

## The First Coming of the English to Bengal.

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IN March, 1633, the agent of the East India Company at Masulipatam, on the Coromandel coast, determined to send an expedition to open up trade with Bengal (1). The party, which consisted of eight Englishmen, proceeded up the coast in a "junk" or country boat, and landed at the modern village of Harishpur at the mouth of the river Patua in Orissa. Thence they ascended the river in small boats to Kosida and took the high road to Cuttack, past the village of Balikunda and the town of Hariharpur or Jagatsinghpur. To the north of Cuttack at the junction of the Mahanadi and the Katjuri, stood Fort Barabati, where Agha Muhammad Zaman, the Mogul Governor, held his court in the palace of Malcandy or Mukund Deo, so called after the last Hindu ruler of Orissa, by whom it had been built.

An account of the expedition to Malcandy has been left by William Brutton, one of the party, and it is here reproduced *in extenso* from the copy of the book, published in 1638, which is preserved in the Goethals Library in Calcutta. It was reprinted in 1752 in the eighth volume of Osborne's *Collection of Voyages and Travels* and also in the fifth volume of the enlarged edition of Hakluyt which was published in 1809-1812. Neither of these works is however, readily accessible. Portions of the text are quoted by the late Mr. C. R. Wilson in the first volume of his "Early Annals of the English in Bengal" and use has been made of his admirable footnotes in elucidating obscure allusions.

The English were sadly behind in recognizing the commercial importance of Bengal. As early as 1530 the Portuguese ships were anchoring in Garden Reach at Betor: and attracted, no doubt, by their operations, the Setts and Bysacks settled at Gobindpore (on the site of the present Fort William) about 1550 and opened a hat, or market, at Suttanuttee. The Portuguese factory at Hooghly dated from about 1570, and it was also at this period that the forts were built at Makwa Thana (on the spot now occupied by the Botanical Gardens). The Dutch followed with a factory of their own at Golaghat (also in

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(1) The first English settlement at Masulipatam was in 1611. In August 1699 Mr. Thomas Pitt, landed there as Agent for the New East India Company and assumed the title of President of the Coromandel Coast and Consul for the King of England. In 1700 the Old-Company resolved to re-establish a Chief and Council there and despatched a force of twenty-four soldiers with a Lieutenant, Sergeant and Corporal. The site of the factory is in the quarter of the town called Englishpalem, and of the French and Hollander Companies in Frenchpettah and Valandupalem. A grave is still extant which bears the inscription "John Rowland, 25th August, 1710."

Hooghly town) about 1650, and moved to Chinsurah some six years later. The Danes came upon the scene with a factory at Balasore about 1636 (2).

The history may be told in a few sentences of the factory which was founded by the English in 1633 at Hariharpur some eleven miles from Balikuda, and about twenty-five from Cuttack. Bruton's town of Hariharpur, which was "six or seven miles in compass" must have included the neighbouring villages. The place was unhealthy and five out of six factors died during 1633, together with a number of the crew of the *Swan* which arrived off the coast in July, and several of the *Thomas*, which followed soon after. The factory fell into decay: and the silting up of the river Alanka completed its ruin.

The factory at Balasore which was established at the same time, had a longer life. In 1641 the ship *Diamond* was ordered to Balasore to pay off the debts incurred by the factors and to bring them away. But Francis Day, the founder of Fort Saint George, who visited the place in that year on a tour of inspection, strongly opposed such a step: "Do not abandon Ballasor," he wrote, "after all your trouble and expense." The Madras Council referred the matter to their honourable masters in London: and in 1650 it was resolved to despatch the *Lyonesse* to found a settlement in Bengal. In the year following a factory was opened by James Bridgman and Edward Stephens at Hooghly, which thus became the chief station of "the Bay," with agencies at Balasore, Patna, Cossimbazar, and Rajmehal. Gabriel Boughton, who had been surgeon of the *Hopewell* and had been sent from Surat to Agra in 1645, was residing at Rajmahal with Shah Shuja, the Governor of Bengal: and in 1652 obtained for the sum of Rs. 3,000/- letters patent empowering the English to trade in the province without payment of customs or dues. In 1657, the "Madrassers" again determined to withdraw their factories from the Bengal sea-board: but the project was frustrated by Cromwell's reorganization of the Company. The settlement at Balasore was again nearly abandoned in 1686. Charnock who had been driven out of Hooghly, sacked the place in 1687, and the exploit was repeated by Captain Heath in the following year. Balasore remained unoccupied until 1690, when Aurangzeb granted a new firman for the re-establishment of the English factories in Bengal. In 1751 Orissa was ceded by Ali Verdi Khan to the Mahrattas, whose incursions had become constant. Three years earlier, we find Mr. Kelsall, the Resident at Balasore, reporting that the Mahrattas had attacked the factory at Bulramgurry, at the mouth of the Balasore river. After the fall of Fort William in 1756 the factors at Balasore joined the refugees at Fulta. The Mahratta occupation lasted until 1803, when the forces of the Bhonsla Rajah were ejected without serious opposition by expeditions sent from Ganjam and Fort William (3). Henceforward Balasore becomes the headquarters of a British district.

