

NORTH-WESTERN PROVINCES.

HISTORICAL AND STATISTICAL

MEMOIR OF THE GHAZEEPOOR DISTRICT:

BY

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PART I.



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ALLAHABAD:

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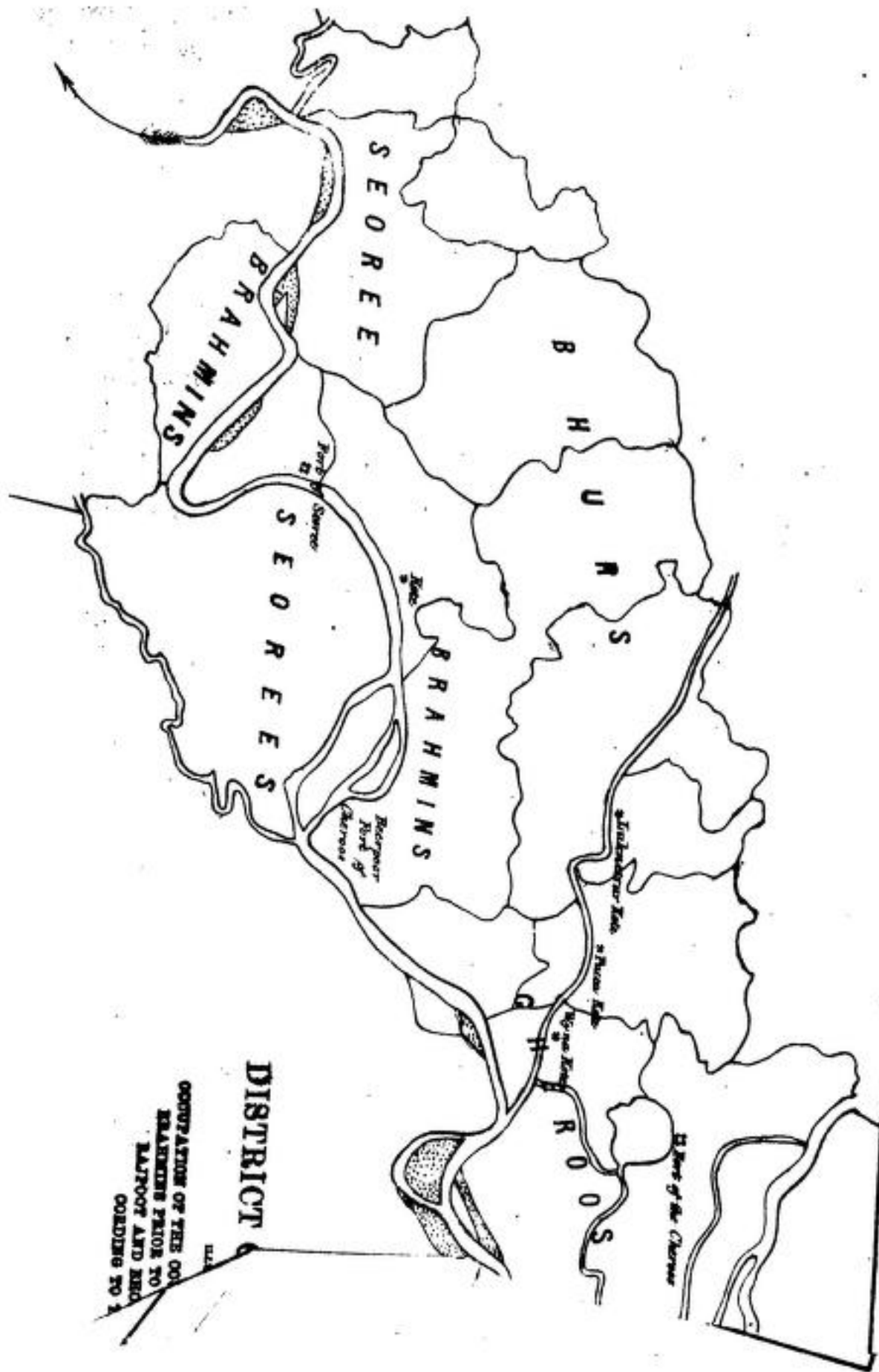
1870.

