

AN
ACCOUNT
OF AN
EMBASSY
TO THE
KINGDOM OF AVA,

SENT BY
THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA,
IN THE YEAR 1795.

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⁷²
MAJOR IN HIS MAJESTY'S 76TH REGIMENT.

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highest authority, it became requisite to make some enquiries respecting our accommodations for the voyage. Being well aware that no steps could be taken except through the regular channels of authority, I applied to the Raywoon to obtain permission to purchase suitable boats for the use of the deputation: an inferior officer waited on me, to represent on the part of the Raywoon, that it was inconsistent with the usage of their government to admit of a public minister being at any expence for his conveyance; and that the superintendant of the port had received instructions to prepare as many boats as I thought necessary. This, I understood, was an established point of etiquette from which they could not possibly recede. I expressed regret at putting the government to so great an expence, but requested, as the season was boisterous, and the voyage not a short one, that the vessels might be examined by an English shipwright, and such alterations made as would render them commodious to Europeans, which the boats of the natives, both from their structure and insufficient covering, are far from being. My desire met a cheerful compliance.

Conformably to the imperial mandate, the Maywoon left Pegue, and arrived at Rangoon on the 25th of May; his retinue was numerous, and as no person of high official consequence, when summoned to attend the Golden Feet, can assure himself of returning to his government, or office, in order to be prepared for whatever might occur, he brought with him his wife and family, as the companions of his voyage. On the day after his arrival I paid him a visit, he was extremely civil, and assured me of his ready services on every occasion.

About this time an order came from court to the provincial government of Pegue, which furnished a subject of much conversation. I was told that the Emperor of China, having never seen a rhinoceros or an alligator,

entertained an ardent desire to view those formidable animals before his death, and had intimated his wish, through a provincial legate from Yunan, who had lately arrived at Ummerapoorra for the purpose of settling some mercantile arrangements. The King of Ava, solicitous to gratify his august brother of China, had signified his pleasure to his chief minister, who sent the order beforementioned, the purport of which, I understood, was to catch twenty alligators, and as many of the rhinoceros tribe, and convey them to the metropolis, whence they were to be transported to the imperial city of Pee-Kien. Those who made elephant hunting their profession, were dispatched to the forests, and strong nets were thrown across the Pegue river, on the sands of which, when the tide ebbed, I had seen, in the course of my journey to Pegue, a much greater number than his majesty required. The fishermen began successfully; several alligators were taken in two or three days, and put into boats, in the bottom of which wells were constructed. The crocodile and alligator, although they are accounted amphibious animals, cannot long support life out of the water. The rhinoceros hunters, I afterwards learned, were not equally fortunate.

In a former part of this work it has been mentioned, that the Birmans, notwithstanding they are Hindoos of the sect of Boodh, and not disciples of Brahma, nevertheless reverence the Brahmins, and acknowledge their superiority in science over their own priests or Rhahaans. The partiality which the King, who is guided in every movement by astrological advice, manifests in their favour, has given celebrity to their predictions, and brought them so much into fashion, that there is not a viceroy or Maywoon who has not in his household some of these domestic sages, whom he consults on all important occasions, and sometimes on occasions of no importance whatever. The Maywoon of Pegue, whose vicereignty, though