

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

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I.—*Extract from the late Colonel Lambton's Notices of Malabar.*—Communicated by Major T. B. Jervis.

THE Coimbetoor province is an extensive district extending from the bounds of Trichinopoly as far west as south Malabar, and is bounded by the Cavery on the east and north as far as Sattiagul above the ghats, and on the west or NW. by the Mysoor country taking in the Guzulatty Pass. On the south it is skirted by the Pyluy and Annamalli mountains, and the district of Dindigul.

The face of the country is an even surface, but undulated; and being generally enclosed with thorn fences, it has a beautiful appearance when the fences are green, and the crops on the ground. The soil is light and dry, and the surface covered every where with small stones, but it produces all kinds of dry grain, with some rice on the banks of the rivers. It likewise produces cotton, hemp, tobacco, &c. There is also extensive pasturage for cattle and sheep, and the latter are in great numbers, and remarkable for their delicacy.

The general elevation of the lower part of Coimbetoor, or the part below the ghats, is from nine hundred to a thousand feet above the sea, and this flat is surrounded by very high mountains, viz. by the great chain of mountains on the south which extend from Dindigul valley and terminate within twenty-four miles of the Malabar coast, by the Neelgherry hills on the west and by the range of ghats on the north. The Anga mountains, and the Annamalli mountains form a gap of about twenty miles in breadth, through which the wind rushes like a blast through a funnel during

the time of the western monsoon, which commences in May, and continues till October. The wind, which is always from the west, in those months is checked by the lofty mountains that run parallel to the Malabar coast, and being confined to this narrow opening, it enters with prodigious violence, which is considerably augmented by the heat of the atmosphere to the eastward, while the cold weather prevails to the westward of these mountains. This occasions a gale of wind, which carries clouds of sand entirely across the Coimbetoor district, where the mountains again converge, and cause another violent current that sweeps the plains of Trichinopoly and extends to the eastward of Tanjore.

In the neighbourhood of Daraporam the surface is leveled with the drifted sand, and tradition says that whole villages in the Coimbetoor, have been buried by these continued hurricanes: indeed there are many vestiges that give credibility to the story. In the neighbourhood of Daraporam, several vaults have been discovered by digging a few feet below the surface of the ground, which have the appearance of ancient sepulchres, and have in all probability been originally above ground, for they have partitions, and openings like doors, but all on a very small scale.

These vaults contain urns and various earthen vessels which in shape and quality have no resemblance to any of the present day. Some of them appear to have been filled with the ashes of the dead, others with metallic substances, having the rude shape of swords and other weapons, transfigured by calcination or by time. These curious facts may lead us to a very reasonable conjecture, that a different race of people from the present, has once inhabited these countries.

In some of these places various coins have been found, some with Persian characters, others with characters not now understood, and what is most remarkable, several Roman coins have been discovered in various parts of the Coimbetoor; I saw two at Daraporam, one of gold and the other of silver, both of the reign of Augustus Cæsar; and Mr. Garrow, I am informed, has collected a number of them. It remains with those who have time and inclination to explore the antiquities of the east, to discover, or at least to form a probable conjecture, how Roman coins have been brought to this part of India.

The great defect in historical documents renders it difficult, and always doubtful, in referring back to remote periods; and there does not appear to be any authentic retrospect beyond 280 years, when

the Coimbetoor country formed a part of the dominions under the Madura Dynasty. It appears that the princes of that line encouraged the arts of peace, but that indolence and luxury were the consequences; and the latter kings becoming feeble, the country became weakened by the troublesome Polygars who rendered themselves in a great measure independent of the government; and this disunion finally prepared the way for a foreign conquest by the Mysoorians. From records in possession of some of the inhabitants it appears that after the dissolution of the kingly dominion, the police established by the Polygars was of a military nature, which better enabled them to unite against an invading power, but the inefficiency incident to all combinations of little chieftains, as well as little republics, must render them an easy prey to a great military power actuated by one head.

