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# TRAVELS

IN THE

## CENTRAL PARTS OF INDO-CHINA

(SIAM),

### CAMBODIA, AND LAOS,

DURING THE YEARS 1858, 1859, AND 1860.

BY THE LATE

### M. HENRI MOUHOT,

FRENCH NATURALIST.

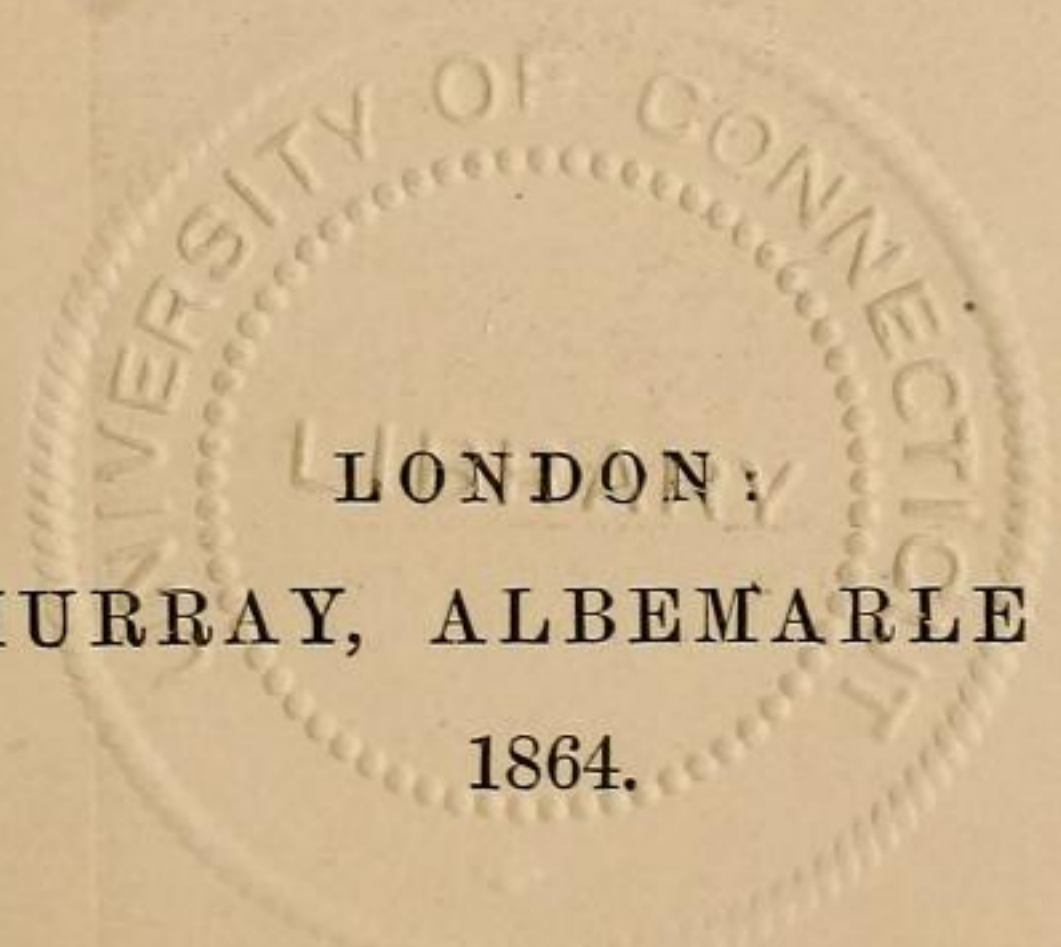
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## CHAPTER XVIII.

THE EAST OF LOUANG PRABANG — NOTES OF TRAVELS — OBSERVATIONS FROM BANGKOK TO LAOS — END OF THE JOURNAL — DEATH OF THE TRAVELLER.

THE dress of the Laotians differs little from that of the Siamese. The people wear the *langouti* and a little red cotton waistcoat, or often nothing at all. Both men and women go barefoot: their head-dresses are like the Siamese. The women are generally better-looking than those of the latter nation: they wear a single short petticoat of cotton, and sometimes a piece of silk over the breast. Their hair, which is black, they twist into a knot at the back of the head. The houses are built of bamboos and leaves interwoven and raised upon stakes, and underneath is a shelter for domestic animals, such as oxen, pigs, fowls, &c.

The dwellings are, in the strictest sense, unfurnished, having neither tables nor beds, nor, with few exceptions, even vessels of earth or porcelain. They eat their rice made into balls out of their hands, or from little baskets plaited with cane, some of which are far from unartistic.

The crossbow and *sarbacane* are the arms used in hunting, as well as a kind of lance made of bamboo, and

sometimes, but more rarely, the gun, with which they are very skilful.

