

BURMA GAZETTEER

LOWER CHINDWIN DISTRICT

UPPER BURMA

RANGOON

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT, GOVERNMENT PRINTING,

BURMA

Rainfall and climate.

The rainfall varies inversely with distance from the hills on the north and west. The average rainfall at Môngywa (1895 to 1909) was 26'86 inches.

The average rainfall at other recording stations is shown in Chapter VIII, and the figures reflect the fact that the district is partly wet-zone. The rainfall variation from year to year is, however, great, and the showers are local, a widespread downpour being the exception. The minimum recorded temperature at Môngywa has been 47 degrees (1905) and the maximum 112 degrees (1908 and 1909). In the dry-zone regions, although the heat in April and May is excessive, the climate is healthy at all times of the year. Under the hills in the west and north malaria prevails in the rains, and the valleys are feverish until the cold weather sets in, when for the four months from November to February they enjoy a bracing climate. The climate of the dry portions of the district is stated to be suitable for persons suffering from complaints of the chest. The prevailing winds are from south-west to north-east from the middle of May to the middle of October the monsoon period and in the opposite direction for the remainder of the year.

There was a hailstorm in November 1896 which ruined the crops in several riverine villages near Le-mye on the Chindwin, and was so violent as to throw down trees and houses. The occurrence of hailstorms is, however, most usual in the northern half of the district, where they not infrequently occur in March and April.

[The following notes on the wild fauna of the district, indigenous beliefs in regard to animals, etc., have been supplied by Mr. J. P. Connor, Superintendent of Land Records, Lower Chindwin District :--]

Fauna: quadrupeds.

All the varieties of wild game found in Upper Burma, except the rhinoceros, occur in the Lower Chindwin district. The localities in which they are found vary according to the vegetation appropriate to each species, ranging from the scrubby thorn jungles of the dry zone to the bamboo-covered and heavily afforested hills of the northern and western humid zone.

In the former, *thamin* (brow-antlered deer, panolia Eldi) and hare abound, and barking-deer, pig and leopards are occasionally found. *Thamin* cast their horns during the rainy season, and, when the new ones appear, avoid the society of the does, which spitefully take advantage of their defenceless condition to bite the tender growth. They avoid dense jungle as the shape of their horns renders them likely to be caught by creepers, especially in parts

where the runs are not familiar to them, and also because they are best able to outdistance their natural enemies in open country, being the fleetest of deer. The hare not only eludes its pursuer by its speed, but also by running along a carefully prepared track, which has apertures bitten through the tangled shrub at the side, through which its pursuer cannot follow with equal facility. When a hare first breaks it runs in a leisurely manner, as if about to stop, but when it turns a corner it doubles its speed, and does not check till it has covered a good distance. When a hare is captured, a Burman will pull off the tip of the tail for luck. The hare has its form under a low tuft of grass or bush, where it makes a smooth bed by beating the ground with its rump.

In the humid regions, which include the hills, bison (*Gavæus gaurus*), *saing* (wild bull, *bos sondaicus*), *sambhur* (*rusa Aristotelis*), tigers, bears and the goat-antelope are met with. The *saing* is one of the wariest animals that can be hunted. Burmans say that "it teaches the hunter." It is said to be so expert with its horns as to be able to pick a plum off the ground, transfixed on one of the points. It is also said to be unsafe to take refuge from an enraged *saing* in a bamboo clump, however thick, as the beast will overturn it or break it down. A man pursued by a bison is believed to be safe if he lies down flat on the ground, as the beast cannot reach him there, owing to its short thick neck, and generally rushes past, avoiding the prostrate form.

Elephants, leopards, pig and barking-deer occur in both the humid and dry zones.

The tusks or canine-teeth of the barking-deer (*cervulus-aureus*) are considered to be poisonous. When agitated, this deer is said to emit a sound like the chattering of teeth in ague, which can only be heard at close quarters. It is a nervous, watchful creature and, when frightened, utters the bark from which it takes its name. When a deer is pursued by wild dogs it makes for the nearest stream, presumably with the object of throwing them off the scent. It can make a good fight when pressed, and has been known to attack-human beings in the last resort, as for instance when caught by accident in a hare net.

In the rains pig rear their young in comfortable nests (*wet thaik*) built of grass. The tops of these are sloped like a thatched roof in order to keep out the rain.

Elephants are considered to be the most sagacious of animals. A herd is protected by *sentinels*, *kin*, which take