

JOURNEY OF MGR. LAMBERT, BISHOP OF BERITUS, FROM
TENASSERIM TO SIAM IN 1662.

by

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Being extracts translated from "Relation du voyage de Mgr de Béryste" in the Archives of the Missions Etrangères at Paris—Vol. 876, p. 117, and vol 121, p. 626.

The Bishop left Marseilles on 27th Nov. 1660 for China, accompanied by the Priests, James de Bourges and Francis Deydier. The party travelled overland from Alexandretta to Ormuz, and from Surat to Masulipatam. de Bourges kept a diary from which the following account is extracted.

Our ship did not reach Tenasserim before the 16th May 1662. On this day we disembarked and took up our quarters with the Portuguese Jesuit, Mr. John Cardoza, who had the kindness to send out his boat to bring us to the shore.

Next day we were permitted to unship our baggage. The Governor and his Officers subjected it to a very perfunctory examination, and contented themselves with demanding duties on some bone rosaries painted red, which they mistook for coral. The duties are charged at the rate of 8% ad valorem, instead of being estimated, as is done elsewhere.

We found that Fr. Cardoza was in charge of two Churches, pending the arrival of a successor to the second incumbent, who had died in January of that year. After staying two days with him, we took up our abode in the dead Priest's house, and stayed there for the remainder of our visit to Tenasserim.

(There follows an account of their religious occupations).

On the 30th June we set out on our journey to Ayu'ia, as they call the Chief City, which is known to us as Siam. Our transport consisted of three boats. Each boat had a crew of three men, and was protected with a palm-leaf covering. These boats are usually constructed in one piece out of the trunk of a tall tree of good proportions, at least 20 ft. long, hollowed out by fire; bulwarks are then attached to the sides. These boats are well adapted to use

on these swift streams, containing waterfalls and rapids, on which boats composed of more than a single length of timber would soon break up as a result of the rough treatment to which they are subjected.

We paid twelve Crowns (Ecu) for each boat. We did our cooking and slept in the boats on account of the tigers, elephants and other carnivorous beasts which abound in the forest. The forest covers both banks without a break; and it is therefore dangerous to go ashore.

Our progress up-stream was rendered tedious by the swiftness of the current and by the rapids which occurred at intervals. At these points the boatmen are obliged to go down into the river and to make use of their arms in order to lift the boats†. Some pull with ropes, while others propel the boats with long poles, or actually lift them up on their shoulders: so hard is it to stem the force of the current which rushes between the rocks with the strength of a mill-race. It occasioned the loss of the boat in which the Bishop and Fr. Deydier were travelling with the principle part of our baggage.

The boatmen, unable to make headway against the water, allowed the boat to drift: it was carried down stream, and smashed against a huge up-rooted tree lying in mid-current. Happily the Bishop caught on to this tree and had strength to clamber up and bestride it: he there had full time to watch the destruction of the boat and its contents. However, since the tree was a big one, its submerged branches caught up and sustained the major part of the luggage, most of which was salvaged, including the small case which contained our important papers.

The Bishop and the Priest remained for some time astride the tree-trunk, washed on both sides by the swift waters of the River. Providentially a boat was on its way down stream at the time: the Bishop made signs to it, and the boatmen agreed to take the two up to Jalinga, distant only three leagues.....

Our passports were among the things which we failed to retrieve. The Bishop's companion was therefore obliged to retrace

† i. e. (over the rocks).

his steps to Tenasserim in order to obtain new ones.

Eventually we rejoined forces at Jalinga, an ill-favoured village in a small but pleasant valley. We hired a bamboo house, roofed with leaf-thatch, which sufficed to protect us from the continuous rain.

Here we had leisure to make good the damage suffered by the articles which we had saved from the wreck.

We left Jalinga on the 27th July, and after three days march we reached the village of Menam, where we had to show our Tenasserim passports as well as those issued by the Headman of Jalinga.

On the road we experienced fresh difficulties, even worse than those we had experienced on the river. Our carts afforded us more torture than comfort; in fact, we were nearly always compelled to travel on foot. At its widest part, the body of these vehicles has a span of about three feet, and less at the extremities: into this space we had to pack ourselves. The body of the cart rests on a beam, which forms the axle between the two wheels; and when the unevenness of the road forces the wheels over onto one side, the cart then bumps along on the end of the axle instead of on the tyres. Furthermore, some part or other of the cart is always breaking and delaying the journey: consequently, we much preferred to brave the mud and the swift streams on foot.

Our carts served as a lodging at night. We often camped with water all around us. It was then that the leeches, which abound in that warm, damp soil, did battle with us, attacking us without respite and with such persistence that we were never able to prevent them from sucking our blood. We were also exposed to the wild beasts, which alarmed us in the day-time and which threatened us at night. To keep them off, we built a stockade every night, placing the cattle and baggage in the centre: the carts were drawn up around it in a circle or triangle, surrounded by several lines of prickly entanglements as a protection. We never passed a night without hearing Rhino and particularly Tigers prowling near us. The latter is such a deadly foe of cattle that our draught beasts were always in terror of its approach.

To ward off these beasts, we would let off guns and keep fires burning all night long, each man taking his turn at the watch.

All the same, we managed to sleep in the body of the cart without much more inconvenience than that occasioned by the cramped quarters. Thus by degrees we became accustomed to the fatigues and discomforts inseparable from our calling. Even by day we were not entirely free from anxiety caused by wild beasts, for the Elephants, which abound in Siam and are afraid of nothing, would occasionally cause us alarm.

On leaving Menam village, for the space of half a day, we descended a mountain side, which was so steep that we had to rope up the cart-wheels. Thereafter, we came into a very pleasant country, which seemed like a new world in comparison with the jungle we had just left,—so pure was the air, and so fertile the fields, which extended in an unbroken line of cultivation.....

Six days later we reached Couir (Koui), a small rectangular town, surrounded by a wooden palisade which encloses two hundred houses. Here we were again asked to show our passports, also two days later at Pram (Pran), a town which enjoys some trade by reason of its large river and proximity to the sea.

From Pram we reached Pipili (Petchaburi) in five days, arriving on 13th August..... Pipili is a big city with brick wallsThe following day we embarked in a boat chartered to carry us to Siam. (Ayut'ia).

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