In the wastes of the south of the district are some wild buffaloes, that are exceedingly destructive; but in general this district is not so much afflicted with so great an evil.

Wherever there is any shelter, the wild hog is exceedingly numerous, and he is very destructive. The low caste called Dosad pursue him eagerly for eating. They have dogs taught to bring him to bay until their masters come up, and attack with spears and arrows. In the large rivers porpoises are numerous; but are very seldom killed for their oil.

There is an immense variety and number of vultures, eagles, kites, and hawks; but at present none are employed in sport, nor do they any harm.

Everywhere north of Puraniya parakeets are in immense numbers and eat a great quantity of grain. In the southern part of the district wild peacocks are a great nuisance. In every part there are three other kind of birds, that consume much grain and occasion a heavy loss.

The worst is the Kaim (*Galinula porphyrio* L.), a bird

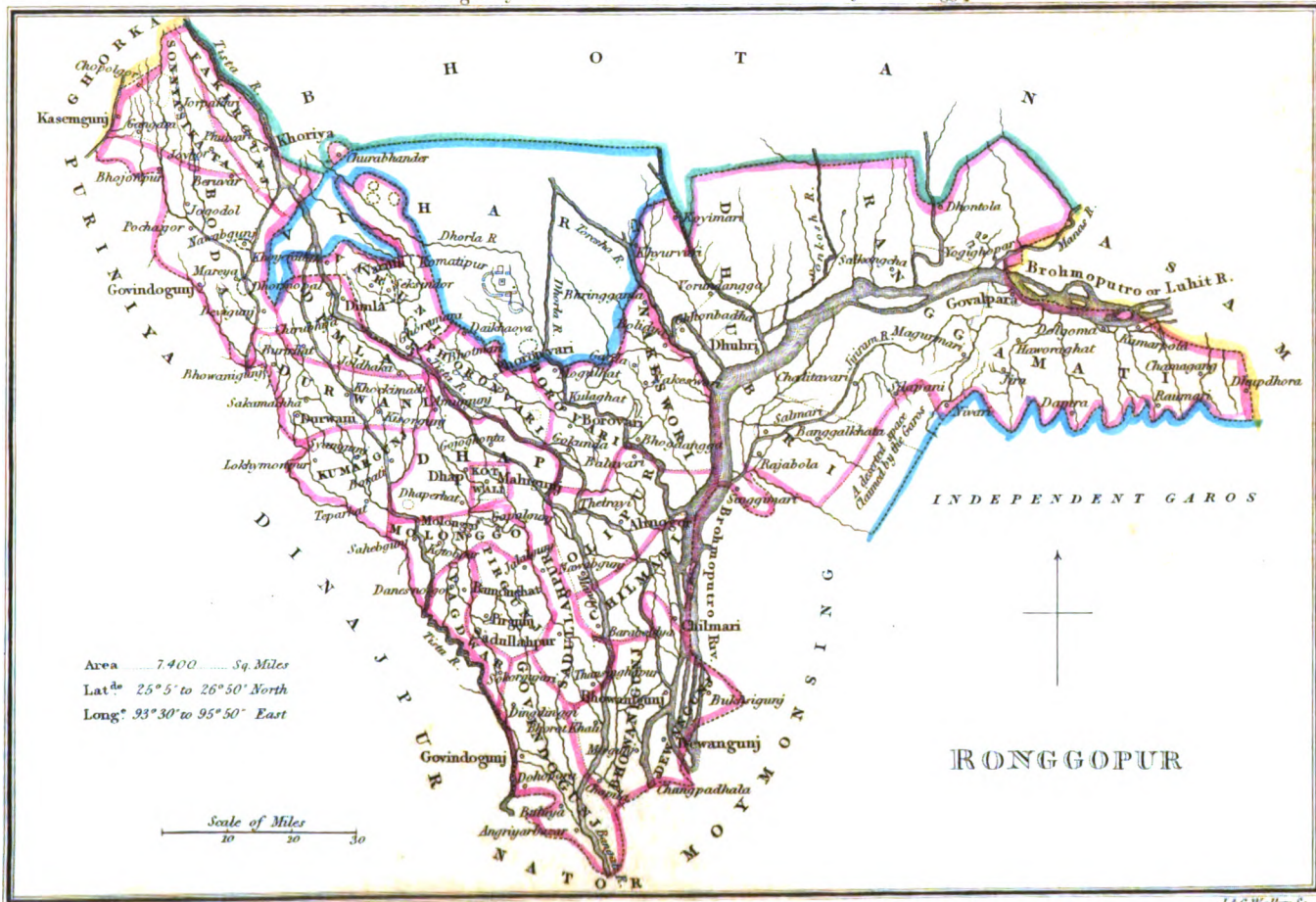
celebrated for its beauty among the ancient Greeks, with whom it was a great rarity. It remains here all the year, and consumes much rice, that grows on the lower lands. It seems to be a very stupid bird, and is tamed with great difficulty, very few for any time surviving the loss of liberty.

