

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04654-1 - Rough Notes of the Campaign in Sindh and Afghanistan, in 1838–9

James Outram

Excerpt

[More information](#)

CAMPAIGN

IN

SINDE AND AFFGHANISTAN,

IN 1838—39.

CHAPTER I.

SINDE.

HAVING been permitted to volunteer for service, during the approaching Campaign, which has for its object the restoration of Shah Shooja ool Moolk to the throne of Cabul, and being appointed Extra Aid-de-Camp to Lieut.-General Sir John Keane, K. C. B., G. C. H., I embarked on the 21st November, 1838, on board the Semiramis steamer, at Bombay, with His Excellency and suite.—22d. Delayed in the middle ground till 2 P. M. for new hawsers to replace others carried away in towing our convoy, the Taptee brig, and two boats.—27th. In the morning passed

B 2

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04654-1 - Rough Notes of the Campaign in Sindh and Afghanistan, in 1838–9

James Outram

Excerpt

[More information](#)

the *Hannah* and *Syden*, transports, and at midday anchored off the Hujamree mouth of the Indus. Found Major-General Willshire and a portion of the first Brigade already there, also Her Majesty's 18-gun brig *Cruizer*, the Company's brig of war *Palinurus*, and the schooner *Constance*.—28th. A portion of the troops sent up the river to the encamping ground near *Vikur*, twenty miles. Lieutenant *Eastwick*, Assistant to Colonel *Pottinger*, Resident in Sindh, arrived from thence, representing that no preparations whatever had been made by the Ameer of Sindh for transporting the troops, or provisioning them.—29th. Dispatched by the Commander-in-Chief, in the *Constance* schooner, on a mission to *Cutch*, to procure assistance in land and water carriage.—30th. Boarded two horse boats belonging to the Horse Artillery.

1st December. Anchored at midnight off *Mandavie*.—2d. Landed in the morning, and found Captain *Ward*, one of the Resident's Assistants, at the Palace; arranged with him for the dispatch to the Army of boats, forage, and sheep; in the evening left for *Bhoj*; travelled there on camels and horseback.—3d. Arrived at *Bhoj* at daybreak, forty miles: arranged with Captain *Melville*, Assistant Resident in charge, for the supply of five hundred additional camels, five hundred having already been sent off via *Luckput*, and four hundred pack bullocks to be shipped at *Mandavie*. Visited the *Rao* at noon to convey Sir *John Keane's* remembrances and good wishes, and received cordial messages from His Highness in reply. In the evening departed on

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04654-1 - Rough Notes of the Campaign in Sindh and Afghanistan, in 1838–9

James Outram

Excerpt

[More information](#)

return to Mandavie.—4th. Breakfasted with Captain Ward at Mandavie; found that twenty-two boats had been dispatched the day before with forage and sheep; engaged more boats for the conveyance of pack bullocks, and to tow the Mootnee Indus boat, which, as she was lying useless at Mandavie, I took upon myself to place in requisition. Sailed in the evening.—5th. Passed the anchorage off the Hujamree, but not in sight.—6th. At sunset anchored off Curachee, a port in Sindh, sixty miles north-west of the Hujamree mouth.

7th. In the evening went on shore in a native boat, without servants or baggage of any kind, having sent back the *Constance* to the Hujamree, determining myself to go overland to camp, and hoping to excite confidence by displaying it in thus going totally unattended,—my object being ostensibly merely to look after camels, but in reality also to feel the temper of the natives, and to endeavour to ascertain the actual intentions of their rulers. Put up in the house of a wealthy Banian, whom I knew to be in our interests.—The Hakim (Governor) of Curachee, hearing of my arrival, intimated his expectation that I should visit him, but I answered that as I was the representative of the British General, he must come to me if he wished to see me. He came accordingly to inquire my object, and I replied, that it was to see whether the collection of camels, as promised by the Ameers, was really in progress: found, however, after much conversation, that no such directions had been given by the Ameers, but that a friendly Banian, named

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04654-1 - Rough Notes of the Campaign in Sinde and Affghanistan, in 1838–9

James Outram

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Nao-Mull, had gone in person to Gharry-Kote, half way to the British camp, to exert his influence in our behalf: gave the Hakim to understand that I should acquaint Colonel Pottinger with his masters' falsehood, and informed him that their backwardness in affording aid must turn to their own disadvantage, by detaining the force so much longer in their country, or by compelling us to help ourselves; that our immediate object was to join the Bengal Army at Shikarpore, and that it obviously was the interest of the Sinde Government to facilitate our advance.

