

**AN
ACCOUNT OF ASSAM**

**BY
DR. JOHN PETER WADE**

F. R. A. S.

1800.

**EDITED BY
BENUDHAR SHARMA.**



FIRST IMPRESSION.

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Madhupur Tea Estate, North Lakhimpur
ASSAM.**

A
GEOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
OF
ASSAM

1800 A. D.

BY Dr. JOHN PETER WADE.

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ASSAM IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

IN TWO PARTS.—1800.

INTRODUCTION.

PART FIRST.

The jealous spirit of the Chinese government accompanied the conquerors of Assam, who have now retained possession of that country during a period of one thousand years; and must have emigrated originally from the interior, or from the confines of the former kingdom. Strangers of every description and country were scrupulously denied admission into Assam; which does not appear to have been visited even by the indefatigable footstep of the missionary. It is on record, that two Europeans have obtained access into the kingdom; one at an early period, who attended the Mogul army, was taken prisoner, conducted to the capital, and afterwards liberated. There is reason to suppose he was a native of Holland, and has published some account of his involuntary travels to the court of the monarch. The second traveller was a Frenchman; whose name will not easily be erased from the memory of many gentlemen of property in Bengal, Chevalier, who at a later period, obtained the government of Chandernagore, embarked a considerable property, it is said, at Dacca, on a fleet of boats, and proceeded to the confines of Assam. Permission was obtained from court, and he advanced with his fleet as far as the capital, Rungpur—Gurgown, under an escort which deprived him of all intercourse with the natives, and confined his personal observations within the limits of his barge; at length he obtained his liberty by a stratagem; and has left some information relative to the geography of the country; or more probably the banks of the river, which lay in his course.

From such sources the geography of Assam could not receive much improvement. The few hints which Major Rennel seems to have obtained from the conversation or the notes of Chevalier, are marked by such ob-

vicious errors, that we cannot regret his information from this quarter has not proved more copious.

The Persian tract published, and probably translated by Mr. Vansittard, contains a few remarks on the divisions of the country, which are accurate; though, as is usual, in Asiatic writers, involved in much hyperbolical description.

Major Rennel has undoubtedly made the best use of his materials; but little was in his power; with his superior talents, his opportunities, and his information, have not concurred, to give any degree of perfection to the geography of the country.

Mr. Wood, of the corps of Engineers, an attentive and intelligent gentleman, who accompanied the deputation in the capacity of surveyor, has presented government with the only correct map of the course of the Berhampooter (Brahmapootra), and of such parts of the country as lay within the limits of his survey, as far as the capital Rangpoor—Gurgown.

At the desire of the late governor-general, Lord Teignmouth, Captain Colebrook, the surveyor-general, obligingly favoured me with a copy of Mr. Wood's map, to be prefixed to the history of the reign of Gowrinatsing, late monarch of Assam, which was transmitted to Europe for publication, in the year 1796.

As far as my sources of information extend, these are the only public documents which exist on the subject of Assam. If my personal excursions, during a residence of nearly two years, and my intercourse with the most intelligent and best-informed natives shall enable me to add something to the valuable information contained in Mr. Wood's map, I shall esteem the labour and expense (for neither has been spared) which attended my researches most amply repaid.

Exclusively attached, until the period in question, to the study and practice of my profession, I had not acquired the requisite and scientific accomplishments, which might have rendered my opportunities of acquiring geographical knowledge of greater utility to government and to the public; yet I shall venture to hope, that the general and unscientific sketch of the country contained in the following sheets will not prove entirely unacceptable, when it is considered that no Europeans have ever explored, or probably ever will explore, the provinces of Assam with the consent of the existing government of that country.

The Kingdom of Assam is about seven hundred miles in length, and from sixty to eighty in breadth; in a few places, however, of Upper Assam, where the mountainous confines recede farthest, the breadth greatly exceeds this proportion; and it will be within a very moderate calculation to consider the surface as containing sixty thousand square miles; an extent much superior to that of England, which is stated at forty-nine thousand

occupied by the Rangulighur rampart, which runs from the Colone, near its junction with the Berhampooter, during a course of ten miles to the southern mountains. Coliabar, upon the whole may be reckoned about one hundred miles from Cajullymook.

CASIRUNGA lies to the east and south-east of Rangulighur; and the Namdoyungh to the eastward above Khonarmook or Sonarmook. The country here is low, and subject to inundation. It extends about six miles in length from the causeway to BASSA, and four in breadth to the foot of the mountains from Namdoyungh. Namdoyungh is forty miles long, and ten broad; it has Colarphaut on the west. Ouperdoyungh on the east, Casirunga on the south and the Berhampooter flows on the north. Toquharrurgown, Khoolalgown, Atooneagown and Dehinghiagown, are the principal towns of this flourishing province.

MORUNGI lies to the east of Casirunga; it is interspersed with small hills, covered with a wild and luxuriant vegetation, and is not subject to inundation; Tobungh, Khapeonti, and Lokow, are the principal towns. It is a frontiers district; and possessed a military station of three thousand men, on the Rungagurrah hill, as a protection against the inroads of the mountaineers of Naga and Cossari, who are contiguous on the south. It is bounded on the north and east by Doyungh, Bassa, and the Dunsiri river. Colarphaut extended to east and north-east, above Coliabar, to the distance of ten or fifteen miles. It has Doyungh, and Cassirunga, on the east and south.

BASSA is a considerable district, about ten miles in length, and eight in breadth. The Naga mountain rises to the south, Doyungh lays to the north, Dhooli to the east, and the Dunsiri flows to the west. It is a low country, resembling Natow, in Bengal, on a smaller scale.

UPURDOYUNGH, is contiguous to Bassa on the north. It has Deurgown to the east, Namdoyungh to the west, and the Dehingh river to the north. It is interperced with small hills of red earth, and is not subject to be overflowed in any part during the season of rains. Purbutteagown, Kaburrurgown, Daikialurgown, and Rhadullagown, are its principal towns; Cossarihat, and Nagapaut are also places of note in this district, which form a square of about twenty miles in length and breadth.

DEORGOWN, famous for the temple of Sadasio, is eight miles long and six broad. It is an elevated country on the banks of one of the principal branches of the great river, which, flowing through various channels in this neighbourhood, forms several new islands susceptible of cultivation.

GOOROOMARA CHAPARI (Chapari means island) is opposite to Deurgown; it is not of any great extent; but Majooli, called by preeminence the island, lies in this direction, and is very large. It is formed by the Dehingh river on the south, and the Looicheh on the north. To the west of