**The field note books of Hamilton by Ralf Britz**

During his two visits to India, Hamilton kept a notebook into which he wrote down descriptions of the new fish species he encountered, almost exclusively in Latin, the language of science in the 1700 and early 1800s. The notes of these new species and their drawings that were made by his Indian painter Haludar form a unit of mutual complementation that allowed Hamilton to clearly distinguish the species from each other. Unfortunately the field notes and most of the drawings were separated when Hamilton left India and the former which stayed with the library of the India office initially but then were moved to the British Library have only been consulted once after Hamilton's monograph was published in 1822 and then forgotten entirely. This is unfortunate, as the field notes contain essential information to understand where and when Hamilton collected the different species he described and also data that were not included in his monograph. The British Library has now made this unique source of important information for Indian ichthyology available and all field notes pages can now be studied on-line in high quality scans at these addresses:

[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Mss\_Eur\_E70\_A](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.bl.uk%2Fmanuscripts%2FFullDisplay.aspx%3Fref%3DMss_Eur_E70_A&data=02%7C01%7Cp.clark%40nhm.ac.uk%7Cde690c5541c14e58af8008d7f9757827%7C73a29c014e78437fa0d4c8553e1960c1%7C1%7C1%7C637252155245849731&sdata=tsRY%2BWtcpVXF8ELXEYedZijDsKHFgUs0DUWuQDfz%2Bv0%3D&reserved=0)

[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Mss\_Eur\_E70\_B](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.bl.uk%2Fmanuscripts%2FFullDisplay.aspx%3Fref%3DMss_Eur_E70_B&data=02%7C01%7Cp.clark%40nhm.ac.uk%7Cde690c5541c14e58af8008d7f9757827%7C73a29c014e78437fa0d4c8553e1960c1%7C1%7C1%7C637252155245859724&sdata=sjGg6A7ld4KJQH8jjrkHawacP%2FMwmFiuJgg%2B3LcsteE%3D&reserved=0)

Their publication coincides with the publication of the new edition of Hamilton's 1822 monograph by the Ray Society, with all the available colour illustrations of more than 220 species of fishes compared to the 96 species published originally in monochrome only.

Not only do the field notes provide important information for ichthyologists working on Indian freshwater fishes, they also offer a window into the scientific thinking and workings of a brilliant naturalist's mind.