Previous to Hyder Ally's invasion, the force north of the Noyel river was between ten and fifty thousand men, called Candachar peons; a number of forts were erected in the district, and every fort was entrusted to a man of character, whose establishment consisted of about 1,150 men of different ranks. They were rewarded with lands which they cultivated and held under a kind of military tenure similar to the tenures during the feudal system in Europe. A part of this force remained constantly as a garrison in each fort, and the rest was stationed in different parts of the district to maintain tranquillity and peace. In this division of the Coimbetoor, there were originally about ten or twelve forts; but in latter times they amounted to *thirty-six*, which evinces the great increase of military tenures, where every man of a certain rank considered *his* fort as his castle, and the citadel to his domain. Under such a system it is easy to conceive the feeble resistance that would be made against an invading army, where every petty chieftain would think only for himself, where all his peons and adherents would assemble within his fort, and where no disposable moving force was in being to repel a foreign attack. In this miserable and disjointed state was the northern part of Coimbetoor, when Hyder invaded the country, after the battle of Sattimungalum. Tipoo evacuated the whole of these forts, and disbanded the peons and their officers.

After the peace with the English in 1791, Tipoo had made no provision for an established police; and the country below the ghats was entirely neglected, which gave rise to extreme excesses of despotism among the revenue servants. This calamity pervades almost every Mussulman Government, and oppression once begun

is practised by every individual to his next inferior, till at length it reaches the lowest order of the subjects, who languish under all the accumulated evils of public and private despotism. Under such a state of things, a revolt is not to be wondered at, and this unfortunate situation of the country, gave an opportunity for the Gouers to set themselves up against the Sirkar, and commit depredations in every part of the country. The notorious Tomba Gouer was one of these leaders, many of whose adherents as well as adversaries are now in existence.

Various crimes and disorders arose out of this disorganization ; and two remarkable castes, the Coravars and the Valiars, became distinguished for *gang-robberies* and *house-breaking*, which crimes till of late years have been very prevalent. These two castes were very numerous, and scarcely any of the first turned their hands to industry. The caste of Coravars contained within the two divisions of Coimbetoor, about 2,400 souls, and not above 50 persons cultivated the land on their own account ; some of them were labourers during the plowing, sowing, and reaping seasons, but after that, they returned to their profession of thieving and plundering. They had a jargon unknown to any other caste. They underwent hardships when young that they might withhold their confessions under the severest tortures. This kind of education is now nearly abolished, but the universal propensity for thieving prevails among the most respectable of them.

The Valiars were in number about 5,000, a great many of these applied themselves to habits of industry ; near 700 paid rent to the Sirkar, and a considerable number were labourers in the pay of other ryots. A number of them have also been Cavelgars, on the same terms as the Coravars, and though dissimilar in castes and customs yet they never fail to unite their strength in their plundering or thieving exertions.

When a Coravar or Valiar became a Cavelgar to a village, it was from that instant free from the depredation of either caste, though they had previously plundered it to get themselves nominated.

Poisoning cattle is at this day a very common crime among the parias and chucklars. To the chucklars all dead cattle are a requisite, and in return they supply the inhabitants with sandals, leather bags, &c.

Highway robberies and deliberate murders have not been very frequent, and petty thefts, though common, appear to have been more the result of necessity than of habitual vice.

Besides the Cavery, which forms the northern and eastern boundary of Coimbetoor, there are the Bhavany river, the Noyel, the Ambravatty and the Paniany rivers. The Bhavany river has its source among the mountains to the N. W. of Coimbetoor, and after a winding course through the most fertile part of the district, it falls into the Cavery at Bhavany. The Noyel rises in the mountains west of Coimbetoor, takes an easterly direction past Payroor and Tirupoor, and falls into the Cavery about two miles and a half below Codamoody pagoda.

The Ambravatty has its source in the great range of mountains north of Dhullee, runs in a direction nearly N. E., and after receiving another small river which rises near Pyney, passes Daraporam, and after winding to the east and north, takes a course nearly east, passes Chini Daraporam, and Caroor, and falls into the Cavery about seven miles below the latter place. The Paniany river rises in the mountains south of Annamalli, passes Paulghautcherry, and after being joined by the Walla-aur runs nearly west till it disembogues into the sea at Paniany on the Malabar coast.

These rivers, except the Cavery, have but little water in the dry season, but are soon filled after the rains, and they as soon subside and become fordable; their banks are ornamented with paddy grounds, and some to a great extent. In the movements of armies these rivers and paddy grounds, together with the enclosures, would render it difficult for cavalry and artillery to act with facility, though some parts of the country are more open and admit of good positions. On the south of the Noyel river, it answers more particularly this description, that part of the district being less enclosed and less cultivated, and to the westward it is high open ground without any jungle.