The Bageri of the natives is what the English in Bengal call an Ortolan, and in spring, after it has been fattened on the winter crops, and the grass seeds, which abound in the hot weather, it becomes a very delicious morsel. It approaches so near the *Calandre* Lark of Latham, that I suspect a drawing of this bird, found in the collection of Lady Impey, induced that able ornithologist to place the *Calandre* among Indian birds. The Bageri is a bird of passage, and with us is always found in very large flocks, and only during the fair weather. It disappears when the rainy weather commences, and it might be supposed, that a few stragglers might reach Italy and the south of Europe, where the *Calandre* is a rare bird; but there appears to me abundant marks, by which the two birds may be distinguished, and their habits and uses are so different, that it would be improper to consider them as belonging to the same species.

The third of these destructive birds is the Kolang of the natives, the common crane (*Ardea Grus*) of Europe. It remains all the cold season, and as the heats increase, retires to breed. It consumes much grain.

The peacocks, cranes, parakeets, and ortolans, make an open attack in the day time, and may be kept off by care; but this occasions great trouble, especially where the farmer is harassed all night by watching his crops to keep off the deer and wild hogs. The *Galinule* creeps unseen along the marshes, and in fact does more harm than any of the other birds.

Partridges and quails are very numerous. The Kalatita, or black partridge, is the most common. It approaches very near to the *Francolin* of Europe, but there are some differences, and it is very poor eating, while the *Francolin*, by the most scientific eaters of France, is admitted to be excellent. I suspect, therefore, that our bird cannot be entitled to so valued a name. The black partridge chiefly frequents long grass and low bushes, where its presence is readily discoverable by an incessant loud whistling noise; but it is not readily seen until it takes wing.



HISTORY, TOPOGRAPHY, ANTIQUITIES, &c.
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BOOK II.

DISTRICT OR ZILA OF RONGGOPOOR.

CHAPTER I.

EXTENT, GENERAL APPEARANCE, SOIL, RIVERS, METEOROLOGY, &c.

The district or Zila of Ronggopoor, which forms the extent of the jurisdiction of a judge and magistrate, occupies the north-eastern part of Bengal. A collector also resides at Ronggopoor; but he collects the revenue of a part of the Moymonsing district that has lately been separated from Ronggopoor; and receives the tribute due by the Raja of Koch Vihar, whose territory is entirely independent of the judge and magistrate. In this account I shall confine myself strictly to the district placed under the authority of that officer. Its greatest length from the frontier of Assam to that of Nepal is 185 British miles, and its greatest width, crossing the above line at right angles, from the boundary of Nator on the Banggali river, to the frontier of Bhotan on the Sonkosh, is 116 British miles. This district extends from about $24^{\circ} 52'$ to $26^{\circ} 44'$ N. Lat. Its western extremity is about 2 minutes west of the meridian of Calcutta, and its eastern extends to $2^{\circ} 50'$ of E. longitude from that city.

By tracing the boundaries of the district, as nearly as possible, on the map in the Bengal Atlas, I find, that it contains about 7400 square British miles. The face of the country, however, since the time when Major Rennell made his most valuable survey, has undergone such wonderful changes from the alterations in the courses of rivers, that I can place no

CHAPTER VI.

NATURAL PRODUCTIONS OF RONGGOPOOR.

Animals.—In the woods of Mechpara are found two kinds of the ape, both called Hulluk by the natives. The one, which is of a grey colour, seems to be the *Simia Moloch* of Audibert; and the other, which is black, with broad white eye brows, is the second variety of the long-armed ape, described by Pennant. Although the colours of these two animals are very different, their manners, shape, and cry, are so much alike as to give room to think that the difference arises from some accidental circumstance that I have not been able to trace.

