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Terracottas of Bengal: An Analytical Study

(With 276 Illustration)

Zulekha Haque

With the
Compliments
of the
Editor



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Chairman
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Plate 167: Two Europeans hunting an animal, possibly a boar, on the *pancharatna* Govinda temple of Puthia, Rajshahi, Bangladesh.



Plate 168: Portrayal of an European forcibly holding down a woman on his lap on the Chandranath Shiva temple of Hetampur, Birbhum.

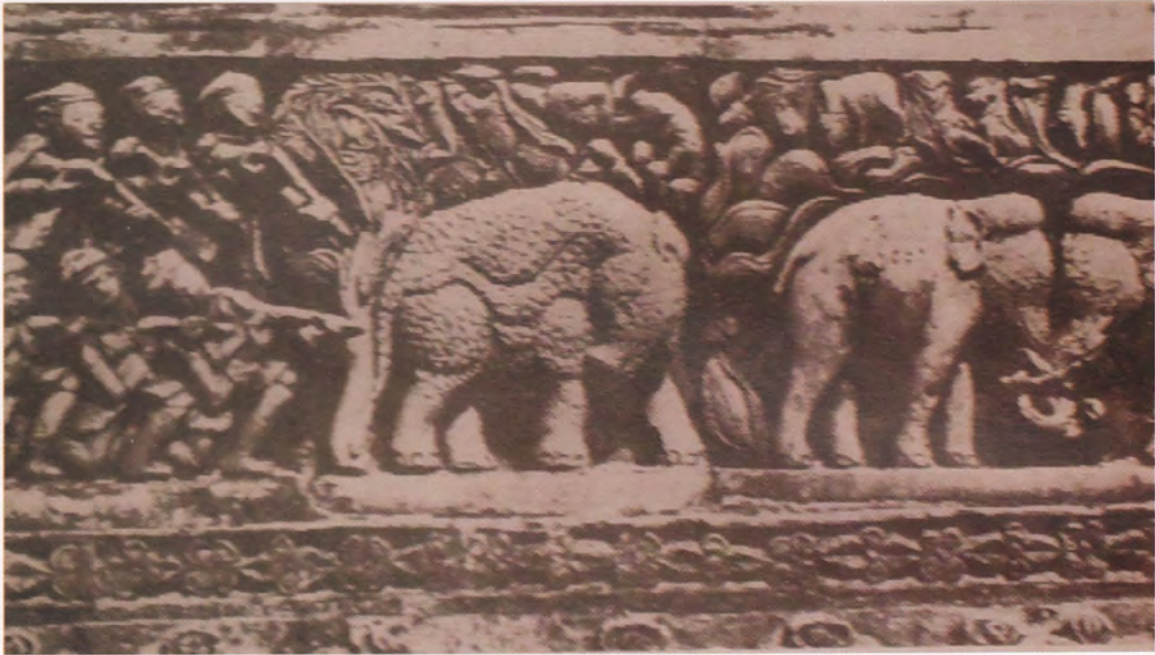


Plate 213: Soldiers are portrayed in the difficult hunt of rhinoceros, on the Charbangla Shiva temple, at Baranagara, India.



Plate 214: Another similar rhinoceros hunt on the *pancharatna* Govinda temple at Puthia, Rajshahi, Bangladesh. The upper panel shows *Krishna lila* scenes.

and horse riders who are seen to follow a large animal with marks resembling woolly-knots all over its body, with a large head and a short tail. The Kantaji temple also shows two plaques containing scenes of hunters who are attacking two animals with the same scaly body. In one of them, the hunters are two Europeans (**Plate 167**). It is interesting to note, that though these animals as depicted on the Kantaji temple are wild, they have saddle-cloths on their backs. This is possibly due to the tradition of the Bengali folk artists who cannot resist the urge to put such decorative elements even where they are not necessary. Though it is difficult to say with certainty what animals do they represent, yet it is possible that they are purely imaginary and mythical ones. But if they did represent any known species, it is the boar they resemble most. Specially some of the drawings by Samuel Hewlett in Thomas Williamson's book illustrating boar or hog-hunts give us reminders of these portrayals in terracotta. May be these are bad attempts in depicting such animals.

In the long panel on the Govinda temple at Puthia, an unmistakable scene of a rhinoceros-hunt has been depicted (**Plate 214**). Not only the portrayal of the animal, but the manner it was hunted, is interesting as well. The party is a large one comprising, beside elephants and horse riders, a noble smoking the *hukkah* sitting in a palanquin followed by a few armed retainers. One rider and a retainer are shown killing a tiger while a deer is fleeing. The *mahout* of the elephant is hurling a spear at the rhino, perhaps in an attempt to make a dent in its armour-plate-like hide, while a *paik* is shown lying on the ground with a spear raised in his hand. Either he has been felled by the rhinoceros or is trying to hurt it by piercing its underbelly lying on the ground. The scene is full of bustle and activity, but the most interesting object in the plaque is the animal itself. It has large scaly pieces of hide overlapping one another resembling the layers of huge shields put on top of one another. Its horn instead of protruding from its nose has been shown springing up from its forehead in the manner of the unicorn.

The Gangeshwar Siva temple at Baranagar has a plaque at the base of a pillar which shows a rhinoceros and possibly also a tiger attacking three hunters (**Plate 213**). Here also the animal has been portrayed in the like manner as the earlier one but the horn instead has been put on its nose. This animal is not unknown in eastern India. Even in the recent past, jungles of Assam have produced rhinoceros. The Emperor Jahangir, while recording his exploits in the field of sport, very proudly states in the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* how he shot and killed rhinoceros.¹³ Williamson has also discussed briefly the habits and whereabouts of this animal which, according to him, were to be found in the jungles of Medinipur, Dinajpur etc. So the animal portrayed in the plaques, though rare, was not altogether unknown to the people of Bengal and, no doubt, its difficult portrayal has been done with imagination and ingenuity.

The hunting parties contained not only the chief hunters riding either horses, elephants or being carried in palanquins (**Plates 93, 132, 218**) but also armed retainers or *paiks* who acted as guards and helpers as well. Besides, some of the plaques contain