

THE SINGPHO RHINOCEROS.

SOME months ago I was informed by a gentleman, then recently returned from Upper Burma, that, according to native reports, there exists in the Singpho country a rhinoceros of larger size than either the two-horned *Rhinoceros sumatrensis* or the single-horned *R. sondaicus*. For this animal, according to my informant, the natives have a name distinct from those which they apply respectively to the two species last named, and they further describe it as being of huge size, comparing it in this respect with an elephant. Now the Singpho country, which is the area marked in the *Times Atlas* as the district inhabited by the Kachins or Singphos (Kakhyens) is the tract lying on the headwaters of the Chindwin River, this being separated from the north-eastern extremity of the Assam Valley only by the Naga Hills and the Patkai Range. Consequently, the suggestion naturally arises that the Singpho rhinoceros may be a representative of the great Indian *Rhinoceros unicornis*, whose chief habitat at the present day is the Assam Valley. That the Singpho animal is not absolutely identical with the Assam rhinoceros is practically certain when it is borne in mind that the latter is a plain-dwelling species, and that the mountain barrier between the Assam and Chindwin Valleys is of very considerable height.

From the time that the foregoing information was given me I have been endeavouring to ascertain whether there are any traces of the Singpho rhinoceros in public or private collections, and at length I have found one specimen, which affords decisive evidence of the existence of such an animal. Having occasion to refer for another purpose to the third (1899) edition of Mr Rowland Ward's invaluable *Records of Big Game*, I noticed, under the heading of the great Indian one-horned rhinoceros, the entry of a horn from "Singpho," Burma, belonging to Sir C. A. Elliott, K.C.S.I., the specimen measuring 19in. in length and 18in. in girth. From the fourth edition of Mr Ward's book, it may be mentioned, the entry in question has been omitted, probably for the reason that in revising the proofs, the editor thought there must be an error in recording the great Indian rhinoceros from Burma. The Singpho horn, it may be added, accords much better in dimensions with that of the great Indian species than with those of either of the other Asiatic rhinoceroses, and indicates a large animal.

Upon obtaining this information I wrote to Sir Charles Elliott, who, in reply, informed me that when in Sadiya, the extreme north-eastern station of Assam, in the winter of 1882-3, or thereabouts, he heard that a very fine rhinoceros horn had been brought down to the bazaar by some Singphos for sale. This specimen, together with a smaller horn, was purchased by Sir Charles, the former being mounted as a trophy, and the latter being made into an inkstand. The owner informs me that there is every reason for believing the two horns to have been derived from one and the same animal. If this be so, it is practically certain that the Singpho rhinoceros cannot be identical with the great Indian species, despite the story current in Assam that the latter, when very old, will sometimes grow a second horn.

Nevertheless, it seems quite within the bounds of probability, judging from the native reports as to the great size of the animal and also from the large dimensions of the horn in Sir Charles Elliott's possession, that the Singpho rhinoceros may turn out to be more or less closely related to *Rhinoceros unicornis*, although provided with two horns. The definite addition of such an animal to the Asiatic fauna would be a matter of great interest, and sportsmen and officials connected with Upper Burma should use every effort to obtain at least the skull and head skin of the Singpho rhinoceros, in order that its real affinities may be determined. For such a trophy the British Museum would be the proper home. It may be added that, in view of the comparatively recent date at which we became definitely acquainted with the tsine, or Burmese banteng, there is nothing at all improbable in a rhinoceros which inhabits a still more remote, and consequently less known district, proving to be at least subspecifically distinct from any of the named representatives of the group. R. L.