The Hulluks live in considerable herds; and, although exceedingly noisy, it is difficult to procure a view, their activity in springing from tree to tree being very great; and they are very shy. In the dry season, when water is scarce, and they are under the necessity of leaving the woods to procure drink, they are often caught, as nothing can be more awkward than their walk, which is always erect. The old ones, when caught, are very intractable, and seldom live long; but the young ones are readily tamed, are fond of being caressed and scratched by men, and of playing with dogs; but they are extremely irritable, and impatient of restraint. Although uncommonly ugly and misshapen, the Hulluk has much less grimace than a monkey, and is not so exceedingly dirty and indecent; but it seems to be endowed with less intellect, vivacity, and courage. The two animals have a mutual detestation; but a monkey always puts to flight an ape larger than itself. Spiders and grasshoppers seem to be the favourite food of the Hulluks; but they will also eat fish and wild fruit and leaves. They have three kinds of cry, all shrill, harsh, and monotonous. One somewhat resembles Ayu, ayu, ayu, and seems to mark impatience; another is like Ula, ula, ula, with nearly the sound of vowels and accent of the English word huzza; the third is a short kind of bark

wou, wou, wou. These two last seem to express various degrees of satisfaction. The resemblance of apes to mankind, and the painful education that has been given to the few which have reached Europe, having led to opinions concerning their faculties, as far removed from truth, as a description of the learned pig would be an accurate representation of the groveling race, I have entered more fully into an account of this animal's manners, than its consequence otherwise would require. As this animal has nails on the thumbs of its hind hands, for they cannot with propriety be called feet, it must be classed with the Pongo of Buffon; but it will be a distinct species, if that great naturalist was sufficiently accurate in stating, that the Pongo has no callosities on his buttocks; for both the grey and black Hulluks have that distinguishing mark, although it is much concealed by the length of their hair.

The short-tailed monkey, called Morkot by the natives, and described in my account of Dinajpoor, is found in the woods of this district; and I have already mentioned the great colony of this vile animal that is on the hill Tokores-wori. At Nenggotiyar Pahar, North from Yogighopa, there is another, but not so remarkable. In Bengal the monkies, which have tails longer than their body and head, seem in general to be called Longgur. In the woods, near Goyalpara, I observed a herd, but had no opportunity of observing them close. Although nearly of the same size, they seem to differ from the Honuman on the banks of the Ganges, in being all over of a pale yellowish red, and in being remarkably shy. It is probable, that they may be of the kind, which Audibert has called *Simia Entellus*. Both species of monkies live entirely on vegetables, and in Mechpara are very destructive in both gardens and fields. The apes living chiefly on insects, do no harm to the natives.

The *Lemur tardigradus*, by the natives of Mechpara, where it is sometimes but rarely caught, is called Lojjawoti Banor, or bashful monkey. In comparing it with a monkey, the people here have been more successful in their classification than those of Hindustan, who call it a cat. It is, however, an animal of prey, and feeds, I believe, chiefly on small birds, which it takes at night, and is then very active. Its manners in some respects resemble those of the bat, as it is dazzled by

the glare of day, and then retires to rest, hanging from the branch of a tree, much as the large bats of India do.

The common black bear of India is occasionally found in the wilder parts of the district; but is not numerous. One of their principal haunts is in the old ramparts of Komotapoor, where the holes, which they dig in the earth, are secure from being filled with water. Many also haunt Singeswor forest, and sometimes kill a person that has straggled near. They destroy mangoes, jaks, plantains, and honey; but do no harm to the crops nor herds. The proper name in this district is Bhandi; but towards the south the word Bhaluk is in common use.

Otters are very numerous, and in the northern parts of the district a few skins are procured by farmers for the Bhotan market; but this kind of hunting is not carried to the extent of which it is capable. A few of the hunters from Dhaka, who are of the tribe called Gangrar, frequent the banks of the Brohmoputro, and kill otters for the traders of that city. Their first step is to catch a living young otter, and these are procurable between the middle of November and the middle of December. During the two following months is the season for hunting. The hunter goes to a place frequented by otters, ties the young one to a bush or reed, and conceals himself near. Its cries soon bring the old ones, which the hunter strikes with a harpoon. The hunter as usual is paid in advance, and is allowed half a rupee for every skin. Each hunter takes in advance from 5 to 10 rs. for the season, at the end of which he delivers the skins that he has procured, and settles his account. The otter of India is about $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet from the snout to the end of the tail.

Foxes (*canis Bengalensis* Pennant) and jackals are numerous in every part of the district: and I heard of a hyæna having carried away two children; but in this district this is not a common animal. On the north-west frontier towards Nepal, I heard of a wild animal called Hungra. It is said to be like a jackal; but whether or not it is a wolf, I was not able to determine; for in no part of the country could I induce any person to bring me the wild quadrupeds. In the same vicinity I heard of another animal seemingly of the canine tribe. It is called Kuhok, and by the natives is said to be of two religions. The Moslem Kuhoks live upon hares and deer,

while the Hindus content themselves with carrion. They produce between the middle of November and middle of January, and the young are then sometimes caught; but I had no opportunity of seeing one.