The *Seeroes* in appearance strongly resemble the gipsies of Europe; their women wear a tartan dress, and often have a kind of horn projecting from the forehead as an ornament. They live in light and easily-moved booths made of grass and reeds; are fond of intoxicating drinks; and eat the flesh of swine and oxen. They procure wives for their young men by kidnapping female children; and live principally by jugglery, coining false money, and theft. During the hot season they often attack by night the *bunjaras* or travelling merchants, when halting at the camping-grounds amid the hills and forests of *Sirgooja*, and drive off their pack-bullocks, which, during the rainy season, they pasture in the jungle, and early in November bring for sale into the *Mirzapoor District*. One woman of the tribe, whom I saw, had with her, in a sack, the bones of her husband, who had died during the annual migration to the south. She had carried his remains about with her for hundreds of miles, in order that she might throw them into the sacred waters of the *Ganges*. This fact seems to indicate that the *Ganges* valley was once the home of the tribe; as it is only people residing within a moderate distance of the river who are in the habit of committing to its waters the remains of their dead. The *Seeroes* whom I met in *Oudh* were brought before me for trial, and were convicted on the charge of fabricating and passing false money. A gang of about 50 or 60 of the *Seeroes*, in the cold weather of 1859-60, stole three girls from the *Mirzapoor District*. In November, 1860, the tribe returned from the south, and pitched their camp at the foot of the hills near *Ahrorah*. During their stay there, in the day-time they used to keep the stolen children concealed under sacks, for fear of their being recognized by their relatives. Notwithstanding their precautions, the oldest girl managed to escape, came to my camp, and told me how the other two children were detained by the *Seeroes*. On the following morning at dawn I surrounded the camp with a large number of men: some of the *Seeroes* escaped to the hills; but most of them were arrested. After much search, the girls were found in a hole in the ground concealed by leaves. Several of the *Seeroes* were convicted by the *Sessions Judge*, *Mr. W. Edwards*, who, as the children had no near relatives, made them over to the *Church Mission Orphanage* in *Benares*. The eldest of the stolen children, who was remarkably intelligent, gave me a full account of the habits and means of subsistence of the tribe. Some of the *Seeroes* arrested were proclaimed *Jacoits*, and were sent to the *Superintendent of Thuggee and Dacoitee* at *Jubbulpoor*. I may mention, that the *Seeroe* tribe is also called *Sansoe*; but they will seldom admit the name of either *Sansoe* or *Seeroe*, and commonly say that they are *Bunjaras*, *Kunjurs*, or *Nuts*.

It is generally admitted that the gipsies who first entered Europe in the thirteenth century were emigrants from India. I would throw out the suggestion that they were not, as is often supposed, *Hindoos* who had fled from the *Mussulmans*, but rather aborigines who had been expelled from their homes by the *Hindoos*, and to some extent by the *Mussulmans*.

According to the census of 1865, there are 56,543 *Bhurs* residing in the district, nearly all of whom are in those Northern and Central Pargunnahs which tradition points out as the ancient possessions of the race. Now they own not an acre of land, and rarely attain even the dignity of cultivators. For the most part they are ploughmen or village policemen, and are much addicted to the crime of house-breaking with theft. It is said that there are two divisions of them,—the *Raj Bhurs* who do not eat swine's flesh, and are looked upon as a kind of low *Hindoos*; and the common *Bhurs*, who keep herds of swine, and are altogether out of the pale of *Hindoo* society.

Large numbers of *Bhurs* are to be found in the adjacent parts of the *Benares Province* and in *Oudh*. In the south of the *Mirzapore District*, in Pargunnah *Bidjeygurh*, during the disturbances of 1857-58, they showed some inclination to join the mutineers, who often visited the pargunnah, and to assert that a portion of the tract now owned by the *Chundel Rajpoots* was their rightful property. Their former



*In the days of the Emperor Baber, the rhinoceros abounded in the country adjacent to the Ghogra; and wild elephants, first met with in numbers at Karrah, now in the Futtehpour District, became more common as a traveller proceeded eastward. We may, therefore, fairly conclude that the Ghazeepoor District, which is situated on the Ghogra, and far east of Karrah, must have been in a great degree a forest, swarming with herds of elephants and rhinoceros, three or four hundred years ago.*

