

JOURNAL
OF
FRANCIS BUCHANAN
KEPT DURING THE SURVEY OF
THE DISTRICT
OF
BHAGALPUR
IN
1810-1811

Edited with Notes and Introduction

BY

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7th January.—I went to Mosaha. I first returned about three miles to near the monument of Mirza Muhammed,⁽³⁵⁹⁾ and from thence struck north about a mile to the Nawab's house. The Jhil here is very narrow, and at this season quite dry; but in the rainy season boats can pass to the jhil, which now contains water from another behind the Jumma Musjid, and that I believe communicates with others at the foot of the hills all the way to Mosaha, and these are probably an old channel of the Ganges.⁽³⁶⁰⁾ I then proceeded to the Jumma Mosjid, and from thence passing behind the two hills, along a narrow space of high land to an old bridge, fast hastening to destruction, but the arches are still entire. These are of brick, but some of the ornamental parts have been made of stone. The bridge is about a quarter of a mile from the Jumma Mosjid, and rather more than a mile from Pirpahar,⁽³⁶¹⁾ where there is a handsome brick Dorga in tolerable repair, but everything near it is slovenly. Pir pahar is a curious hill of no great size, but communicates with another extending toward the mountains. Whether or not there was a passage for the Ganges behind that in the line of the jhils above-mentioned, I cannot say. If there was not, Pir pahar and the adjacent hill must at one time have formed a very curious promontory, as all the land between it and the hills of Jumma Mosjid are evidently a chor, and that not of very long standing, as a single tree has not yet grown on it. This hill consists of a white rock, which crumbles on the slightest stroke of the hammer, and consists of grains of fat quartz united by a white powdery matter. Even the quartz is so far decayed that it breaks by a slight blow. I cannot perceive in this rock the slightest trace of

(359) The father of 'Alī Vardī Khān (Mahābat Jang).

(360) Buchanan's view is borne out by the accounts of old travellers and the oldest maps. This channel is what John Marshall called "the little River", up which he sailed from Rājmahāl in 1670. The old bridge described by Buchanan, is, I am told, still in existence.

(361) See Rennell's *B.A.*, Pl. XV, on which Jumma Musjid and Peer Pahar are both marked. The earliest map on which Pīr Pahār is shown is that of John Thonton (1703), on which it appears as "Phier Phear". The modern S.S. is useless for this part of Buchanan's tour.

stratification. In some places there are a kind of horizontal streaks, but this is entirely external, the action of water or air; for they entirely disappear on scraping the surface. The east end of the hill terminates in a bluff point, where the river has evidently washed away the mouldering rock for about six feet in height, and formed in it various cavities and holes. Above this is a perpendicular mass from twenty to thirty feet (I speak by conjecture), in which no sort of fissure or stratification is observable. I have no doubt that this is a granite in a state of decay; and if any conglutinating power should give firmness to its parts, we should then have a complete sandstone. A most curious circumstance is, that the surface of the hill to the top is covered with fragments of stones totally different in nature. The most common is the same slaggy stone that I found on the hills towards the south. Some of the masses, as the specimen, are covered with a kind of enamel, but many are not. I have no doubt of this being lava. Along with this are many large masses consisting of small fragments of semi-diaphanous quartz united by a black earthy substance, and very hard. In some places part of the same stone consists of this conglutination, and of an iron shot quartz or hornstone, both closely united without any intermediate fissure, and connected with the stratum above the Khori at Khori pahar showing the transition of the hornstone into Khori. From Pir pahar to Mosaha, about five miles, is a chor near the Ganges, now well cultivated, but there are no trees, until you reach the vicinity of the hills. Under the hills belonging to the mountaineers, and straight west from Mosaha, is a low hill, perhaps a mile in length. Between it and the great hills is a large jhil, the principal haunt of the wild rhinoceros.⁽³⁶²⁾ The great hills here seem tolerably cultivated. A servant, who went up, saw much orrohor.⁽³⁶³⁾ Opposite to Mosaha is a cultivated chor, separated by a narrow nulla from the

(362) See Appendix 7.

(363) *Arhar*, vulgo *rahar*, the 'Pigeon pea' (*Cajanus indicus*).

APPENDIX 7.

Rhinoceros and wild Elephants.

After leaving Rājmahāl, under date 7th January 1811, Buchanan refers to a low hill about a mile in length lying due west of Musahā, and adds: "Between it and the great hills is a large jhil, the principal haunt of the wild rhinoceros." This hill is not shown on the 1 in.=1 mi. Survey map just as Buchanan describes it; and the line showing the "boundary of the Gangetic inundation" indicates the origin of the *jhil* that existed there. In his Report he has stated that in most of the wild parts of the district the rhinoceros was "occasionally, but very rarely, seen"; that formerly there were many in the marshes at the foot of the hills between Rājmahāl and Sakrīgalī, and even in his time there were some there, but they had been much disturbed by sportsmen and had become scarce and exceedingly shy.