The tiger, commonly called Govagha by the natives, on account of its killing cattle, in most parts of the district is very seldom seen. In Bottrishazari, one of the countries most exposed to their depredations, a man may be killed once in two or three years, and from 16 to 20 cattle may be annually destroyed. Even the buffalo has been known to fall a prey to the Govagha, of which I never heard an instance in any other part of India. In the eastern wilds, tigers are by no means so troublesome as I expected; and the injury which they commit is still less considerable than in Bottrishazari. They seldom, I was told, come on the plains; but are very numerous among the Garo mountains. Leopards are not more common than tigers. In Mechpara and Molonggo, I heard also of the small animal of this kind (Nakeswori), that is said to live on trees; but although I offered very considerable rewards, I could not procure one either dead or alive.

Porcupines are not so numerous as in Dinajpoor, and are still less sought after for food. Hares are very abundant in every part of the district, even on the left of the Brohmoputro. This I did not expect, as to the east of the lower part of its course, this animal is not found. In some parts of the district, chiefly towards the west the farmers have nets, and are at the trouble of catching the hares. In others they are totally neglected, or when people are hunting deer, they may occasionally be at the trouble of knocking down a few hares with a stick. Rats are very troublesome and destructive, especially a kind, that, as the winter crop of rice comes to maturity, and the fields become dry, forms large holes under ground, where it hoards up grain to last it for the season. Poor boys are very diligent in the search of these hoards, and often procure a very considerable quantity of grain.

Both in the woods of Mechpara, and in those of Bottrishazari, the Pangolin is found. In the latter it is called Keyot Machh, or the fish of the Keyot (a tribe of Hindus). In the former Katpohu (timber animal) is the name by which it is known. The reason assigned for this name is, that it lives in

the hollow trunks of trees. It is a very rare animal, but very much sought after, as its flesh is supposed to possess strong aphrodisiac qualities.

Elephants are numerous throughout the two eastern divisions, and many frequent the parts of the two divisions towards the north-west, that are situated towards Nepal and Bhotan. Of late years they scarcely ever have penetrated into any other part of the district, and seem therefore to be on the decrease; as 20 years ago they often came far south. They are exceedingly destructive to the crops of grain; and notwithstanding vast labour and trouble taken to watch the crops, do much injury. When the rice approaches maturity, every man, in the parts which the elephant frequents, is under the necessity of watching through the night. Stages are erected on posts 12 or 14 feet high, and on one side of the stage a small shed is made for the watchmen, two of whom always mount the same stage. One feeds a fire that burns constantly on the open part of the stage, while the other in his turn, is allowed to sleep, except when any wild animals such as elephants, deer, or hogs, come into the field; then he is roused, and both unite in shouting and in making all the noise they can with sticks or drums. They never attempt to attack the animals. The principal haunts of the elephant in the rainy season, seem to be the Sal forests; in the dry season they chiefly frequent the thickets of reeds, by which so much of the country is overgrown. They very rarely go upon the mountains. Their two principal retreats however are Porbotjoyar, and the deserted tract of the country, which is situated between the Gro mountains, Mechpara, Kalumalupara and Koroyivari. During the whole night that I slept at the entrance to this tract from Nivari, the roaring was incessant. Near this I observed a regular road, which was said to be one of their paths, and that in their excursions they usually frequent one route, which soon becomes well beaten and smooth. I no where heard of their attacking men; but a very large one, which I saw swim over the Brohmoputro in the height of the floods, landed at Goyalpara, and in his passage through the town overthrew several huts that were in his way, while he was eating the plantain trees; so that a very general alarm being spread, I was under the necessity of sending people to shoot him. This animal was

a male, and had neither tusks nor tail, and was looked upon by the natives as a curiosity, although the loss of his tail was probably a mere accident.