We learn from the "Ayeen Akbery" of Abul-Fuzl, that in the time of Akber each of the pergunnahs of the district formed a separate mehal or estate. These pergunnahs were often not included within the circuit of a single boundary line, and the isolated patches appertaining to them were sometimes at a considerable distance from the principal tract. In process of time all the forests intervening were cleared, and the pergunnahs became conterminous. Most of them were split up into smaller estates; but, as late as the permanent settlement, the entire pergunnah of Lucknesur was still a single estate held jointly by a large Rajpoot community. The process of making the pergunnahs more symmetrical, begun under the Mussulman, has been continued under the English Government, so that now each of the pergunnahs of the district is included within the circuit of a single line.

Some of the larger pergunnahs, occupied by more than one clan, have subdivisions called tuppahs. At the time of the permanent settlement several of these tuppahs constituted large mehals owned by a single clan. They have since been all broken up into smaller estates.

In some pergunnahs, held by a single clan, all the villages held by the descendants of a common ancestor, who, though not the first founder of the clan was amongst his earliest descendants, are grouped together under his name, and are called his "turuf" (literally his "side"). Turufs differ from tuppahs in this respect, that the villages of tuppahs are all situated together, and included within a ring-fence; while those in a turuf may be far apart from each other.

Talooqas are large estates containing the whole or part of a large number of villages. Mehal means simply an estate without regard to size. Large talooqas and estates containing only a fractional part of a single village, are alike mehals.

Mouzahs, or townships, are specific portions of land included within fixed and known boundaries, and called by a certain name. They are of two kinds,—inhabited and uninhabited. They differ from mehals in this, that their area remains unchanged; while that of mehals is liable to alterations from the division or junction of estates.

on the Ghazee poor revenues of 9 lakhs and 3,50,000 dams, equal to Rs. 23,375. (23.)

At the same time, an army, under the King's son, Humayoon, was despatched against the Ghazee poor Governor and the other Chiefs who still held out. (24.)

They gradually fell back as he approached, and when he entered Ghazee poor, at the end of 1526 A. D., they passed beyond the Ghogra. The help of Humayoon was urgently needed by his father in Rajpootana; he was therefore unable at that time to pursue the Affghans further; and, leaving a garrison in Jounpoor, he rejoined his father. (25.)

The Ghazee poor Affghans finding that the King, with his best troops, was engaged in his war with the Rana of Oudhipoor, attacked and defeated his army in Jounpoor and Oudh, and again conquered the country as far as Kanouj. (26.)

When the King returned victorious from Oudhipoor, he forced the passage of the Ganges in the face of the foe, and drove them back to Ghazee poor. His campaign in the district in that year, 1528 A. D., was not decisive, and the account of it has been lost. (27.)

In the following April (1529 A. D.), (28.) Baber again entered Ghazee poor, and Mahomed Khan Lohany, who, in the past two years, had not received much from the jagheer bestowed upon him, presented himself. The Governor, Nusseer Khan, and some Chiefs, tendered their submission in writing. Many others, however, with a strong force, still held out, and were in position in Pergunnahs Bulliah and Khurreed, between the Ganges and the Ghogra. Baber proceeded to the east, effected a junction with a body of troops from Jounpoor, made a simultaneous attack on the enemy with six different detachments,—crossing the Ganges on the south, from Shahabad, and crossing the Ghogra on the north, from Sarun.

The Affghans were completely defeated and dislodged from their position. Seven or eight thousand joined the standard of the conqueror, and were welcomed by him; the rest went off into Oudh.

The strategy of Baber, though successful, was rash in the extreme; and if the enemy had been vigilant and determined, it is likely his detachment would have been cut off in detail. The more so, as the position of affairs was complicated by the presence of a fleet and army from Bengal, which pretended to be neutral, but made a sudden and fierce attack on the troops of Baber, at a most critical time, and was repulsed with the greatest difficulty. Baber, whose moderation in the hour of victory was only surpassed by his resolution and cheerful equanimity in disaster, forgave the treachery of the Bengal commanders, and made peace with them.

Baber's account of his campaign and sojourn of two months in the Ghazee poor District and the adjacent parts of Behar is replete with amusing and picturesque incidents, which may fall below the dignity of history, but which equal it in interest. We learn from him how the forest near Chunar abounded with wild elephants; and how a wild buffalo was slain,

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(23.) See page 337, Erskine's "Baber."

