

HLAING RIVER

It has been supposed that it acts as a sort of escape channel for the flood waters of the Naweng when ponded back by an unusual rise of the Irrawaddy and even that it is an old channel of the Irrawaddy itself but now cut off by an alluvial bar, but there is a sufficient rise in the intervening country to form a watershed between this sluggish river and the eddying volume of the Naweng in flood which sweeps past it a few miles to the north.

On leaving the Engma lake, which it enters as the 'Zay', it continues its southward course as the 'Myit-ma- kha', traverses the Henzada district east of and almost parallel to the Irrawaddy and enters the Rangoon district at Myit-kyo.

In the north it is separated from the Irrawaddy by a line of low hills covered with Eng forest which ends a little above the latitude of Myanong. Below this it is connected with the Irrawaddy by numerous creeks which increase in size and importance towards the south. From Tsan-rwe, where it receives the Thoon-tshay from the east, it is navigable upwards at all seasons as far as Ta-pwon, the water being never less than three feet deep, but the channel is in many places choked with jungle. Small boats ascend even as far as Eng-ma with cargoes of salt, ngapee and other goods.

Owing to the numerous shoals it is impracticable for steamers even of light draught above Tsan-rwe where its width is 180 yards its depth four feet, the bed sandy and the tidal rise 21 feet. Below Tsan-rwe it continues between high sandy banks to about 17° 15' N., where the Bhaw-lay, with a mouth about 120 yards broad, leaves it to the west.

A little lower its banks gradually sink and assume the appearance characteristic of those of a tidal stream in the delta, abrupt and steep for a few feet from the top and below high water mark shelving and muddy, the crest either bare or hidden by overhanging shrubs with their lower branches and branchlets washed by the tide and covered with brown slime which, as the water falls, dries into a dirty grey.

Large trees such as the Mango and Htien disappear and are succeeded by Lamoo and other timber which thrives in brackish water. The waters have no longer a semblance even of transparency but are thick and muddy every stroke of the oar sending the earthy particles swirling in distinct eddies.

A very little north of the 17th parallel the Bhaw-lay, here called the Kook-ko, joins it again and it then widens considerably. Three miles lower it suddenly spreads out to a breadth of several miles and its course is divided by two main islands into three channels; of these the eastern is the deepest and the one most generally used by boats and always by the river steamers which reach the Irrawaddy during the rains through the Kook-ko. Up to 1874 the route was through the Pan-hlaing further south, but this is gradually silting up.

The western channel is shallow and considerably larger whilst the central is still shallower and so filled with sand banks that, except at high water, it is barely navigable even by a canoe.

The two main islands, one on each side of this central channel, are gradually enlarging by accretion: that on the east now contains about sixty acres and that on the west about eighty. Above there is a small round island formerly containing from fifteen to twenty acres, but the banks are steep and fall in every year and its area is now only about five. Below the two main islands is another, larger than either, which has increased and is still increasing in the same way as they are. Just above Rangoon the river is joined by the Pan-hlaing from the westward and sweeping round the town towards the east it is joined by the Pegu and the Poo-zwon-doung when, turning south again, it flows on for 21 miles through an ever-widening- channel and falls into the Gulf of Martaban in Lat. 16° 28' N. Long. 96° 20' E. through a mouth three miles broad.

The land at the entrance is low and for the most part covered with jungle to the water's edge forming dense mangrove and tidal forests.

Owing to the great rise and fall of the tide and to the velocity of the tidal stream the water, even far out to seaward, is charged with a large quantity of deposit, causing the river to present a deep yellow hue. At the mouth it is high water, at full and change of the moon, at 3 hrs. 15 mins. : the springs rise 21 feet and neaps 13 feet.

It is navigable to Rangoon by large ships, which, however, have to wait for flood tide to cross the Hastings, a shoal formed just above the united mouths of the Pegu and Poo-zwon-doung rivers

In the rains it is navigable for 80 miles above Rangoon by ships of 500 tons burden. The channel up to Rangoon is winding and difficult.