In this district very little progress has been made in the art of taking and taming these valuable animals. Several of the proprietors of land have tame females trained for the purpose (Kumki). These are provided with a long rope, which is fastened to their girdle, and then coiled on their back. On its end is formed a noose, which a man who sits on the back of the trained female, throws round the neck of the wild elephant, and then the tame one walks away until the wild one is almost strangled. In the meantime, the people assisted by another tame female, endeavour to fasten ropes to his legs, and he is dragged to a place where there are trees, to which he is fastened until he becomes somewhat tame. He is then led to a more convenient place by the tame females. The elephants usually caught in this manner are too small, being seldom procured more than $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet high; and a larger proportion of them seem to die, than of those which are caught by being surrounded with a fence (Khada). The Vijnji Raja formerly paid his tribute in elephants; but, as very few survived, and as they were seldom of a good size, a value was put upon each that he should deliver, and the payment has been taken in money. It is however, more to be attributed to the manner of catching, than to the defect of the breed, that the quality of the elephants which he delivered was of so inferior a nature; and I have no doubt, that the people of Chatigang would in this district procure most excellent cattle.

In Mechpara and Haworaghat a few elephants are occasionally caught in pitfals (Dhor). These are dug in the paths above-mentioned 12 cubits long, 8 deep, and 4 wide, and carefully covered with branches and earth. People provided with means of kindling torches watch near, and when an elephant falls, they suddenly come up with lights, and make a noise which drives away the herd. If they were not disturbed, the others would help their companion to escape. When thus deserted, ropes are made fast to the captive, and tied to trees. The people then dig, and throw in pieces of wood and earth until the poor animal is able to come out of the pit, and is placed in a state of discipline.

This also is a very bad manner of catching elephants, as they are often so much injured in the fall that they do not recover. Many elephants are killed for their teeth. The people employed are Rajbongsi, Garo, Rabha and Kachhari farmers, who usually are allowed one tooth, and give the other to the proprietor of the land; but it is said, that the Vijn Raja takes both teeth, and only makes the hunters a present. In the north-west part of the district the elephant seems to be totally unmolested, at least by the people of Bengal, who neither attempt to kill, nor tame them.

In most parts of the district there are only a few hogs; but in the two eastern divisions, in the two towards the north-west and near the forest called Singheswor, and near the woods of the Pangga Raja, they are very troublesome and destructive. The Hindu farmers there have nets, in which they catch the wild hog, and he is considered as pure food. No attempts are made to eradicate the breed, which indeed, I believe, could only be done by clearing the country. Even in the clear parts of the country, although the lower Hindus kill the wild hog on purpose to eat him; no attempt is made to extirpate the animal. Most people suffer loss by them, in parts of the district where there is little waste land, and where the few wild hogs that are found, nestle in the thickets by which the villages are surrounded.

Everywhere that there are forests and extensive thickets of reeds, the rhinoceros is not uncommon; and in the two eastern divisions several persons make a profession of hunting this animal, which is quite harmless, and neither injures the persons nor crops of the inhabitants. It is a solitary animal, nor at any season does the male live in the society of the female. The rhinoceros is killed on account of his horn and skin. The horn is in great request, being considered as possessed of great medical virtues, and it is employed for making bracelets and cups, that are used in the religious ceremonies of the Hindus. A good horn is worth 6 rs. on the spot. The skin is used for making targets. Each skin gives five or six cuts, of which the two best are on the hips. Each skin according to its size is worth on the spot from 2 to 3 rs. The proprietor of the land usually gets the horn, and the hunter (Pahulwan) is allowed the skin; but the landlord is generally cheated.

In the two eastern divisions, the hunters that kill the rhinoceros and elephant, may be about 60 or 70 in number, and are employed chiefly by four merchants residing at Dhubri, of whom one is a Bengalese and three are Sikhs. All the hunters are farmers, and employ only a part of their time in the pursuit of game. Each man usually receives 6 rs. at the beginning of the season, and may kill one or two rhinoceroses and one elephant; but he also occasionally kills buffaloes for their skins and horns; at least these are the only saleable parts. The hunters of course eat the meat, as they do also that of the rhinoceros. The hunters use a large piece called *Kamchunggi*, which requires a rest to enable the hunter to take an aim. Poisoned arrows are also employed both for killing the buffalo and elephant, but it is only fire-arms that are sufficient for killing the rhinoceros.

In the two eastern divisions deer are exceedingly numerous, and very destructive, and there are many in the two frontier divisions towards the north-west. In other parts they are scarcely known. Among the natives musks, deer and antelopes are included under one Generic name, which in the Sangskrita is *Mrogo*, in the Bengalese is *Horin*, and in the vulgar dialect of Kamrup is *Pohu*. In other parts this last word is considered as applicable to any quadruped. I shall commence with the largest.

