

A POPULAR VIEW:

One view, two artists, eight patterns

by Michael Sack

The city of Kanpur, on the Ganges River in Uttar Pradesh state in northern India, has grown from a small town in the late 1700s to a city of around three million in 2018. It has gone through at least eleven name changes but is known to transferware collectors by two of them: Khanpore and Cawnpore, both spellings given to the place by the English. The city is known primarily for its role in the Indian Mutiny of 1857, when a large number of English residents were brutally killed by the Sepoy mutineers. Nowadays it is distinguished as the sixth most polluted city in India due to its lack of sewage treatment and its large number of tanneries which dump animal body parts and tanning chemicals directly into the Ganges.

Back in the early 1800s, before the mutiny, two artists, both military men, journeyed along the river and made sketches which were later engraved and published in two books. The first artist was Lt. Col. Charles Ramus Forrest, whose book *A Picturesque Tour along the Rivers Ganges and Jumna in India* came out in 1824. The book has two sections, one of which is a history of India from practically the beginning of time up to 1788, and the other is essentially a travelogue illustrated with twenty-six hand-colored aquatints. The book was published in London by Rudolf Ackermann, a German-born English publisher noted for his high-quality books, including other illustrated books about rivers such as the Rhine and Thames. One of the aquatints in this book (Figure 1) shows a view titled “Surseya Ghaut, Khanpore”. Currently the city is called Kanpur, and the ghat, or ghat – a series of steps leading down to the river – is called Sarsaiya (Figure 14).

The second artist to visit and record the place was Capt. Robert Elliot, R.N.,



Figure 1. “Surseya Ghaut, Khanpore” Charles Ramus Forrest. Engraved by Thomas Sutherland.

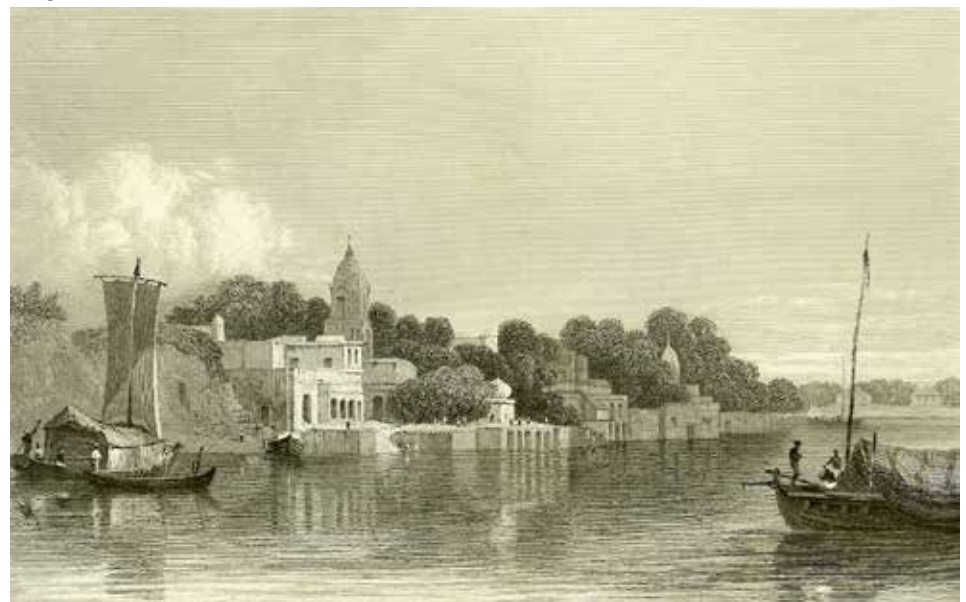


Figure 2. “Cawnpore” Sketched by Capt. Robert Elliot, R.N. Drawn by S. Prout. Engraved by C. Mottram.

R.N., whose book *Views in the East* was published in London in 1833 by H. (Henry) Fisher, Son & Co.. His black and white engraving of Surseya Ghaut (Figure 2) is simply titled “Cawnpore”.

Since there was no effective

copyright law in England until 1842, anyone could copy published pictures such as these, and potters in Britain copied away. Elements of twenty-two prints from the Forrest book and fifteen from the Elliot book found their way onto transferware

patterns. By clicking on the blue highlighted title of these books in the Transferware Collectors Club database, one can see all of the prints and all of the patterns. As far as Indian scenes are concerned, no place was represented more frequently than this one place on the Ganges, never mind the more picturesque and impressive monuments such as the Taj Mahal or Akbar's Tomb which potters could have chosen. So far, eight different patterns based on these two prints by seven makers have shown up, along with two patterns repeated in a different color and one vignette based on a tiny portion of a print.