8th. The principal inhabitants called together by the Hakim, to consult what was to be done in consequence of my presence, and the communication I had made; and also to deliberate on a letter received last night from the Ameers, stating that the sirdars dispatched by them to the British camp, to compliment the Commander-in-Chief, had there received information, that forty thousand troops were about to follow the present force for the purpose of forcibly occupying Sinde. It appeared they were much puzzled how to act, and one of the party was deputed to question me in the hope of ascertaining our real intentions: I confined my conversation with him, however, to a simple denial of the report that forty thousand men were coming, reiterating my injunctions to expedite the collection of the necessary carriage. The public consultation terminated at last in a resolution not to molest our agent in his exertions to procure camels, although it was decided that no aid was to be given him without orders from the Ameers. Nao-Mull's brother subsequently suc-

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04654-1 - Rough Notes of the Campaign in Sindh and Afghanistan, in 1838–9

James Outram

Excerpt

[More information](#)

ceeded in collecting a few camels on the spot, and dispatched his emissaries to engage others, expecting in two or three days to complete about three hundred at Curachee, which I directed to be sent after me without delay.

9th. Departed soon after midnight from Curachee, accompanied by Sookram, one of Nao-Mull's brothers, he and his servant, and a camel-man and myself mounted on two camels. About 4 A. M. it became so cold as to compel us to dismount and spread our beds in the jungle till the sun rose, when we resumed our journey, and travelled till midday; then dismounted for half-an-hour to rest the camels, which were miserable brutes. In the evening arrived at Gharry-Kote, where I found Nao-Mull surrounded by Beloche camel drivers, whom he was endeavouring to persuade to join the English. He was much surprised to see a British officer, no warning having been given him of my approach, but immediately took advantage of my presence to appeal to me for confirmation of the terms he had promised to the camel-men, which I at once assured them would be scrupulously fulfilled by the Commander-in-Chief. On receiving this assurance, they declared themselves satisfied, and expressed their determination to join the British camp immediately. Accordingly, they left that night for the purpose, with three hundred camels, two hundred more being expected by Nao-Mull next day.

The road from Curachee to Gharry-Kote is a sandy plain almost the whole way, generally perfectly bare, but occasionally varied by tamarisk jungle,

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04654-1 - Rough Notes of the Campaign in Sinde and Affghanistan, in 1838–9

James Outram

Excerpt

[More information](#)

bordering the dry beds of rivers, which are filled only in the rains, although water can be obtained in them by digging a foot or two deep in the sand. The sea is visible nearly the whole way. A branch of the Indus runs past Gharry-Kote, navigable up to that place, but not beyond it for boats of considerable size. The distance from Curachee I should estimate at about forty miles, having occupied our camels nearly twelve hours, at an average pace of about three-and-a-half miles per hour. About half way is a low stony range of undulating ground, scattered with Mahomedan tombs, over a distance of two miles, and said to be the remains of a Mahomedan camp, of which I found no other traces. The tombs were very numerous, and generally well constructed of cut stone, but of small size. At about two miles from Gharry-Kote, I went off the road a few hundred yards to inspect the ruins of a city covering a low hill; edging the river for about a quarter of a mile, the foundations of walls, bastions, and houses, can be distinctly traced, and appear very ancient. Coins are frequently washed up in the rains: the name given by my guide was 'Bamboora.'

Late at night I was visited by the brother, Kumr Ali, of a chief, styled Meer Ali, the Jam of the tribe of Jokeas, whose possessions are held on the tenure of furnishing twelve thousand fighting men to the state in times of war. After some general conversation in the usual style,* my visitor whispered to

* "The propensity of the Sindian courtiers to flatter strangers, and even each other, is ludicrous to a European. Scarcely two persons of the higher rank ever met together

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04654-1 - Rough Notes of the Campaign in Sindh and Afghanistan, in 1838–9

James Outram

Excerpt

[More information](#)

me that, understanding I was an officer in the confidence of the British General, he was anxious to make a certain secret communication, and that he proposed leaving with me a person in his confidence for that purpose until all others should have withdrawn. The chief's Deewan, or Secretary, waited accordingly, and when all the rest were gone, showed me certain documents bearing the seals of the Ameers, and of considerable importance, as displaying their real intentions and treachery. These were offered for the inspection of Colonel Pottinger on certain conditions, with permission to that gentleman to copy them after ascertaining their authenticity; the chief giving as a cause for his faithlessness to his sovereigns, that he had been despoiled and injured by the present dynasty. To this communication I merely gave answer, that I should see Colonel Pottinger next day, when I would communicate the chief's wish and information.