The principal roads diverge from Caroor to Erode, Coimbetoor and Daraporam. The road which passes Erode, separates into two branches, the one to Bhavany, whence it leads to Sattimungalum along the north bank of the Bhavany river. The other leads direct from Erode on the south of that river, and crosses it opposite to Sattimungalum. From thence there is but one road which leads up the Guzzelatty Pass and enters the Mysoor country to the south of Ardinelly. This road is in general good, with the exception of some few places which require repairs after the monsoons.

The road to Coimbetoor continues on the South of the Noyel river at some distance; passes through Kongium and Pulladam, and crosses that river about seven miles east from Coimbetoor.

This road in general is very good or might be easily made so, the country being of a dry soil, covered with stones for the most part. For great part of the way it is ill cultivated, and badly supplied with water, an inconvenience which in the dry season must be felt by an army every where at a distance from the rivers, as wells afford the chief supply to the villages, where they have small tanks for their cattle. When I was in that country in 1806, in April and May the want of water was so great, and the country so dried up for want of rain, that the cattle and sheep were nearly perishing; and the surface of the country being covered with stones, and no verdure on the fences, the whole presented a scene of misery exceeding any thing I had ever met with. It is at that season too that the hot winds prevail previous to the commencement of the rains.

The road from Caroor to Daraporam goes nearly direct, and crosses the Ambravatty near Chini Daraporam and again opposite Daraporam.

The great road from Dindigul to Paulghautcherry passes Daraporam and is in general very good, and the country from Daraporam to Paulghautcherry is uncommonly favorable for roads.

Exclusive of their principal roads, there are other cross ones, viz. from Coimbeetoor to Bhavany, to Daraporam, to Daniancottah up the Guzzelatty Pass to Paulghautcherry and Pulachy. From Bhavany there is another road leading to Sankerydroog and Salem. All these are in general good, or could be very easily rendered such.

The Pass of greatest importance is the Guzzelatty Pass, which is the great gateway between the southern provinces and the Mysoor. This was the high road during the times of Tippoo and Hyder, and is equally so now under present circumstances. It is the most direct road between Tinnevelly, Madura, Dindigul and Trichinopoly below the Ghats, to Seringapatam and Bangalore, the two great military stations in the upper country. Passes in general owe their strength to the difficulty of access, or in other words to the badness of the road which leads through them, to the jungle which surrounds, and the height which commands them; a security however which we hold at the expence of convenience. But the Guzzelatty Pass has this advantage, that the better the road is, and the more the jungle is cleared away, the stronger it might be rendered by the aid of redoubts. The Fort of Guzzelatty is on the north bank of the Moyar river, but the Pass may be said to commence near the

choultry and pagoda, about one and a half mile to the northward of the fort.

The first ascent, which is from the eastward, is indeed very steep. After ascending about a quarter of a mile, the road turns immediately to the north, in which direction it may be made to continue on the summit of a ridge the whole way to an old fort, nearly at the top of the Pass, which has been intended as a defence, and such it may be made, if the jungle be cleared away. For this ridge slopes away on each side, with a very steep descent; and these slopes may be completely defended by batteries at the very top of the Pass, where there is now a choultry, and where a line might be carried across, so as to flank both the road and the sides of the ridge. Tippo had commenced a large fort a little way to the west of the choultry, with a view I suppose, to defend that side of the Pass, but the work was left unfinished.

The fort which is near the top of the Pass has a perfect command of the ridge below it, where the road ought to be made straight that it might be raked by the guns from that fort, as far the turn to the eastward, where another fort or redoubt should be erected to defend the lower part of the Pass, where the road should also be made straight, so as to be completely enfiladed. The whole of the jungle ought to be cleared away on both sides, that nothing could approach under cover. The ridge being thus cleared the whole way up, batteries might be erected at the summit, to have a clear command of the whole ridge, and of that part of the road above the present fort, leading to the head of the Pass.

At the time I went up the Guzzelatty Pass, it was in its worst state, and then I rode on horseback the whole way, and was only twenty minutes from the bottom to the fort. At that time there were some rocky places, where the soil had been washed away by the rains, and they appeared to constitute the chief difficulties. Those places I thought might be repaired, and the whole made practicable for guns. I understand the pioneers have been since employed on it, but I am unacquainted with what they have done.

