

ASSAM DISTRICT GAZETTEERS.

VOLUME VIII

LAKHIMPUR

BY

B. C. ALLEN, c.s.

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Small kheddahs too are occasionally erected, and the animals gradually driven into them, but this system of elephant hunting is too well known to require description. Fifty-seven animals were caught in 1902-03, the last year in which the mahals were sold by the Deputy Commissioner. Rhinoceros are now becoming scarce, but are occasionally met with in the swampy ground in the wilder portions of the district. They breed slowly, and, as the horn is worth more than its weight in silver, and the flesh is prized as food, they present a tempting mark to the native hunter. The two-horned variety of rhinoceros is said to be found in the desolate hills which lie between Assam and the Khamti Valley, but has not been shot by any European.

Herds of wild buffaloes are found north of the Brahmaputra, and wild bulls often serve the tame cows that are kept by the Nepalese. Bison are generally found near the hills and in the neighbourhood of tree forest; tigers, leopards, and bears are met with in the wilder parts of the district. A curious animal called the takin (*budorcas taxicolor*) is found in the Mishmi hills, but, though its horns are not unfrequently brought down to Sadiya, no European has as yet succeeded in shooting it. According to Blandford, it is a heavily made animal much larger than a serow, with a big head, thick horns, and stout limbs. The length from snout to vent is six and a half feet, and the height at shoulder three and a half feet. It appears to be allied to both goats and antelopes. Wild animals cause little loss of human life, but in 1903, are said to have accounted for nearly two

wheat, barley, and mustard; the domestic animals being oxen, half-bred yaks, horses, pigs, and fowls. Mr. Needham also found a good deal of terraced cultivation, but his description of the valley is couched in less glowing terms than those of his two predecessors, though, as he met with a far from hospitable reception, his opportunities for examining its resources were but small. The Mishmis trade with the inhabitants of Zayul, exchanging grass, bark, dye stuff, musk pods, and deer skins, for salt, cattle, woollen coats, metal vessels, swords, beads, silver amulets, and ammunition; but neither the Miju clan of Mishmis nor the Thibetans are allowed to trade directly with Assam. Little difficulty would, however, be experienced in constructing a practicable trade route, if on political or commercial grounds it was considered to be desirable to do so.*

South of the Brahmaputra, more than one expedition has gone to Putau the capital of the Bor Khamti country. The first officer to explore in this direction was Wilcox, who reached Bor Khamti in 1826, but for many years he had no followers. Of recent years three separate parties of explorers have visited the valley. Colonel Woodthorpe and Major Macgregor in 1884-85, and Mr. Errol Gray in 1892-93 entered Bor Khamti from Assam, while in 1895, Prince Henry of Orleans passed through it in the course of his journey from Tonkin to Calcutta. The first stage of the journey follows the Noa Dihing river for 67 miles and calls for little comment. The

Expeditions
to Bor
Khamti.

* Mr. Needham's diary of his journey will be found in Assam Secretariat File No. 1735 J. of 1886.

country is sparsely peopled with Khamtis and Singphos, but presents no special difficulties to the traveller. The path then runs up the Diyun valley as far as the Merit, a distance of about 45 miles. The country is, for the most part, covered with dense forest, haunted by elephant, rhinoceros, and other big game, and in places the going is extremely bad. After leaving the Diyun, the track crosses a pass 8,300 feet above the level of the sea, which in the winter time is often deep in snow. Two marches further on, the Makoshat mountain has to be crossed at a height of nearly 9,000 feet, but the path then sinks to the Phungma river which is less than 5,000 feet above sea level. From there it is three short marches to Langnu, which is situated at the southern end of the Bor Khamti valley about 1,500 feet above the sea.

**The Bor
Khamti
Valley.**

The Bor Khamti valley is said to be on the average about fifteen miles in width, though in places it is as much as twenty-five. The soil is very fertile and large crops of rice are raised which are stored in excellent granaries. Prince Henry of Orleans, though little predisposed in favour of the people, describes the place in glowing terms. As far as the eye could reach stretch rice fields, yellow as the plains of Lombardy. It is a splendid territory, fertile in soil and well watered, where tropical and temperate culture flourish side by side, and the inhabitants are protected on three fronts by mountains. The population was estimated by Mr. Gray to be about 11,000 souls, 3,000 of whom perhaps would be fighting men, living in 17 villages. The village of the Langnu Raja was surrounded by a double