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TIPPOO SULTAN - THE MAN AND THE BEAST

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ABSTRACT: The ship Bengal landed in Philadelphia in June 1821 from Calcutta. Included in its cargo was a male elephant described by a newspaper as being of "uncommon size, color and beauty." (Anonymous, 1821a). It was the third male elephant to reach America and is known to us today as Tippoo Sultan. Columbus was the first male to reach these shores, and he did so in 1817. In November 1819, Horatio was unloaded from the ship of the same name. Horatio fell through a bridge in September 1820, thus when Tippoo Sultan landed he was one of two males in the country. The males had been preceded by three females: the Crowninshield import of 1795; "Old Bet," imported by Edward Savage in 1804; and "Little Bet," imported by Hachaliah Bailey and his partners in 1817. None of these females was very large. (See also Elephant, 2(1):235-237 about first elephants). Columbus and Tippoo Sultan were both over eight feet in height and in advertisements their size was always featured.

We do not know who it was that imported Tippoo Sultan, but we do know that he was not given that name at once. He was initially exhibited as a single attraction at the Black Horse Inn in Philadelphia on July 18, 1821, under the name Tippoo Saib (Anonymous, 1821b). We find him with that name in Georgetown, D.C. in October and in Frederick, Maryland in November. He was added to an existing menagerie in Baltimore in December, 1821, where his name was not advertised, he being described as "the largest male elephant in America" (Anonymous, 1821c). However, in early May 1822, the menagerie moved to 462 Broadway in New York and it was here that he was referred to by the name he carried to his death, Tippoo Sultan.

The use of the two names, Tippoo Saib and Tippoo Sultan, makes sense to us when we realize that they are from the same source and were two versions of a man's name. Tippoo Sultan was the Sultan of Mysore, an Indian state, from 1782 to 1799. Tippoo is eighteenth-century usage; today the word is translated as "Tipu", it means tiger in the Canarese language.

Elephants exhibited in America in the first half of the nineteenth century had names derived from ships (Columbus, Horatio, Helen McGregor), from antiquity (Hannibal, Virginius) and from history (Pizarro, Bolivar). Of those possibly named after persons (the two Bettys, Caroline, Flora and Ann) we do not know whose wives or daughters were being honored. However, with Tippoo Sultan, Hyder Ali (imported 1832) and Tippoo Saib (imported 1840) we have the only instance of three elephant names derived from one human family.

Hyder Ali (1722-1782) was a man of humble birth, who rose through the ranks of the army and, apparently with some piratical assistance, made

himself Sultan of Mysore. He fought the British twice in the First and Second Mysore Wars. He was a dedicated Anglophobe, apparently because of constant British pressure on his personal expansionistic ambitions. He successfully transmitted his hatred of the English to his son, Tippoo Saib or Tippoo Sultan. The son also involved himself in two wars against the English, in 1790 and 1799. He was the loser in both confrontations and was killed in his palace at the conclusion of the second war.

Just as Hyder Ali and his son Tippoo Sultan were Anglophobes, so was the importer of the elephant. In 1821 when the beast was brought to America, it was but four years since the War of 1812 had ended and only a generation since the Revolution. Anti-British feeling was still very strong in this country. It softened somewhat in the 1840's as English capital was sought to finance our railroads, but gained strength again at the time of the Civil War, at least in the North. In some quarters it did not fade until the two countries were allied in the first World War. What better way to indicate Anglophobia than to give an Asian animal the name of the Asian enemy of the British?

However this was not an original thought with the menagerie men. A privateer paid for by Philadelphia merchants to fight in the Revolution was named Hyder Ali. The Navy had a frigate named Seringapatam, which was the capital of Mysore, and its figurehead was a likeness of Tippoo Sultan.

To return to the elephant, the show he graced in 1822 was advertised as the "Great American Caravan of Living Animals". It consisted of a male and female camel, a lion, a Barbary ape, an anteater and the Dancing African Lady (an ape that performed on the tight rope). This group was quite possibly successor to the earliest American menagerie. During 1816-1821 it was advertised as "Grand, Rich and Rare Collection of Living Animals" and before that, in 1813-1816, as "Museum of Living Animals", the first traveling menagerie found in which more than two species were exhibited. The stability of the stock in these three endeavors makes it quite likely that these were the same show over the years.

We do not know who the proprietors of these three titles were. The only name that appears in conjunction with them is that of a Mr. Brown in Washington in 1819. This might have been Christopher Brown, the oldest of that name to go into the business, but we have no proof of it.