The stag is by far the most common deer of this district, and by the natives is called *Gaoj* and *Bhalonggi*. In travelling through the two eastern divisions I saw a great number, and had a great deal of difficulty to account for their appearance. In April and May I saw none that had horns; and every herd, that I observed, had young ones, so that I concluded all which I saw, to be females; and they were all of a light red colour, exactly like the common red deer of Europe. These were the *Bhalonggi* of the natives. In November and December, again, all that I saw were full grown, had all horns, and were therefore evidently males. These by the natives were called *Gaoj*, and were all of the brown kind with long hair under their necks, like the *Biche d'Ardennes* of Buffon, which seems to be the same with the greater *Axis* of Pennant, or with what Europeans in India commonly call the elk. The natives of this district allege, that there is one only species, and that all the males are dark brown, and all the females

light red, and the appearances, so far as I saw here, would induced me to join in their opinion, had not I in other parts seen both males and females of each kind. What became of the males in spring, and of the females in winter, I know not; but among many hundreds seen at each season, all the kinds seemed to be of one sex. Both seemed equally fond of the company of the wild buffalo, which probably serves them as a protector.

At Goyalpara the axis or spotted deer is called Borokhotiya, and the porcine deer is called Khotiya; but neither are so common as the stag. The *Cervus Muntjac* of Gmelin, or rib-faced deer of Pennant is sometimes found near Goyalpara, where it is called Maya. The common Antelope, or *cervicapra* is found but rarely in this district, and is confined to its Northern parts. By the natives it is called Kalshangr.

No person in this district makes a profession of hunting deer, nor are their skins in request; but many farmers employ their leisure hours in killing them, and thus procure a supply of excellent food, which is partly used when recently killed, and partly preserved by being dried in the smoke. This is done by carefully removing the fat, and separating the muscular fibres into slips of about the thickness of the thumb. The deer are caught in pitfals by gins and by nets. Occasionally a sportsman goes out at night with a lantern tied to his head. The deer approach to view the extraordinary appearance, and the man takes the opportunity of killing them with arrows.

In all parts where deer are found, the wild buffalo is very common, and exceedingly destructive. It is a handsomer animal than the tame breed, and in its motions has a much finer carriage. Many are caught in pitfals by the farmers, who frequently also catch young ones alive, especially in the rainy season, when the inundation confines the herds to a few high places. On such occasions the farmers in their canoes attack a herd with spears; and, after having killed or dispersed the old ones, are often able to secure some of the young.

Besides the hunters (Pahulwan) of the rhinoceros and elephant, who occasionally kill the buffalo, there are a few hunters (Kangri), who pursue this animal alone. These also are farmers, and receive advances from some traders of Go-

yalpara for the horns and skins, which are sent to Dhaka. Two or three hunters generally go together, and without attempting to conceal themselves, shoot the buffalo with poisoned arrows. The slightest wound proves fatal in 5 or 6 hours, during which the hunters watch the animal, and avoid a near approach, until he is dead. The poison is a root brought from the snowy mountains, which seems to be in universal use throughout India. Twenty buffalo hides bring the hunter from $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 rs. When a herd of wild buffaloes is very troublesome, and will not remove for the shouting and noise of the villagers, a little grain procures the assistance of these hunters. They kill five or six, and the remainder go away. They seem rarely to hunt, except on such occasions, as the whole number of skins procured is very inconsiderable.

In the Brohmoputro there are many porpoises of the kind described by Dr. Roxburgh in the Asiatic Researches. They are killed by the tribe of fishermen called Gangrar, who use the oil. According to these fishermen, the porpoise brings forth her young between the 11th of February and 11th of April, and bears only one at a time. They do not give suck for more than a month, by which time the teeth of the young have grown, and they are able to provide for themselves. The male and female do not pair. They are seen in copulation between the 13th of May and 14th of July, so that their period of gestation is about 9 months. They have been caught $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet long, and 6 feet is the common size. They live entirely on fish. They may be taken at any season; but the most convenient is from the middle of January until the middle of March. The fishermen in a fast rowing boat watch their coming up to breathe, which they generally do repeatedly near the same place, and strike them with a harpoon, that has three slender barbed prongs of iron about a foot in length. These are fixed into one end of a piece of wood; the other end goes into the hollow of a slender bamboo, which serves as a shaft; but the piece of wood separates from the shaft, whenever the animal is struck; and is connected with it merely by means of a rope; and this is the case with all the kinds of harpoon, that these fishermen employ. The shaft floats, and enables the fisher-

men to follow the porpoise, until it dies. After the entrails and bones have been thrown away, the whole body is cut in pieces, which are melted in an earthen pot for about an hour and a half. The oil is then strained from the flesh by means of sackcloth. One porpoise gives from 10 to 15 sers (84 $\frac{1}{8}$ sicca weight) or from 21 $\frac{7}{10}$ to 32 $\frac{5}{8}$ lb. of oil, which is not saleable, and is used by the fishermen themselves, partly for the lamp, and partly for making torches, with which they attract large fish towards their boats, and thus strike them. Should there arise any demand for train oil, much might be procured by this fishery, as porpoises swarm in every large river of Bengal.

