

PURCHASED
HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS
OF
EASTERN INDIA
(in Eight Volumes)

by
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Volume-VII
RONGGOPUR

CAXTON PUBLICATIONS.
DELHI

28 CW

COMPUTERISED

954.1
ML 382h
v. 7

First Published : 1838
Reprint : 1990

THE ASIATIC SOCIETY
KOLKATA-700 016

ACC. NO. 63324 DATE 5.9.02

Published by : CAXTON PUBLICATIONS
B-3/53, Ashok Vihar, Phase-II,
Delhi-110 052 SL NO. 017040

COMPUTERISED

Printed at : Mehra Offset Press, Delhi.

INTRODUCTION

The present volumes of the official survey of 'Historical Documents of Eastern India' includes the Zilahs or districts of Behar and Patna, Shahabad, Bhagalpur, Gorakhpur, Dinajpur, Puraniya, Ronggopur and Assam. The particulars given of the social state of the numerous inhabitants of these fertile and important Provinces are equally, if not more valuable and interesting with those detailed in the preceding volumes. There may be some individuals who cannot appreciate the merit of the minutiae which this survey presents, but the philosophic mind will arrive at juster conclusions respecting the character and condition of the people by means of this very minute specification, than by any other mode of ratiocination. The merchant and the capitalist will be also the better enabled to judge of the capability of the country for the speculations of commerce, and the employment of capital and dependent as the proprietors of the East India Company now are for their dividends on the territorial revenue of India, the circumstantial account of the rent, tenure and produce of land—and the management of public and private estates, will prove of inestimable value. Since the appearance of the preceding volume, many old Anglo-Indians have declared that this survey has presented them with a clearer view of the actual frame-work and anatomy of society in the East, than any thing they saw or heard during their sojourn in Hindostan. The famine now devastating the Upper Provinces of the Bengal Presidency, gives an additional, painful interest to the details which this survey presents of the physical condition of the people.

CHAPTER VI.

NATURAL PRODUCTIONS OF RONGGPOOR.

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

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 Vijnri 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 Siks. 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 pitfalls 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 pitfalls 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-