The menagerie went into Albany on October 25, 1822, where they enlarged a building at Green and Division Streets, opposite the state capitol, and stayed the winter. The 1823 road season was spent mostly in western New York, and they returned to the Albany building in October. It was in this winter, 1823-1824, that they exhibited in conjunction with J.W. Bancker's circus for the first combination of circus and menagerie on record. Both shows could be seen for one admission. It was also during this winter that Joseph Martin's name is first mentioned as Tippoo Sultan's keeper.

The 1824 season found the menagerie in New England, and their winter quarters were established in Philadelphia in December. By this time Martin had taught the elephant some tricks. The most interesting one was when Martin would stand on the elephant's tusks and be tossed by a nod of the beast's head onto its back. Martin would turn a somersault in flight.

The other animals in the collection changed over the years, but Tippoo Sultan's name was featured in most advertisements, enabling us to keep a watch on the show's movements. They visited all the settled parts of the country, and the elephant had a sort of fame, which he shared with the great Columbus. The title was usually "Grand Caravan of Living Animals", but occasionally is seen as "Grand Caravan with Tippoo Sultan". Research has thus far not discovered another example of a menagerie title containing the name of one of the exhibits.

In 1826 Martin, Finch and Company took out the license in Rochester, New York indicating that John Martin was now part-owner of the show and that Edward Finch was his partner. In the practice of the time it seems doubtful that they owned the elephant, it being more common to lease elephants. Finch, for instance, had leased Betty II from Hackaliah Bailey in 1823.

According to the advertising Tippoo had grown to a height of ten feet by 1832. He was also said to be twenty-six years old, indicating a birth in 1806. In 1832 and 1833 he was leased to Hopkins and Company and in 1834 quite possibly to June, Hopkins and Company. June, Hopkins had two elephants, but no mention of their names has been found. The man who leased them the beast was Nathan Howes, a supposition based on an advertisement offering the menagerie for sale in January, 1834.

The show was listed as having twenty wild animals (six of which were monkeys), twenty wax figures, seventeen horses and a pony. It was carried in eight wagons (Anonymous, 1834). The ad was signed by Bailey Howes, as agent for the concern, and it is this connection we use to bring us to Nathan Howes.

Eighteen thirty-five saw the introduction of the Zoological Association and its monopoly of the menagerie business. Of the twelve shows put on the road by the Association, six included circus troupes. Nathan Howes and Richard Sands combined their American Circus with the Tippoo Sultan menagerie for 1835 to become one of those six combined shows. They advertised it under one of the most ungainly titles ever used "Mammoth Elephant, Menagerie and Circus". Sands, one of those performers who could almost give an entire performance by himself, was riding master, juggler and bareback rider. He was one of five bareback riders advertised in the early 1830's. Tippoo Sultan was joined by the calf Hyder Ali, named after the real Tippoo's father, of course. Imported in December 1832, Hyder Ali had spent 1833 and 1834 in the Raymond and Ogden menagerie. That the two were placed together because of their names is a possibility, though name changes were not at all unusual in those days, especially in regard to calves.

Tippoo was a docile beast for the most part, we read of but one reference to his running away and being consequently restrained. In comparison to Columbus, whose exploits were several times the stuff of newspaper comment, Tippoo was almost a lamb, despite his size.

Nathan Howes sold out or leased or somehow drew away from the Mammoth Menagerie after 1835. In 1836 it went out under the management of Noel E. Waring as the Mammoth Exhibition from the Zoological Institute, New York, - probably a Waring and Raymond operation. It had no circus department and only Tippoo Sultan as elephant. He was on the same show in 1837, though Waring was not the manager, it being leased to Purdy, Welch, Macomber.

There is a reference to Tippoo dying in the Caribbean (Dingess, unpublished ms.) and, if it is true, it must have happened in the winter of 1837-1838. There are no references to him in the United States after 1837. His namesake, Tippoo Saib, first appears in 1840, whether by importation or name change we don't know. Tippoo Saib roamed the country for thirty years and died in Connersville, Indiana in 1871. Of Hyder Ali the calf, there is no record after 1837, which may mean he was renamed Tippoo Saib.

Of the man who hated the English, he is buried beside his father in their capital, Seringapatam. In the Victoria and Albert Museum in London is a lifesized figure of a tiger which once belonged to Tippoo Sultan. It is an organ, which when cranked, emits growls like a wild animal, as well as the shrieks of its human victim, for the tiger has an Englishman by the throat and as the mechanism turns he bites him over and over. During a bombing in World War II the piece was rendered inoperable but prior to the war, apparently, children were constantly turning the crank on the thing to the dismay of readers in the Indian library in the next room. Thus, from beyond the grave, as it were, Tippoo Sultan continued to plague at least a few Englishmen.

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