It will not be necessary to enter into a detail of the birds, that are found in this district; as in general they do neither harm to the inhabitants, nor are they applied to any use; yet birds of the genera of pigeon, partridge, quail, peacock, pheasant, bustard, bittern, plover, snipe, and duck of a great variety, and many of them very good, are in an extraordinary abundance. These however are not the kinds most in request among the natives, who, when they eat any wild bird, which is very seldom, prefer small herons, shags, and sparrows to all others. The wild fowl (*Phasianus Gallus*) is very common in the woods, but is so very unclean a feeder, that it is impossible to endure it as food.

In the account of the tribes, by which this country is occupied, I have mentioned two, the Noliyas and Telengas, which catch birds with a rod, the end of which is besmeared with bird lime. Some of these birds, chiefly parakeets, are tamed, and sold; but the greater part of what these poor creatures catch is eaten by themselves, and it is very seldom, that they can find a purchaser for any part of their game.

The farmers near Goyalpara catch many young Moynas (*Gracula religiosa*) Phoridis (*Psittacus gingianus* B) and Tiyas, which is the most common parakeet of Bengal, but does not seem as yet to be have been introduced into the systems of ornithology. It comes nearest to the *Psittaca torquata* of Brisson. In the same parts is also frequently procured the Bhimraj (*Lunius malabaricus*), which sings with a fine mellow voice, like that of a bull-finch but louder. All these are eagerly bought up by the boatmen from the south,

and the parakeets are distributed among the idle fellows about all the towns, to the great annoyance of every person, who wishes to sleep after break of day.

These two kinds of parakeet, and the Bawoyi (*loxia typhina*) are exceeding great nuisances to the farmers of the two eastern divisions, who are compelled to watch their crops by night to drive away elephants, hogs, buffaloes and deer, and by day to scare these birds. The millet (China, Kangni) suffers in particular from their depredations, the flocks being inconceivably numerous. The Kaim, a bird approaching near the *galunila porphyrio*, is very numerous in ditches and ponds, and destroys a great quantity of grain. Large flocks of a crane called Kolong, and of another called Saros (*ardea antigone*) frequent this district in winter, and eat much rice. They come from the north in the beginning of the cold season, and retire when the heats commence.

In the dry season the pelican (*pelicanus philippensis*) is very common on the sands of the Brohmoputro. In the rainy season it is said to frequent the Garo mountains, where it breeds. In November and December I observed many thousands of them, in flocks, soaring high over the land between these mountains and the Brohmoputro. They always fly in lines like wild geese; but on these occasions the lines crossed each other in various directions forming numerous squares and parallelograms, as if in a regular dance. It seemed to be merely for amusement, that the pelicans were thus employed, as they do not fish like the gulls by darting on their prey, but wade quietly along the shore, until a fish comes within reach of their enormous gape; nor were they emigrating from one place to another; but continued each time, that I observed them, for more than an hour, to wheel about in various directions, so as constantly to alter the disposition of their lines; but the lines were always strictly preserved.

The Pangga Raja employs 5 or 6 Falconers (Mirshekari), who train hawks, and catch, with the rod and line, the birds with which these are fed. Many hawks are used by the natives; but in this district the two most remarkable are the *Falco minutus*, little larger than a lark; and the Sofyedbaz, a very large Falcon with much white on her plumage, and an expanse of wing of 4 feet. It is an exceedingly fine bird. No other native indulges in this sport.

HISTORY, TOPOGRAPHY, ANTIQUITIES, &c.

OF

EASTERN INDIA.

BOOK III.

DISTRICT OF ASAM.*

CHAPTER I.

