



**Note:**

Dalrymple provides some information on Captain George Baker in his introduction to the *Oriental Repertory*:

Captain George Baker's Observations at Persaim in 1755, his Journal of an Embassy, to the King of the Bûraghmahns, his Character of that King, and the Short Account of the Country are from MSS, which that valuable friend gave to me during the course of our voyage in the Cuddalore [in] 1759: His modest diffidence makes him apprehensive of appearing as an author; but, I doubt not, the publick approbation will shew his apprehensions were groundless.

All of the accounts mentioned by Dalrymple have been republished in the SBBR (see volume 3.2 and the present issue). In the collection of notes included below, "The Palace at Pegu" has been extracted from Dalrymple's introduction. As he explains of the origin of the note, "I find amongst my memos of information, received from Captain Baker, the following account of Pegu, which could not properly be introduced in any other place, and therefore I have inserted it here."

The sections on (1) the Burmans and Mons and (2) the Karens, below, were extracts inserted into the initial anonymous letter included in the *Oriental Repertory* collection by Dalrymple, indicating with a "B" that Baker was the source of the quotations.

Dalrymple, in his introduction to *Oriental Repertory*, also makes the following observation based on Baker's accounts which may usefully be included here:

It has appeared, in Captain Baker's Observations, that the Bûraghmah King had risen from his abilities; Simento, the

King of Pegu, was at first a Goldsmith; so that both competitors were self-raised.

M. W. C.

## **Notes on Bûraghmah (c. 1755)**

### **Captain George Baker**

#### **Bûraghmahns and Peguers**

(It may be here proper to observe that) This Country contains two nations, the Bûraghmahns and Peguers.

The Peguers resemble the Malays, in their appearance and disposition, though more industrious; they cut their hair round before, and the back-part, from their ears to the crown of their head, is shaved in a semicircle.

Bûraghmahns have more similitude to the Arabians in their features; but are darker in complexion than the Peguers. The Bûraghmahns are much more numerous than the Peguers, and more addicted to commerce; Even in Pegu their numbers are 100 to 1. They punctuate themselves, and, by rubbing gunpowder [Dalrymple note: another memo says dammer, which is more probable] into the wound, give such marks as remain ever after. They are of a tawny complexion, though the women who are not much exposed, if not white, are at least fair. The common women undergo all drudgery, and are very homely.

The men are lusty, and particularly paint their thighs, as has been observed, not in figures of beasts, &c. as would seem, but like the Meangis.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Original footnote: Dampier, in his description of the prince of Meangis, says "He was painted all down the breast, between his shoulders behind; on his thighs (mostly) before; and in the form of several broad rings, or bracelets, round his arms and legs. I cannot liken the drawings to any figure of animals or the like, but they were very curious, full of great variety of lines, flourishes, chequered work, &c. keeping a very graceful proportion, and appearing very artificial, even to wonder, especially that upon and between his shoulder blades." Dampier, vol. I, p. 514.

### **Carianners [Karens]**

There is another people in this country called Carianners, whiter than either, distinguished into Bûraghmah and Pegu Carianners; they live in the woods in small societies, of ten or twelve houses; are not wanting in industry, though it goes no farther than to procure them an annual subsistence.

They are remarkable for their perfect morality, but have no apparent religion. When asked if they believed the existence of any superior being, they replied, that the Bûraghmah and Pegu tallopins [monks] told them so, but that they knew nothing about it.

It is customary with them to place a duck, or fowl, with some rice, upon the grave of every deceased person; when asked on this also, they give no reply, but that it is customary. When any person dies they abandon the house, and build another.

### **The Palace at Pegu**

The city of Pegu was a regular square, with four grand streets leading to four gates, and being built on a plain, a person, at the center, could see them all at once, although the city was above a mile each way. In the NE quarter was the palace, and the temple of Kyak Mintao, the last was gilt, and made a very splendid appearance, as do the other celebrated pagodas, in this country, being also gilt.

The palace had somewhat of grandeur, although it had no carved work, like the Bûraghmah king's, which was very far from being contemptibly executed. The pillars, &c. of the Pegu palace, were carried to Bengal in 1757 by Captain Bailey.

It is remarkable the palace was built in one day, according to a superstitious custom these people, which enjoins their royal palaces to be raised in one day; It was built in 1753: All the materials being prepared, a certain number of people, from every district, and from every ship in the river, were summoned, with the proper implements, to be employed in this business.

**The Royal Ship of Pegu**

The Būraghmah king's boat carries three hundred persons, besides servants, 150 rowers, seventy-five men with firelocks, and seventy-five with bows and arrows, placed in three teers; the rowers on the surface of the water, and then the fire arms. The boat was about 150 feet long and forty broad, and went very swiftly, the rowers being well-trained to their oars.