6. RHINOCEROS IN THE KACHIN STATE

'We are not told what people inhabited Lin-yang. Several early works, some dating from the 4th Century, refer, more or less fancifully, to the tribes living SW. of Yung-Ch'ang. In the mountains astride the Frontier there were the wild and troublesome P'u (b'uok) tribes, whose land produced rhinoceros, elephant, tortoise shell, jade, amber, cowries, gold, silver, salt-wells, cinnamon and cotton trees, hill-paddy and panicled millet.' Burma down to fall of Pagan, by G. H. Luce and Pe Maung Tin. *Journal Burma Research Society*—XXIX—1939 (page 267).

The country referred to in the preceding paragraph may be identified with the present Kachin State which lies in the north of Burma and comprises Myitkyina and Bhamo Districts.

In September 1955 the Ministry of the Kachin State conducted an enquiry in order to ascertain the species and number of rhinoceros still surviving within the State.

Putao Sub-division:

The Assistant Resident reported in December 1955 as follows:

(*a*) A villager reported having seen fresh tracks of two smaller rhinoceros in the Namlang stream.

(*b*) A large solitary rhino is also reported on the border of Putao Sub-division and Hukawng Valley.

The Assistant Resident cannot say whether the rhinoceros are the great one-horned or the Asiatic two-horned rhinoceros.

But in view of the fact that a rhinoceros shot by a Lisu in the Namlang Valley in 1942 was one-horned, and one previously shot also one-horned, the rhinoceros now reported from Putao Sub-division may be a great one-horned or Indian rhinoceros, which had wandered into the area from Tirap Frontier Tract National Park, Assam. Part of the boundary of this National Park is the Burma frontier.

They could not be the smaller one-horned or Javan Rhinoceros as E.H. Peacock in 'A Game Book for Burma', 1930, writes (page 78): 'It is open to question whether the Javan rhinoceros ever existed outside of the Thaton, Salween and Mergui Forest Divisions in Lower Burma. The only definite records of its existence come from these three Divisions.'

For a previous note see *JBNHS*, Vol. 52, No. 1, April 1954, page 87.

Kamaing Sub-Division:

The Assistant Resident, Kamaing, submitted in November 1955 a copy of a report dated October 1955 from the Kayang-Ok Hpakan (Kayang-Ok is a petty officer in charge of a circle, which comprises an average of six village tracts). The gist of the report is as follows:

(*a*) There are rhinos in Kan Taik Bum, Wantuk bum, Bum Chyang bum, Hpala mung bum, Bumdaw bum.

(*b*) The minimum estimated number is about thirty.

(*c*) In April 1955, Laisai Duwa came upon fresh rhino tracks between Laisai and Haung Pa which is on the Chindwin River. The

size of the tracks was about the size of the track of an elephant measuring 6 to 7 ft. in height.

(*d*) In 1952 a villager from Ohn Done village shot a rhino. The locality where it was shot was not known. About the same year, the headman of Pa-ok-gyi village shot two rhinos in Bum Chyang bum.

(*e*) In March 1954 a villager from Lonkhin village who went in search of amber in the Laisai tract saw numerous fresh tracks of rhinoceros.

The writer has previously estimated the number of rhinos in the Laisai tracts as from 3 to 4 specimens. See *JBNHS*, Vol. 52, No. 1, April 1954, page 85.

The writer therefore enquired of the Assistant Resident, Kamaing, whether the number thirty as estimated by the Kayang-Ok was not high. The Assistant Resident replied in February 1956 that:

(1) the estimate is reasonable.
(2) the rhinos in the area are the Asiatic two-horned rhinoceros.
(3) a white rhino was shot in the area some thirty years ago.
(4) fresh tracks of rhino calves have not been reported, and
(5) the rhinoceros in the area are dangerous and 'from distance, when they see fire-smoke, they use to charge'.

The same belief is held by Karens. See an extract from Burma by Rev. F. Mason D.D., M.R.A.S., 1882 pp. 451-452:

> 'The Southern Karens say there is a third species of rhinoceros in the jungles, which is distinguished from both the others by its skin being covered with small tubercles, and above all by its eating fire. Wherever it sees fire it runs up and devours it immediately. I once lost my way among the hills and valleys of Palaw and Katay, and on obtaining a Karen, who lived in that region, for a guide, he laid special charge on every member of the party to follow him in silence, for a fire eating rhinoceros had been recently seen, and it always came to noises, instead of fleeing from them as most animals do.
>
> The habit of attacking a fire and trampling it out (the eating part of the performance being probably an embellishment) may have originated in the sagacity of the animal or to the mixed operation of fear and rage combined, as a savage dog will pursue and bite the stone thrown at it; and in time an act wholly unconnected with the natural economy of the animal, and developed by an accidental circumstance, may by the operation of the laws of heredity have become converted into an instinct. This idea receives some support from the behaviour of bees. When preparing to smoke off a swarm of bees from their comb in the jungle, especial care is taken by the Burmans not to allow the flame to rise, or to "crackle", as the bees are said to be at once roused to fury by the *sound* of the flames, and to attack every one within reach. Doubtless experience has taught them the danger to their home which attends a crackling fire in the wood, and they at once resort to the weapon of offence with which they are provided. A rhinoceros is actuated by

precisely the same sentiment, and he rushes to the detested fire and tramples it beneath his feet as he would a living enemy.'

25, INYAMYAING ROAD,
UNIVERSITY P.O.,
RANGOON,
UNION OF BURMA,
April 12, 1956.

U TUN YIN,
B.C.S. (Retd.)

[This is not conclusive, as *R. sumatrensis* has usually only one horn in evidence, the anterior one. The posterior horn is usually a mere pimple, if that. So villagers would only notice one horn. The real criterion is size, the heavy folds in the tuberculated or 'studded' skin at the shoulder etc. The species of the rhino alleged to inhabit the Tirap Frontier Tract National Park (valley of the upper Dehing River) has never been determined, as only footprints have been seen in recent years. On the other hand, as *R. unicornis* has been seen in the nearer hills of the Tirap Frontier Division, two or three days march from Margherita, and in the Naga Hills east of Kohima, it is not impossible that it may also be found in north Burma. Thus when a rhino was seen two or three years ago in the Tirap Frontier Division, Mr. Gee sent up two pictures, one of a *R. unicornis* and one of a *R. sumatrensis*. These were shown to the man who saw the rhino, and he confirmed that it was the former. More investigation is worthwhile.—EDS.]

7. NATURE'S ECONOMY

In a recent publication by the International Union for the Protection of Nature entitled *Protect Tomorrow's World Today* my interest was aroused by two paragraphs which recalled incidents from the past. Para 10, p. 12 deals with the hippopotamus as a beneficial factor to fish and aquatic life in general in the rivers and lakes of Africa; and para 24, p. 26, condemns the goat as, perhaps, the most destructive animal on earth. Some comments in relation to these paragraphs and India might be of some interest to some of our readers.

Para 10 reads as follows:

'The relation between beings cannot always be seen: they are often linked in the most unexpected way. Who, for instance, would think of linking these hippopotami, that live part of their mysterious existence in African waters, with fish farming? But they are valuable auxiliaries. Especially in the case of East African Lakes that are fed a relatively small quantity of water by their tributaries, every plant and animal plays the role of a regulator. The excrements of the hippopotami fertilize the water depths, favouring the formation of phytoplankton which, for its part, nourishes the tilapais. These indigenous fish are widely used by the large fish farming enterprises and supplement the protein so essential to African peoples.'