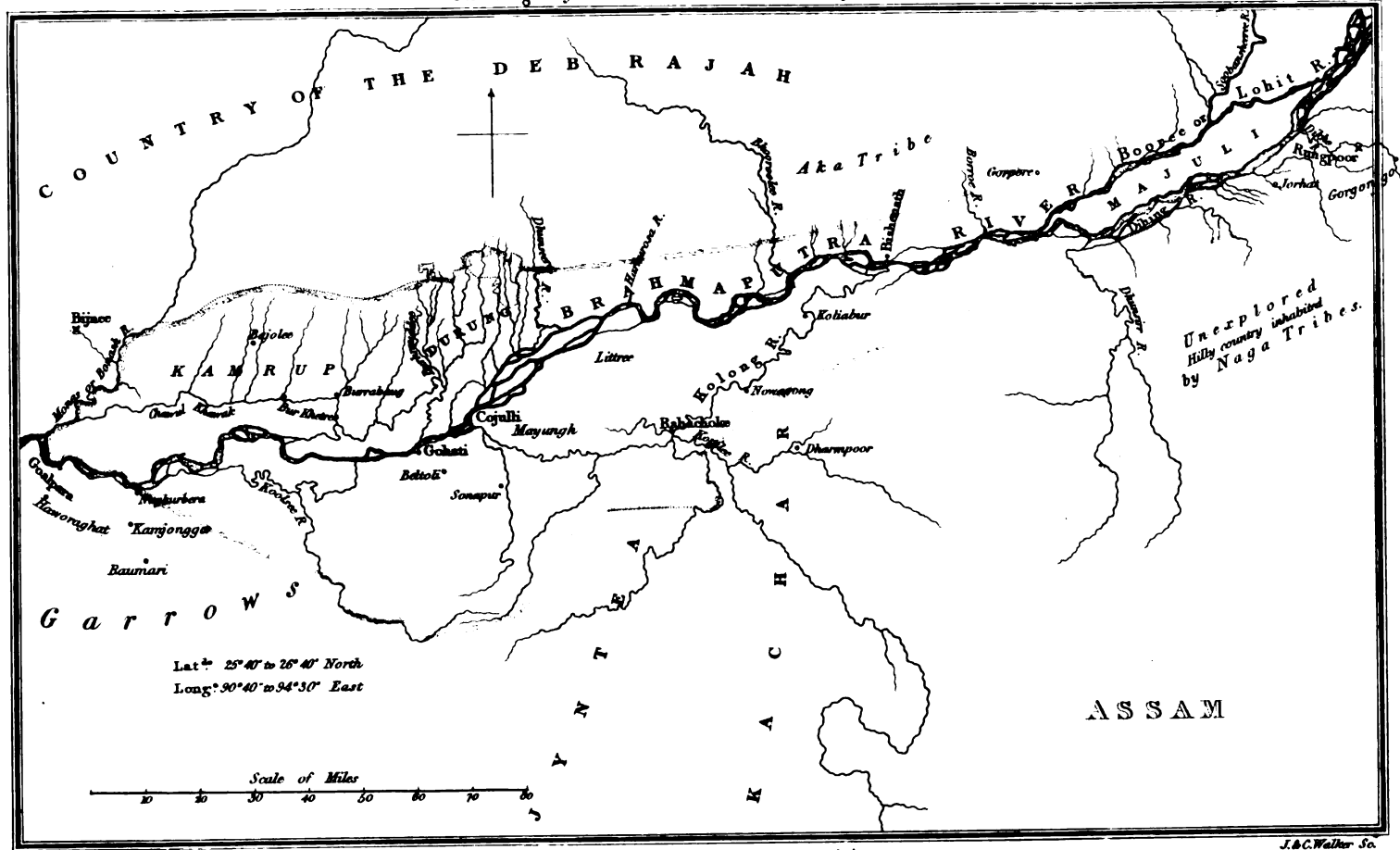
EXTENT, GENERAL APPEARANCE, SOIL, RIVERS, METEOROLOGY, &c.

The following account was collected partly from several natives of Bengal, who on different occasions had visited Asam; and partly from natives of that country, who were fugitives in Bengal. Some of the former had resided long in Asam, and had connections there, whose office gave them an opportunity of being well informed. Among the latter were persons inferior to none in the kingdom in rank, and education. The accounts on all points did not agree, nor can I be certain, that I have on all occasions been able to select the parts that approach nearest to truth. In general, however I shall mention the most material differences.

Many ages ago two brothers named Khunlai and Khuntai came to a hill named Chorai Korong, which is situated south from Gorgango, the ancient capital of Asam. Khunlai taking with him some attendants, and the God Cheng went towards the south-east, and took possession of a country called Nora, which his descendants continue to govern. Khuntai remained in the vicinity of the hill Chorai Khorong, and kept in his possession the God Chung, who is still considered by his descendants as their tutelary deity.

The two brothers Khunlai and Khuntai are supposed to

* Part of this description of Asam is derived from Dr. Buchanan's manuscripts; the remainder from papers which I found in the library of the East India House. [Ed.]



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