(2) Besides the Danes, the French and the Dutch had factories or trading-lodges at Balasore. Ulandshahi (Holland-Shahi) and Dinamardanga were ceded to the British in 1846. The French lodge, which is known as Farashdanga, is still under the control of the Administrateur at Chandernagore, but is leased out by public auction every year.

(3) To this day the peasant's phrase for oppression is "Mahratta amal."

News from the East-  
Indies :

Or,

A Voyage to Bengalla, one of the greatest  
Kingdomes under the High and Mighty  
Prince Pedesha Shassallem, usually called the  
Great Mogull.

With the state and magnificence of the Court of  
Malcandy, kept by the Nabob Viceroy, or vice-  
King under the aforesayd Monarch : Also their  
detestable Religion, mad and foppish  
rites, and Ceremonies, and wic-  
ked Sacrifices and impious  
Customes used in  
those parts.

Written by William Bruton, now resident in the Parish  
of S. Saviours Southwark, who was an eye and eare  
witness of these following Descriptions : and  
published as he collected them being resi-  
dent there divers yeares : and now lately come  
home in the good Ship called the Hope-  
wel of London, with divers Merchants  
of good account which are able  
to testifie the same for truth.

Imprinted at London by I. Okes, and are to be sold by Humphery  
Blunden at his shop in Corne-hill at the signe of the Castle  
neere the Royall Exchange, 1638.

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A Rare and most Strange/Relation from *Bengalla* in the/*East-Indies*, being  
one of the greatest/*Kingdomes* under the Great *Mogull*,/and of their Lawes,  
*Manners*,/and Customes, &c.

Although divers learned, painefull, and skilfull *Mathematicians* and  
*Geographers* have with great Industry spent much profitable Time, in finding  
out the Circumference of the Terrestriall Globe, in describing Empires, King-  
domes, Principalities, Lordships, Regions, Provinces, Territories, Variations  
of Climates and Scituations, with the diversities of Dispositions, of Tongues,  
Religions, Habits, Manners, Lawes, and Customes of sundry Nations : Though  
much labour, perill, and Cost hath beene worthily imploy'd by *Pliny* the second,  
*Ortellius*, *Iodoco Hondius*; or (to come nearer) to our *English Worthies*, such

intice him away by bribery, and so to prevaile with him to come forth of it, and by that meanes their City come to ruine and destruction: so much for their Idolatry.

This City of *Bengalla* is very great and populous, it hath many Merchants in it, and yeeldeth very rich commodities, as good Cloath in abundance, Sugars, Silkes, Taffataes, Stuffes, Waxe, Gumlacke, Butter, Oyle, Rice, and Wheate, with many other good commodities vendable. It is likewise famous for its multitude of *Rhinoceroes*; it hath a Beast much like unto a *Unicorne*, and because it hath but one Horne, some doe beleeve and take it for the Unicorne's Horne for the vertue it hath in it. This City was once free from Taxations, till *Ekebar* (19) the great *Mogull* caused it to be united to his Empire. The chiefest Cities which joyne nearest to it, are *Catigan* and *Satagan* (20) on the Bankes of *Ganges* Eastward: It was once the Seate of the great *Bengalian King Malchiram*, as *Mr. Purchase* relates in his Pilgrimage. This City lyes Westward toward *Pega*, and neere to *Cosmin* and *Aracam*, (21) two famous Cities for Traffic and Scituation; lying upon the River, and within some few Leagues of the Gulfe call'd the *Bengallian gulfe*, which is a very dange—[33] rous one; for at some certaine times of the yeere it is very hazardable for Vessells to passe without shipwrack: There be many other Lakes and Rivers which I could mention, but for Brevity sake I omit them. But there is no strong dringe suffered to be dranke within the City, except a Stranger doe bring it in privately, and so it is not knowne: and thus much shall suffice for the impious Religion of *Jaggarnat*, and the stately Court of *Malcandy*.