In the hamlet of Na-Lê, where I had the pleasure of killing a female tiger, which with its partner was committing great ravages in the neighbourhood, the chief hunter of the village got up a rhinoceros-hunt in my honour. I had not met with this animal in all my wanderings through the forests. The manner in which he is hunted by the Laotians is curious on account of its simplicity and the skill they display. Our party consisted of eight, including myself. I and my servants were armed with guns, and at the end of mine was a sharp bayonet. The Laotians had bamboos with iron blades something between a bayonet and a poignard. The weapon of the chief was the horn of a sword-fish, long, sharp, strong, and supple, and not likely to break.

Thus armed, we set off into the thickest part of the forest, with all the windings of which our leader was well acquainted, and could tell with tolerable certainty where we should find our expected prey. After penetrating nearly two miles into the forest, we suddenly heard the crackling of branches and rustling of the dry leaves. The chief went on in advance, signing to us to keep a little way behind, but to have our arms in readiness. Soon our leader uttered a shrill cry as a token that the animal was near; he then commenced striking against each other two bamboo canes, and the men set up wild yells to provoke the animal to quit his retreat.

A few minutes only elapsed before he rushed towards

us, furious at having been disturbed. He was a rhinoceros of the largest size, and opened a most enormous mouth. Without any signs of fear, but, on the contrary, of great exultation, as though sure of his prey, the intrepid hunter advanced, lance in hand, and then stood still, waiting for the creature's assault. I must say I trembled for him, and I loaded my gun with two balls; but when the rhinoceros came within reach and opened his immense jaws to seize his enemy, the hunter thrust the lance into him to a depth of some feet, and calmly retired to where we were posted.

The animal uttered fearful cries and rolled over on his back in dreadful convulsions, while all the men shouted with delight. In a few minutes more we drew nearer to him; he was vomiting pools of blood. I shook the chief's hand in testimony of my satisfaction at his courage and skill. He told me that to myself was reserved the honour of finishing the animal, which I did by piercing his throat with my bayonet, and he almost immediately yielded up his last sigh. The hunter then drew out his lance and presented it to me as a souvenir; and in return I gave him a magnificent European poignard.

Oubon and Bassac lie W.N.W. from M. Pimai. It takes eight days in the rainy season to travel from this last town to Oubon, two more to reach Bassac. To return occupies at least double that period, the current being excessively strong.

The Ménam-Moune at Pimai is 75 metres wide in the dry season; in the rainy season it is from 6 to 7 metres



Drawn by M. Janet Lange, from a Sketch by M. Mouhot.  
A CHIEF ATTACKING A RHINOCEROS IN THE FOREST OF LAOS.

in depth. There are in this district iron, lignites, and trunks of petrified trees lying on the ground, which even from a very short distance look like fallen trees in a natural state.

Mgi-Poukham, inhabited by the Soués, is six days' journey from Korat in a south-easterly direction.

In the dry season the navigation of the river is impeded by sandbanks: at some points the stream is tolerably wide, but in others choked with sand.

From Korat to Pimai, on an elephant, occupies two days: from Korat to Thaison, two; to Sisapoune, two; to Josoutone, two days; to Oubon, four days; to Bassac, four.

Direction E.N.E. from Korat; Poukiéau, N. of Chaiapume; Pouvienne, ten degrees E. of Chaiapume; Dongkaïe, N.E. by E. of Chaiapume; M. Louang Prabang, N. of Chaiapume.

From Chaiapume to Vien-Tiane is fifteen days' journey on foot towards the N. and nine degrees E. M. Lô, N.W. of Chaiapume; Petchaboune, W.N.W. of Chaiapume; Bassac, E.S.E.

Bane Prom, a mountain situated in a valley nine miles across, is nearly 300 metres high. Bane Prom, a town. Menam Prom, a river nearly 2 metres deep and 40 wide, rises in M'Lôm, and empties itself in the Menam Chie, in the province of Koukhine. Bane-Rike, between Poukiéau and Kone-Sane, four geographical leagues from each place. Menam-Rike is a torrent which empties itself into the Prom.

The vegetation is monotonous — everywhere resinous trees, chiefly of small size. There is a complete absence of birds; insects are in great number and variety, mosquitoes and ox-flies in myriads. I suffer dreadfully from them, and am covered with swellings and blisters from their bites; and they torment our beasts so much that we sometimes fear it will drive them mad. The sensibility of the skin of the elephant is extraordinary, but these creatures are very skilful in brushing off their tormentors by means of a branch held in their trunks. I do not know what would become of me without these good and docile animals, and I cannot tell which to admire most, their patience or intelligence.

From Kone-Sane to Vien-Tiane is eight good days' journey in a north-easterly direction.

To M'Lôm, four days W.N.W.

To Petchaboune, four days W.S.W.

To Kôrat, four days E.S.E.

To Chaiapume, four days E.S.E.

To Poukiéau, four days E.S.E.

To Leuye, three days' rapid travelling N.N.E. over mountains.

From Kone-Sane to Koukhène, two days' rapid journey E.S.E.

From Koukhène to Chenobote, one day's journey S.E.

On the road from Kone-Sane to Leuye, near the former place, is a stream called Oué-Mouan, and a torrent, Oué-Kha.

Bane-Nayaan, a village, five geographical leagues off,