The next great Pass from the upper to the lower part of Coimbatoor is the Caverypooram Pass, which is not included in the present part of the survey. This pass is long and therefore not steep, but as it follows the course of a small river which runs into the Cavery about nine miles west of the old fort of Caverypooram, crossing it upwards of nine times, and in many places follows its bed, the road of course can only be passable in the dry season. It

is the great thoroughfare from the southern part of the Carnatic to the S. E. part of the Mysoor country, and is much frequented by travellers.

This Pass is as remarkable for its length as from the singularity of the road. It commences near Punacatmulla, a hill about two miles west from Caverypooram, and ends about three miles to the S. E. of Caudhully, the first respectable village above the ghat, in going from the eastward; being altogether a distance of near twenty-three miles. For the accommodation of travellers, the distance from Caudhully to Caverypooram is divided by choultries into four stages. The first is from Caverypooram to Chinnicavil choultry, about seven miles, the road generally good excepting near the choultry. The second stage is from Chinnicavil choultry to Nundacavil choultry, a distance of seven miles more, and the road crosses the river no less than six times in this space. This with the addition of some rocky places, must render the road extremely bad, and at some seasons of the year entirely impassable. The third stage is from Nundacavil choultry to Mootapelly's choultry, which is near seven and a half miles. For the first three or four miles, the road follows the bed of the river in a great measure, and crosses it three times, after which it quits the torrent, takes a N. westerly direction, and becomes very steep. In this stage, what with the rapidity of the current, and the steepness of the Pass afterwards, the most serious difficulties are to be met with, and one would scarcely think it credible that carriages of any kind would get through it; yet in 1799 Brown's detachment, with its guns, went up this Pass, on its way to Seringapatam. The last stage is to Caudhully, about seven and a half miles more, the first four of which may be considered as the Pass, the country ascending but the jungle thin and the road good.

Besides these two great Passes up what are called the eastern and S. eastern ghats, there are innumerable small ones for men and bullocks, which are little known, but which certainly ought to be explored. In carrying down my principal triangles in 1806, I left my heavy baggage at Caudhully to proceed down the Caverypooram Pass while I went round to the northward and to a station on Ponnassmali, a very lofty mountain. The first day's march with bullocks and coolies was an ascent nearly the whole way, and I encamped at the foot of what may be called the mountain. After finishing, the guides conducted me down a Pass which led into the plain, where I fell into the road from Allambaddy to Caverypooram.

Opposite to Sattimungalum, there are several Passes where bullocks can ascend up to the table-land above. These Tippos used to avail himself of during our operations in the Coimbetoor country in the former Mysoor wars.

There are other Passes to the westward which lead to Malabar. A small one leads from Coimbetoor over Vellemalla, which is passable for unloaded bullocks; but it is little frequented. The Manaargaud Pass is another which leads to the Malabar, from the N. W. of Coimbetoor. This was formerly much frequented, but as it tended to facilitate smuggling, it has been discouraged, and is now grown over with jungle and infested with tigers.

There must be various roads up the Neelgherry mountains, as they are inhabited on the top, and produce a revenue of about four thousand pagodas annually. No doubt they have various roads down on the Malabar side.

II.—*Descriptive and Geographical Account of the Nilgiri Hills.* By Messrs. Fox and Turnbull.—Communicated by Major T. B. Jervis.

This mass of mountains, situated between the parallels of 11° and 12° of North Latitude, and 76° and 77° of East Longitude, is bounded on the North by the table-land of Davaroypatam, a narrow tract, divided from the table-land of Mysore, by the windings of the Moyar river at the bottom of a deep narrow wooded valley; to the south and east by the open country of Coimbetoor; to the south-west a branch of the Bhavany, called the Maunar, divides it from the populated mountains of Koonda dependant on Malabar; on the west by the chain of Ghats, defined by the Murkurty peak; to the north-west by the windings of the Bakkary river, one of the sources of the Moyar, from the table-land of Wynaad—its greatest length being from east to west 36 miles, and a medium breadth of 15 miles, in figure an irregular oblong, and contains on the whole a superficial area of 469½ square miles, of which only 14 square miles, may be said to be under cultivation. The surface is in no part even, being composed of ridges of different elevations, running parallel to each other, and forming deep vallies between; about the centre it is divided by a loftier chain, running in a north-east and south-west direction; from it lesser ridges branch off in all directions; on this are several conspicuous eminences, as Dodabetta, Bervybetta, their elevation