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MADRAS RECORD OFFICE

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS

Revenue DEPARTMENT

G.O. No.
B.P. No.

373

~~Press~~
Mis.

Dated

10-2-1876

196.

Not to be folded or roughly handled

1/373

No. 2,041.

From Surgeon-Major J. SHORTT, M.D.,
Inspector of Vaccination, Madras Presidency,
To H. E. STOKES, Esq.,
Acting Secretary to the Board of Revenue.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to submit to the Board a report on the lists of snakes received from the different Collectorates in this Presidency during the past year.

2. Whilst a few of the lists contained some valuable information, and the correct designations of the poisonous and non-poisonous species, others had fanciful vernacular names of snakes said to be poisonous. From a few districts specimens were received which enabled me to distinguish the different species. I have redistributed all of these to the Medical College and the Government Central Museum.

3. I now subjoin a list of the poisonous snakes common in this Presidency, with such of their vernacular names as could be ascertained, and it will be seen that many different designations are given to the same species. This, no doubt, has led to the belief among natives of the country that there is in Southern India a very large number of poisonous snakes. A careful inquiry reduces the poisonous

- * 1. Naga Tripudians or Cobra.
- 2. Bungarus Ceruleus.
- 3. Daboia Elegans.
- 4. Echis Carinota.

species to about eight. The four noted on the margin* are the most common in the different districts of this Presidency, and of these the first three are the most deadly, and occasion the chief mortality. The other four poisonous snakes† rarely cause deaths. They are never met with in the vicinity of inhabited

- † 1. Ophiophagus Elaps.
- 2. Bungarus faciatus.
- 3. Trimesurus (several varieties).
- 4. Hypnale Nepa.

villages, but restrict their movements to the jungles and hills of hilly districts. They are found chiefly in South Canara and in the Northern Provinces.

4. Sea-snakes are very poisonous, but along the Eastern Coast the *Enhydrina Bengalensis*, or Vala Kadyen, seems to occasion the chief mortality among fishermen and boatmen.

5. The list now sent is still, as regards vernacular names, incomplete, the absence of specimens making it impossible to identify the snakes alluded to in many of the received lists. Imperfect as it is, however, the present list may be relied on as correct.

6. I beg to enclose colored drawings of all the poisonous snakes I have as yet been able to distinguish. I think it would be well to have copies made, and largely distributed, of the four snakes common to all the districts; copies of the four rarer species might also be distributed in the particular provinces they inhabit. There would be no difficulty also in preserving specimens of the poisonous snakes in spirits and lodging them in some prominent places in the chief market towns. Duplicate copies of the accompanying drawings might perhaps be made in the School of Arts; but, if the Board find any difficulty in that, I have ascer-

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tained that an artist will make as many copies as may be required at a charge of one rupee per copy.

7. A general impression prevails that the natives know little of snakes or of their names. They do fail to distinguish the poisonous from the non-poisonous species, and the names in use may differ in each district. Many of the vernacular designations are, however, very appropriate to the species indicated, but unfortunately the mythology, superstition, and mystery of the Hindu races have led to many imaginary names and attributes being given to snakes. I have met with natives who could give a correct and expressive name to each snake, though even with them their poisonous qualities were invariably exaggerated, and both natives and Europeans class many innocuous snakes as poisonous.

8. Surgeon-Major Nicholson, in a treatise on Ophiology, derides the idea of exterminating snakes, first, on the score of expense and, secondly, from his belief as to the impossibility, and he contrasts the mortality of snake-bite with that of dog-bite resulting in hydrophobia. The mortality from snake-bite and dog-bite cannot, however, be put in comparison, for the hydrophobia cases to which he draws attention chiefly occur among the European races, and are not caused by stray dogs, but by pets kept by the Europeans themselves. What with unnatural food and habits such dogs often become mad and bite their owners. Hydrophobia is not of frequent occurrence among the natives of the country, though every village and hamlet is filled with pariah dogs. Snake-bite with natives has quite different features. The people go about almost unclad, and while engaged in their usual avocations, or in moving abroad during the night, are bitten and die. Owing to the religious mystery enshrouding every snake, and knowing well the cunning and rapidity with which snakes conceal themselves after giving the death-wound, the friends of the injured persons make no exertions to hunt up or destroy the snake, but resort to charms, or the victims submit, as they say, to their fate. But, I believe, if an inducement be offered in the shape of a small sum of money, that entire communities will soon be engaged in the search for, and destruction of, the poisonous species. The most recent information shows that one out of every 5,000 human beings in this country is yearly destroyed by snake-bite, and this mortality need not be.

9. Admitting that the number of poisonous snakes is great, also that they are widespread and increase rapidly, still a systematic plan for their destruction, persistently carried out, must, as I believe, end, if not in their exterminations, at least in a vast reduction of their numbers. As the case now stands, a greater number of deaths is produced by these poisonous reptiles than by wild beasts.

10. I would only add further that in localities infested with snakes the breeding of poultry should be encouraged, more especially the guinea-fowl; pea-fowl should be domesticated, and the common hedge-crow, or crow-pheasant, or *kallikaka*, which is often wantonly destroyed by natives, should be protected.