(24.) See page 340, Erskine's "Baber."

(25.) Page 349, Erskine's "Baber."

(26.) Page 377, Erskine's "Baber."

(27.) Pages 379 and 381, Erskine's "Baber."

(28.) Pages 408 to 421, Erskine's "Baber."

in a hunt for a rhinoceros and lion, in one of the islands in the Ganges. He conducts us with him on his midnight fishing expedition by torch-light on the Surjoo; and tells us how a big fish, escaping the pursuit of an alligator, leaped into one of the boats; nor does he forget to recount how in the preceding year he had swam the strong swift Ganges at Buxar. An exact, as well as an observant traveller, he never fails to have all his stages by land and water accurately measured, and the distances recorded. He notices the superstition of the Hindoos, which is still cherished among them, with regard to the waters of the Karumnasa, which they deem accursed and polluting. When the issue of the campaign was still undecided, he finds time to ride out from his camp near Arrah (which he calls Ari), to see the beds of water lilies, and to taste their seeds, which he tells us resemble the pistachio nut. As the Soane is near, he rides on to see the tombs in Mooncer, and to say his noon-tide prayers at the mosque there. His camp, like that of the forty durwashes, is attacked by a violent midnight storm; but, less fortunate than Syud Mussaood, his tent is blown over his head, and his books and papers, which he had not time to gather up, drenched in the rain that followed.

When the Bengalee army attacked him, he seems to have been more gratified in having an opportunity of seeing how they worked their artillery, in which their skill was famous, than indignant at their treachery; and he remarks, with the utmost gravity, that their method was to fire off at random, and never to take aim.

He makes us equally his confidants, when he ministers to a body diseased by the application of hot pepper water to his boils; and when he indulges a vitiated taste, by a dose of opium, or "maajoon," a sweetmeat containing the far-famed hacheesh, or Indian hemp.

He enjoys the ceremony of re-manning his well-beloved galleys with all the freshness of a school-boy; but when, as he steps in one of these same ships, the dagger of the midnight assassin is averted from his heart, he does not fail to make the pious reflection:—

"Let the sword of the world be brandished as it may, it cannot cut one vein without the permission of God."

Soon after Baber's victories in the Ghazeepeer District, Mahomed Shah Lohany, Sher Khan Soor, of Sasseram, becomes Lord of Ghazeepeer and Behar, about 1530 A. D. the so-called King of Behar, died. (29.) Sher Khan Soor, of Sasseram, by the force of his marvellous talents and distinguished courage, became the head of the Affghans, and the master of all Behar. At length, when the Emperor Humayoon, who had succeeded Baber, was returning from Bengal with his army in the beginning of May, 1539, Sher Khan made a forced march, and intercepted him after he had passed Buxar, at the place where the Karumnasa joins the Ganges in the Ghazeepeer District.

Humayoon was afraid to attack the Affghans, who were in a position of great strength on high ground, protected on the north by the Ganges, and on the south and east by the flooded Karumnasa. (30.) Sher Khan allowed the emperor to spend two months in constructing a boat-bridge over the Ganges. When it was nearly completed, he surprised him, on the 26th June, 1539, at day-break (the best time to surprise Indian troops, as our mutiny experience proves), and cut his whole army to pieces. Humayoon had not a moment for deliberation; he plunged at once into the Ganges. Before he reached the opposite bank, his horse was exhausted,

(29.) Page 110, Vol. II., Briggs' "Feriishta."

(30.) Briggs' "Feriishta," Vol. II., page 87; Elphinstone's "India," p. 392; Sir H. Elliot's Glossary, page 333. I am informed by Mr. H. Blochmann that the river which separated the armies is, in the printed edition of the Asiatic Society of the Badaoni, Vol. I., called the *Ramak*, and in some manuscripts, the *Zahabi*, *Rakha*. It must have been the Karumnasa. Sir H. Elliot thinks the site of the battle identical with that of the battle of Buxar of 1764 A. D.; but in Humayoon's battle the Karumnasa divided the hostile armies, while in the battle of Buxar both armies were on the east of that river.