



Note:

The following is one of many reports and accounts left by Captain Baker, some of which were published in previous issues of the SBBR.

M. W. C.

Short Account of the Bûraghmah Country

Captain George Baker

The Bûraghmah country, it is certain, has heretofore been frequented by many Europeans, particularly English, whose residence, in it, has undoubtedly afforded them much greater opportunities of giving better accounts of it, than what I can pretend to do; yet, as these gentlemen are now mostly defunct, and perhaps no account of theirs extant, I will say a few words towards it, for the satisfaction of such as have not themselves seen it.

Momchabue is the place where the present prince resides; it is a walled town, built with brick and mud, about twelve feet thick, and twenty high; and as I compute, about one thousand paces each side, being a regular square; and contains about four thousand families. It is seated in an even country, about twelve miles from the water-side, but a very sandy soil, though it abounds in many places, with a sort of black earth, which, when toiled, and otherwise prepared, produces great quantities of salt, and out of the neighbouring parts is got, with but a reasonable degree of trouble, good salt-petre; of which too, there might be great quantities had, if people were employed on it.

Khounmewn, a place on the river's side, about twelve miles East of Momchabue, it being the town where goods are landed for, or boated from, the capital, from this place the river running to Ava (the ancient seat of the empire) in a line nearly South about forty-five miles distant; on the West side, there runs a ridge of hills, of a moderate height, from near Khounmewn to immediately opposite of Ava, where they end; in a point, at a place, formerly well inhabited, called Chajganj. On the East side the land is marshy, at least low, in most places, for two, three, four or five miles distant from the river's side unto the foot of a very high ridge of mountains, running nearly North and South, they extend, from considerably to the Southward of Ava, unto the North-ward of Khounmewn, even so far as can be seen, and it is said much farther, though at Khounmewn they come near the river, and part the country, which is ordinarily called the Bûraghmah dominions, from those of Siam, though these, two countries have generally been under one prince.

Ava also is a walled town, but of less extent than Momchabue, though the soil being much better for brick than that of Momchabue, it is certainly much more durable; 'Tis said it has been a rich and populous place. Indeed the remaining ruins afford reason to believe the latter, and common report is sufficient to confirm us, in the belief of the former; though I think (notwithstanding there are some two or three edifices admired by the country people) that there is not a single structure, or but one, that can possibly deserve the name of great, much less magnificent. It contains now about one thousand families, and is seated by the side of the river, on the point of a delightful large plain, of rich soil and delicate herbage. From hence the merchants go by land to and from Siam. At this time it is not productive of a single commodity, and though it has formerly been the mart for trade, that is at this time so dead, there is now scarce any there.

From Ava to Poganj-Younjwe, the river is very winding and crooked. I judge the latter, in a streight line, to lye about WSW, seventy miles from the former. Between these two, the country is, for the most part, low, yet so high in the lowest places as to preserve itself from any damages from the swellings of the river, the soil is good and productive of gajary (Dalrymple's note: q? what? In one ms it is Jagary, which is unrefined sugar) and paddy, besides the East side I am told abounds with salt-petre, and is, in

my opinion, one of the best spots in the Northern part of the kingdom. There is no remarkable town between those five places, but several small villages, both on the river's side and farther in the country.

Pagong-Youngeoe, we are told, has formerly been a large and populous place, and indeed from the great number of pagodas, there is in, and about it, it carries with it much probability. It is situated on ground, reasonably high, perhaps ten feet above what the water ever comes to; but the soil is exceeding sandy, and remarkable for the production of nothing near it but ginjelly (Dalrymple's note: Is a plant from whose seeds oil is expressed) and gajary, for there is neither timber nor grain grows in the neighbourhood; the country for some five miles round it, grows nothing but shrubs and tamarind trees, of which latter there are abundance. But notwithstanding the barrenness of the soil, near this place, yet at somewhat remoter distances, 'tis very fertile; particularly on the opposite side, which is tolerably well inhabited, and from thence is brought grain and fruits, with a sort of earth good for washing.

This place is now inhabited by about six or eight hundred families, and is the mart, where goods are brought from all the neighbouring country, and consequently where others come to buy.

They have one particular pagoda, much bigger than the rest, and indeed the biggest of any between Dagon and Momchabue, 'tis well adorned, and kept in good order, and repair; and celebrated by the people for having one of their God's teeth and a collar-bone buried under it.

From Youngeoe to Sallee-mue I take to be about twenty-five miles, and the latter to lye about SW by South from the former; there is a ridge of ragged mountains on the Western shoar, near the river's side (for these two places lye both on the East) that extend from opposite the one to opposite the other of these places; On the East side is another ridge of hills, but not so long, and lying farther in the country, and at the back of them again, is one remarkable Mountain, which may be seen, in clear weather, from Ava upwards, unto Mellone, or perhaps farther, downwards. The other part of the country on the East shoar is reasonably high, and perhaps a good soil; though 'tis certain near the river's side it has a good degree of sand mixed with it.

Raynan-Gome I take to lye 25' South of Sallee-mue. The country between them, on the West side, is low for many miles from the river side; 'till it ends at the feet of several mountains. The Eastern shoar is considerably higher, and, in all appearance, a fine level country, though the soil near the water side has a mixture of sand in it. At this place there are about two hundred families, who are chiefly employed in getting earth-oil, out of pitts, some five miles in the country.