11. Destruction or extermination of the snakes should be carried out chiefly during the pairing and breeding season in the months of May, June, July, and August.

ENCLOSURE No. 1.

A List of Poisonous Snakes with their Vernacular Names.

Scientific Name.	English Name.	Tamil Name.	Telugu Name.	Hindustani Name.	Canarese Name.
Naga Tripudians.	Cobra	Naga or Nella Pamboo. Nagam.	Munchie Naga. Thachu Pam-moo. Thusta Pam-moo. Thati Burugu.	Nag Samp...	Chatti Candodi. Rakta Candodi. Nagar Han. Naga Sarpa. Kadabalaka. Balevadaka. Balehan Han.
Bungarus Arcuatus.	Bungarus, or White-arched Bungarus.	Yannai or Pannay Vyrien. Kundum Karuvashalay. Viriyan. Punhari Pamboo.		Krait. ...	
Daboia Elcgans.	Russels Viper. Chain do. Cobra Manilha. Tie Polanga ...	Kattri Vyrien. Kajuthee do. Seegootu do. Iratta do. Shev do. Kolli do. Shevuttu do. Changili do. Peru do. Kannadi do. Peru Kunnadi Vyrien.	Katuku Re-kula Poda. Peda Pinjara. Puli Pinjara. Ruktha do. In Kistnaalso Kutlapurugu.	Ulloo Bora. Jesser.	Kudralu, or Kolaka Kunnadi. Raktamizali. Chattemundli Han. Tavadu Kunnadi Han.
Echis Carinata.	The Carpet Viper. Asp.	Seru Suratay Pamboo. Kutta Vyrien. Shuruta do. Pul do. Kuru do. Shiru do. Kayattu do. Nedu do. Murukku do.	Suratay Pam-moo.	Afae	Tavadu hapa-laka. Midi kudralu. Tavodu kamadi.
Elaps Ophiophagus.	The Hamadryad or Hill Cobra.	Not known.	Veiragu ...	Not known.	Not known.
Bungarus Senafaciatu.	Yellow-banded Bungarus.	Do. ...	Bungaram Pam-moo.	Do. ...	Do.
Hypnale Nepa		Do. ...	Not known.	Do. ...	Chatti Kandodi. Kan-
Trimesurus.		Do. ...	Do. ...	Do. ...	nadi. Rakta Kunnadi. Nettra Kunnadi. Chatte Kunnadi Han.

MADRAS,
8th March 1875.

(Signed) JOHN SHORTT, M.D., Surgeon-Major,
Inspector of Vaccination, Madras Presidency.

3/373

No. 3,406.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF REVENUE, dated 22nd December 1875.

Read the following letter from Captain C. SARGEANT, Assistant Superintendent, for Superintendent, Revenue Survey, to H. E. STOKES, Esq., Acting Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated Chepauk, 22nd November 1875, No. 3,452/156.

With reference to G.O., No. 1,204, of the 11th August 1875, sanctioning the cost of 3,000 colored copies of the twelve drawings of snakes, I have the honor to forward 250 copies each of the twelve drawings colored, with a bill for Rupees 900.

2. The work was given out on contract.

ORDERED that the 250 sets of twelve drawings of snakes received with the foregoing letter be distributed as follows, and that a bill of the cost be prepared and sent to the Accountant-General for payment:—

To Collectors, at 6 each	...	...	...	...	...	...	126
Surgeon-General, Indian Medical Department, for distribution to Zillah	...	...	...	...	...	...	110
Surgeons, &c.	...	...	...	...	...	...	3
Dr. Shortt	...	...	...	...	...	...	10
Government	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
For Record	...	...	...	...	...	...	250
							250

* 8th March 1875, No. 2,041.

2. Ordered also that the report* of Dr. Shortt on the subject be reprinted and distributed with the drawings.

(A true Copy and Extract.)

W. J. Lewis
Acting Sub-Secretary.

To the Secretary to Government, Revenue Department,
with 10 copies of Dr. Shortt's report,
and 10 sets of drawings.

„ all Collectors, with 6 do. and 6 do. to each,
also copies of G.O., dated 8th June 1875, No. 893,
and 2nd August 1875, No. 1,204.

„ the Surgeon-General, Indian Medical Department,
with 110 do. and 110 do. also do. do.

To Surgeon-Major J. Shortt, M.D., with 3 do. and 3 do. also copy
of G. O., dated 2nd August 1875, No. 1,204.

Copy to the Superintendent of Revenue Survey.

Exd. W. J. Lewis.

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11 August 1938-77

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Revenue 1875, defects

Board of Revenue,
MADRAS.

PROCEEDINGS, 22ND DECEMBER 1875, No. 3,406.

Dates Dec 1936

Encl. 10

Received 7. 12/36

DECEMBER.
No. 3,406.

Snakes — of the several districts of the
Madras Presidency. — Distributing 250 sets of
twelve drawings of — with Dr. Shortt's report
on the subject.

240373
Lodged

10. 12/36

[Faint signature]