10th. At 6 A. M. left Gharry-Kote, and travelled without any intermission till 9 P. M., a distance of forty-five miles, estimating an average of about three miles per hour; the camels latterly being completely knocked up, and one of them giving in about three miles from camp, and not overtaking us till next day. This day the whole route lay across the Delta of the Indus, being generally covered with tamarisk jungle of the most luxurious growth, and with another

in my presence, without bespattering each other with the most fulsome compliments, and both joining in exalting me to the skies by the most far-fetched and hyperbolic praises.”
—*Dr. Burnes' Visit to Sindh.*

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04654-1 - Rough Notes of the Campaign in Sinde and Affghanistan, in 1838–9

James Outram

Excerpt

[More information](#)

shrub, a most favourite food for camels, which are seen grazing on it in great numbers. The country is intersected by dry artificial canals every three or four hundred yards, which I was informed had had no water in them for the last three or four years, in consequence of one of the branches of the Indus which supplied them having altered its course. At about ten miles from Gharry-Kote, and opposite to a small village called Meerpore, the ruins of a city were pointed out to me some distance off the road, which I had not time to visit; it is called 'Mouj-durria,' and said to be Mahomedan, of much greater extent and in better preservation than Bamboora.*

At about thirty miles distance from Gharry-Kote, passed the 'Bogaur' branch of the Indus, a stream running at the rate of about three miles an hour, four

* It is probable that these ancient cities, and also the one subsequently mentioned on the 28th January, are the same as those referred to by Dr. Burnes in the first portion of the following extract. The town of Meerpoor, which he mentions, is different from that referred to in the text, and on the eastern side of the Indus. "From a similar change in the course of the Indus, the ancient cities of Debal Sindy, which occupied a site between Kurachee and Tatta, and of Braminabad or Kullan Kote, which was near the latter place, were also deserted, although at what date it is difficult to surmise, leaving scarcely a wreck behind. At Shahkapoor, a populous village in the vicinity of Meerpoor, are still to be seen the remains of an extensive fort and city, said to have been the residence of Dahooda Rai, the last of the Soomra Princes, who flourished about the year one thousand and three hundred of our era. The bricks which form part of these ruins are of large dimensions, measuring twenty inches by eight."—*Visit to Sinde*.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04654-1 - Rough Notes of the Campaign in Sind and Affghanistan, in 1838-9

James Outram

Excerpt

[More information](#)

hundred yards broad, and up to the camel's girth at low water, the tide there appearing to rise about two or three feet: passed many villages—generally small hamlets. On this day's route, there was also considerable cultivation, principally of sugar cane, and an oil plant, the latter highly enjoyed by camels. At about four miles from the cantonment of our army, which is situated on the Hujamree mouth of the Indus, near Vikkur, or, as it is called, Ghorabaree, and about twenty miles above the anchorage at the river's mouth, the tamarisk jungle ceases, and the country becomes quite open, and pretty well cultivated, being intersected by numerous canals supplied by the Hujamree.

The road from Curachee to our camp may be estimated at about ninety-five miles; it could only be passed by small detachments of troops, owing to the scarcity of water in some parts, especially the first portion of the road; at this season, no grass or forage whatever for horses or cattle is to be found, although I was told that there is no scarcity in usual seasons. Judging from the remains of deserted towns and dry canals, the country appears to have fallen from a state of much greater prosperity than it now enjoys: this is attributed to the despotic government of the Ameers, which encourages neither trade nor manufactures, and the populace appeared by no means sorry to hail the arrival of Englishmen among them, except when in the presence of the Beloche officials, before whom they dared not display any such feeling. The latter would willingly have given evidence of their dislike to us, had they not been uncertain what

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04654-1 - Rough Notes of the Campaign in Sindh and Afghanistan, in 1838–9

James Outram

Excerpt

[More information](#)

course the Ameers intended to pursue, and therefore feared to commit them. On the whole, however, I had no great incivility to complain of, and experienced no difficulties of any consequence in passing through the country. The luxuriant tamarisk jungles, covering the great portion of the Delta, would afford an inexhaustible supply of excellent fuel for steamers, should they be established on the Indus.

11th. Inspected the camp, which occupies a space of upwards of a mile in length, and half as much in breadth, its rear being protected by the river, and the front flanks by canals containing good water: found all the troops assembled, except the 1st Cavalry, Auxiliary Horse, and a portion of the Grenadiers. Few of the Dragoon horses had arrived, however, and none of the artillery stores are yet brought up from the anchorage,—casualties since the troops left Bombay being four or five Europeans, and about twenty horses, sixteen of the latter having been lost in a boat wrecked on the bar. The camp healthy.—12th to 14th. Landing stores, the Grenadier Regiment, and the Dragoon horses, which are now complete.

15th. Nao-Mull arrived in camp, accompanied by Kumr Ali: says he has prepared in all one thousand camels: those from Cutch have not yet arrived, owing to the refusal of the Ameer of Meerpore to allow them to pass, and they are consequently coming on by a more circuitous route. The information received through Nao-Mull confirms the report of the Ameers' preparations for resistance, should certain stipulations be insisted on, which are to be enforced