As used by collectors, the term "series" refers to a group of pieces, such as a dinner service, which share the same border, but have a different central pattern on each piece. John Hall & Sons produced, as part of their dark blue "Oriental Scenery" series made for the American market, a 16½" x 13"



Figure 3. Oriental Scenery series, John Hall & Sons. "Surseya Ghaut Khanpore"

(42cm x 33cm) platter (Figure 3). This is the most faithful reproduction of the Forrest source print and the only one beside the Parrot Border example on a 10" (27cm) soup plate (Figure 4) that includes the birds (storks?) at the bottom right. Each

potter applied his own artistic license to the pattern, and it is possible that some copied from other potters rather than from the original source print.

In the "Oriental Scenery Cartouche" series, so called in order to distinguish it from the very similar mark of the John Hall & Sons series, the 10¼" (26cm) soup plate (Figure 5) repeats the main building and boats from the John Hall example (Figure 3) but omits everything else. Another dark blue series made for the American market is the "Flower Panel Border" series, with many Indian scenes. Surseya Ghaut shows up on a 7½" (19cm) plate (Figure 6)

The John Hall & Sons "Oriental Scenery" series includes a vegetable tureen (Figure 7) on the lid of which are two identical vignettes showing a tiny portion of the scene copied from the Forrest print. The tureen and lid also copy elements from several other prints in the Forrest book. The mark relates to the pattern on the inside of the base of the tureen.



Figure 4. Parrot Border series, maker unknown. "Surseya Ghaut Khanpore"



Figure 5. "Oriental Scenery Cartouche" series, maker unknown. "Surseya Ghaut Khanpore"



Thomas and Benjamin Godwin produced a dinner service which bears pattern names on individual pieces and is sometimes called the "Indian Scenery" series by collectors. Surseya Ghaut appears on a 10" (25.5cm) soup plate printed in blue (Figure 8) and a 10 3/8" (26.5cm) plate (Figure 9) in a greenish-black color.

Thomas and Benjamin Godwin created another pattern with a view

of Surseya Ghaut, but it is based on the Elliot print (Figure 2) and titled "Cawnpore Bengal". At the time, Bengal was a province as large as France, including Cawnpore and even Calcutta. It appears on a 10 5/8" x 8 5/8" (27cm x 22cm) platter (Figure 10) printed in an olive green that differs from the greenish-black used on their plate shown in Figure 9. It's a rare case for a potter to make two differ-

ent views of the same place using two different sources. The Godwins made other patterns based on Elliot prints, so it seems that they would have been aware of the duplication.

Thomas and John Carey produced a series titled "Indian Temples". Of the seven patterns recorded so far, one has an unidentified European view, and the rest have Indian scenes, not all of them identified. Their ver-



Figure 6. "Flower Panel Border" series, maker unknown (No mark).



Figure 7. John Hall & Sons. "Oriental Scenery" series.



Figure 8. Thomas & Benjamin Godwin. "Surseya Ghaut Khanpore"



Figure 9. Thomas & Benjamin Godwin. "Surseya Ghaut Khanpore"

sion of "Cawnpore", based on the Elliot print, is on a 10½" (26.5cm) soup plate, known in both blue (Figure 11) and purple (Figure 12). The Carey name is omitted from the mark on the purple example.

A series titled "Indian Scenery" by an unknown maker sometimes using the initial "JC below the Indian Scenery mark includes a scene based on the Elliot print "Cawnpore" on an 8¾" (22cm) plate (Figure 13). The mark on this example doesn't show the initials at the bottom, but they may have been unintentionally cut off when the transfer was applied. ■



Figure 10. Thomas & Benjamin Godwin. "Cawnpore Bengal"

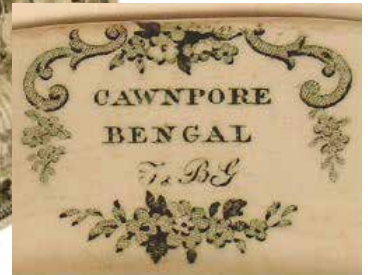


Figure 11. Thomas & John Carey. "Indian Temples"



Figure 12. Thomas & John Carey. "Indian Temples"



Figure 13. Indian Scenery series, maker unknown



Figure 14. Sarsaiya Ghat in the 21st Century