The most of these people have no Learning, but doe all things by memory: They weare commonly long haire, and are very strict in their time of Fasting; but afterwards, when the Ceremony is over, then they freely commit all kind of wickednesse againe. In some places they have their Edicts or Lawes written, and in other places unwritten: They know not what belongs to Bonds or Bills, and they lend without Witnesses, or any sealing of Writings, even upon their owne Words:: And hee that is found to deny his promise hath the top of his Fingers cut off. Their habit is various and different; some of them doe goe in Linnen or Woollen; some are cloathed with Beasts skins, or Birds feathers; others goe naked, and doe cover only their secret parts: Their Bodies are for the most part blacke, which is not accidentall, but naturally arising from the quality of the seed they are begotten: Most of them are of a large stature; they have many Wives which they purchase and buy of their Parents: some they keepe to be their Vassals to do their drudgery: others, which are handsomer, for issue sake and pleasure.

(19) *Akbar*. Orissa became a province of the Empire in 1578.

(20) *Catigan*=Chittagong: the Porto Grande of the Portuguese. *Satagan* or *Satigam*=*Satgaon*, was the Porto Piqueno. It was situated on the right bank of the river Hooghly, thirty miles above Calcutta, at the confluence of the Saraswati channel. The site is now marked by a few huts and a mosque.

(21) *Cosmin*=the modern Bassein, in the delta of the Irrawaddy, of which the classical name was *Kusima*. *Aracam*: the old town which went by this name was at the mouth of the Arakan river: *Akyab* was not founded until 1825. The geography is a trifle confused.

Here are greater store of Beasts than in any other part of the *Indies*: as Oxen, Camells, Lyons, Dogges, [34] Elephants: they have Dogges which are as fierce as Lyons, with which they usually hunt and pursue those wild beasts, as we doe our Bucks, for their delight and pleasure. They ride on goodly Horses booted and spurr'd; so likewise doe their Women.

These people are notable ingenious men; let it be in what Art or Science soever, and will imitate any workmanship that shall be brought before them: for the most part of them hate idlenesse, and those that doe not study in some Art or other, are counted droanes, and stand for Cyphers, and dead men amongst the best and chiefest sort of people: They have a Custome, that alwayes before dinner they doe call their Children and young people in their houses together, and doe examine how they had spent their time from the Sunne-rising, and if they could not give a good account of it, they were not to be admitted to the Table; and so every day, and if they did not the next time improve themselves in some knowledge of laudable things, they are most severely punished and chastised.

These Barbarous and Idolatrous people, although they be so ignorant in the true worship of God, cannot endure a perjured person, nor a common swearer, nor a common drunkard, but will punish them very severely by stripes or else by forfeiture of their Commodities: A perjured person, say they, is an arch enemy to their God and them: and it is so hatefull, that if it be committed by their Father, Brother, or Kindred, they doe presently condemne him, according to the nature of the offence: for though they love the perjury, by reason of the benefit that commeth unto them by it, yet they hate the person even to death: for, say they, hee [35] which was sometimes perjured in their behalfe, may undo what he hath done, and speake the truth when time serves: They instance a story of *Soleman* the great Turke, who loathed and abhorred the Traitor that betrayed Rhodes unto him, and instead of his daughter, whom he expected to be given him in Marriage for a reward, he caused him to be flayed and salted, and told him in derision, that it was not fit for a Christian to marry with a Turke, unlesse he put off his old skin: likewise they instance *Charles* the fourth, who rewarded the souldiers (that betrayed their Lord and Master *Krantius*) with counterfeit coyne; and being desired to deliver them current money, answered, that counterfeit Coyne was the proper wages for counterfeit service: Thus a lyar or perjured person amongst these Idolatrous people they will not beleeve, though he had spoken or sworne the truth: for he that hath beene once false, is ever to be suspected in the same kinds of falshood: wherefore just and upright dealing is aptly compared to a glasse, which being once broken, can never be repaired; or to opportunity, which once omitted, can never be recovered. And so I conclude this relation, wishing all men to preferre knowledge and honesty before wealth and riches; the one soone fadeth, the other abideth for ever: for amongst all the goods of this life, onely wisdom is immortall.

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