Captain W. S. Sherwill, in his General Remarks on the Revenue Survey of the then Bhāgalpur district (1846-50) mentions both rhinoceros and wild elephant as still to be found. Mr. E. G. Man, who had served several years in the Sontāl Parganas, wrote in 1867: (1) "Tradition says that wild elephants and rhinoceros were abundant some twenty years ago; now the latter are quite extinct....." In the *Statistical Account* of the Bhāgalpur district, published in 1877, it is recorded (2) that "rhinoceros were formerly numerous in *pargana* Nāthpur, whither they used to wonder from the neighbourhood of Jalpāigurī. One or two are still sometimes seen, but very rarely." These animals are no longer found in any part of the Bhāgalpur area surveyed by Buchanan.

As regards wild elephants, these were comparatively numerous in Buchanan's time. He refers to them in many localities, e.g., near Karhariā, near Dumkā, between Nalhaṭī and Bīrkhetī, in the hills near Bilābārī (to the west of Farakkā), near Rājmahāl, and to the south of Pīrpāintī. He tells of a village between Bīrkhetī and Pānchūāñ being abandoned owing to their frequent depredations. In his

(1) *Sonthalia and the Sonthals*, Calcutta, 1867, p. 183.

(2) *Statistical Account of Bengal, Bhagalpur District*, 1877, p. 43.

Report he refers to a "colony" of them to the north of the Ganges. These had probably roamed in from the Tarāi jungle, as we know they did into the Purneā district. In fact Mr. J. Beames mentions⁽³⁾ that up to 1866 a large estate in the Sultānpur *pargana* of the Purneā district was held revenue free on the tenure of maintaining an establishment for the capture of wild elephants.

W. S. Sherwill, in his account of the Sultānābād *pargana* (now in the Sontāl Parganas) writes : (4)

"The jungles were formerly well stocked with wild elephants, five of which alone remain at the present day (1850), having been either captured or killed. These animals create much alarm in the villages lying along their beat, which extends for fifty miles in a westerly direction along the base of the Rajmahal Hills and the base of their out-liers in Zillah Beerbhoom. Several villages in Tuppeh Kunditkarayeh, Zillah Beerbhoom, have been lately deserted on account of these animals, who, though they do not take life, take great liberties with the Sonthals' huts, which being probably covered with leguminous or cucurbitaceous creepers, tempt the animals to destroy the fragile huts for the sake of their verdant covering, which they devour with great avidity. These animals are also said to devour any store of grain they may find in the destroyed huts."

Mr. E. G. Man, in the work already quoted, referring to wild elephants in the Sontāl Parganas, writes :—

".....but three specimens remain—the last remnants of the many herds of days gone by. One of these three is, by common report, a magnificent animal. While riding through the jungle at the beginning of this year [? 1866], I came across his tracks, and measured the size of their marks in the mud with a pocket handkerchief. The circumference of the print of one footstep measured was over four and a half feet, which would make him about nine feet high; for twice round the foot is a sure standard of the height. The neighbouring villagers informed me that the three were inseparable, and had contracted a liking for parched grain. They used, therefore, to enter a village at one end, which was the signal for the inhabitants to vanish at the other, and after inspecting the shops for any delicacies that might tempt them, they would finish up by pulling down a house or two for recreation, and then quietly retire."

Mr. Browne Wood notes in connexion with his settlement operations carried out between 1873 and 1879 that several villages had been abandoned owing to the depredations of elephants.

Was Man's "magnificent animal" the last wild elephant in the district, which was shot in 1893⁽⁵⁾? In his Report

(3) *JRAS*, 1896, p. 91.

(4) *General Remarks upon the District of Bhagalpoor*, p. 24.

(5) *Gazetteer, Santal Parganas* (1910), p. 17.

Buchanan writes that " the stock is said to have been some that made their escape from the Nawab's stud ". But such a story is unnecessary to explain the survival of wild elephants in these parts. We know that they were at one time numerous in the forests of the eastern and south-eastern outlines of the Vindhya, and they are still to be found in parts of Orissa and the States to the south and west of Chutiā Nāgpur : and there is no reason why their range should not have once extended into the hills of the Sontāl Parganas.

In his Report, Buchanan also mentions the *gaur* (Indian bison) as being occasionally seen in the wilder parts of the south of the district. This animal, too, has since retreated further to the south-west, into the wilder areas, where it is still found in diminishing numbers in some of the States.