Mellone, a place on the West side of the river, lyes about SSW 35' from Raynan-Gome; there are about one hundred families inhabiting this place, who employ themselves chiefly in tillage of paddy and ginjelly; the country, on each side the river, between these two places, is something irregular; being in some places a little hilly, and in some level, reasonable heights, in others lower and plain, and in general the mould, richer and less sandy than the country above, though for want of inhabitants, and cultivation, it is mostly spread over with low thin woods.

From Mellone to Meachagang, a village containing about one hundred houses, on the West side of the river, I take to be about 35' SSW. Between these two places there has formerly been some towns and several villages, but now utterly ruined and void of a single inhabitant; The country in most, at least many, places hilly, and some of them, on the Western side, high, though there be many intervening vallies, some lying low, and fit for paddy: others higher, and is undoubtedly fine pasture land, being rich soil, and spontaneously producing: abundant herbage, trees and other plants, as nature has possessed it of, but it is rare to see between these two places a head of any sort of cattle, or any other mark of a country inhabited or cultivated, and in general it is very Woody.

From Meachagang to Camma, the course is about South by West 20'. Between these two places, there are two or three small villages, of ten or twenty houses each. The country is much the same as that between Mellone and Meachagang, or if it differs in any thing, it is for the better, being less hilly and rather thinner of woods. Camma is remarkable for the great quantities of twelve covit teak plank it produces.

From Camma to Prone the course is about South by West 15'; the country between these two Places, is very hilly, not inhabited, and indeed unfit for Agriculture, or even Pasturage.

Prone is seated on a broad level point, jetting out into the river, which runs back into a fine Champain country, of rich soil, well inhabited, and productive of much grain; it has the ruins of an old brick wall round it, and immediately without that, another with teak timber. It contains about 2500 Families, and is the place where is the most trade for all sorts of goods, particularly the chief commodities, as iron, lead, teethe wax, timber and plank, of any between Syrian and Ava.

Saladan lyes about SW 18' from Prone; the country, between these places, is level, of a rich mould, and naturally cherishes whatever is sown or planted, with care and culture; but at present abounds with no one particular thing. At the back of Saladan, which lyes on the West side of the river, about a day or two's journey, in the country, grows great quantities of teak timbers, which are brought thence by two little rivers, which come out near this Place. 'Tis from this, and Camma, that the Syrian market always has been supplied with these commodities.

Lundsey, or Yaoungmeoe, lyes on the West side of the river about 25' SSE of Saladan. It is walled in with timber, about eight hundred Paces long, and six hundred broad; and contains (the suburbs included) about two thousand families. The country on all sides of it, is exceeding even and of an excellent rich Soil, but in general woody, being but badly cultivated; it is not remarkable for any thing in particular, but there is notwithstanding something, of whatever the country produces, to be had here, and as to trade it seconds Prone.

From Lundsey, to the mouth of that river which leads to Negrais, the course is about South, 35'. Between these two places, there are two small villages, both on the western shoar; The country is even, and lower than that above it; however it is habitable, and not so thick of woods, as some other parts. The soil is exceeding good, and productive of good paddy: and indeed the whole country between Prone and this river's mouth, is a very fertile mould; being, in my opinion, the richest soil that I have seen, for so great a space together, in the whole country. From this place, where the Negrais River receives its source from that of Ava, it being exceeding crooked, I compute to be, by way of the river, to Pryggee about 110', and (according to computation one hundred) in a streight line SW 60'. The soil, between these places, is exceeding rich and productive of great quantities of grain, and

such fruits, &c. as they plant, it being in most places reasonably high; 'Tis as well inhabited, at this time, as any other part of the Country, that I have seen.

From Pryngee to Persaim, the land is much lower; yet many places habitable, though not now inhabited, and abundance of the land for paddy. I take the latter to lye from Pryngee SSW 45', direct distance.

Negrais I take to lye 45' in a line SSW from Persaim (Dalrymple note: Captain Baker having made a mistake, in casting up the Traverse of the courses and distances between Momchabue and Negrais, has obtained a false latitude of Momchabue; and has laid down his sketch of the river by this false latitude. I have thought it would be satisfactory to give Captain Baker's Traverse, as well as the positions, from his Traverse correct). The country, between these places, is so well known, it needs no Description of mine; and therefore I shall only say, that the first 10' below Persaim, is land exceedingly well situated for the growth of paddy, which is one commodity, if the place becomes inhabited, and the country enjoys peace, that will certainly be very cheap.

APPENDIX**[Captain Baker's Traverse]**

[Journey]	Course	Dist.	Dis. S	Lat. E	Depart. W
From Monchabue to Ava	S	45	45	--	--
Ava to Youngeoe	WSW	70	26,8	--	64,7
Youngeoe to Sallemew	SWbS	25	20,8	--	13,9
Sallemew to Raynangong	S	25	25	--	--
Raynangong to Mellone	SSW	35	32,3	--	13,4
Mellone to Meachagang	SSW	35	32,3	--	13,4
Meachagang to Cammah	SbW	20	18,8	--	6,8
Cammah to Prone	SbW	15	14,1	--	5,1
Prone to Saladan	SW	18	12,7	--	12,7
Saladan to Lundsey	SSE	25	23,1	9,6	--
Lundsey to Head of Negrais River	S	35	35	--	--
Head of Negrais River to Prygee	SW	60	42,4	--	42,4
Prygee to Persaim	SSW	45	41,6	--	17,2
Persaim to Negrais	SSW	45	41,6	--	17,2
[Total]			431,5	9,8	206,8
					9,6
					197,2

Difference of latitude between Negrais in		16.0N
And Momchabue	431' or	7.11
Latitude of Monchabue		23.11N
Ava lyes South of Monchabue		45
Latitude of Ava		22.26N