Early Prehistoric Archaeological Researches In Peninsula Malaysia Up To World War II

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G.W. EARL/ F.W. HUXLEY

When G.W. Earl published his reports on the shell-mounds of Lahar Ikan Mati and Guar Kepah (both in Seberang Perai), he became the first person to be associated with prehistoric archaeological investigations. Earl reported finding red rock (haematite?), water-worn quartz pebbles (pounding stones?), and fragmentary human remains at Guar Kepah.

Earl sent the human remains to F.W. Huxley for further identification. At that time, Huxley’s poor health prevented him from presenting a detailed report on the human remains. In a brief letter to the Ethnological Society of London, Huxley cited that “the very fragmentary condition” of the remains did not allow him to approximate the contour or capacity of the skull, thus depriving him of the “most important datum in any ethnological comparison”. This letter became the first published physical anthropological report on the Malay Peninsula prehistoric human remains.

The pioneering finds of Earl and Huxley went into obscurity until the original reports were re-discovered by Robert von Heine Geldern some seventy years later.

THE PERAK MUSEUM

The establishment of the Perak Museum at Taiping in 1883 marked the...
beginning of institutionalized prehistoric archaeological investigations in the Malay Peninsula. The primary objective of the Perak Museum was to collect ethnological, anthropological, and archaeological informations (The Selangor Museum was established as a centre for Malayan zoology).

ABRAHAM HALE

A few years after the establishment of the Perak Museum, Abraham Hale published a couple of reports on the polished stone implements frequently found in Perak at that time. These reports established the existence of a prehistoric neolithic people in Perak.

The Perak Museum Notes made a brief appearance between the years 1893 and 1898. It supplemented the Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (first published in 1878) as an additional local outlet for publishing archaeological reports.

LEONARD WRAY JR.

The appointment of Leonard Wray Jr. as the first curator of the Perak Museum in the late 1890’s proved to be a positive step for Peninsular Malaysian archaeology. Wray pioneered cave explorations and excavations in the Malay Peninsula through excavations in the rock shelters at Gunong Pondok and Gunong Cheroh, and visitations to the caves at Kota Gelanggi, Pahang. He discovered the first stone implement and also the first flexed human burials that were clearly associated with the cultural deposits in the rock-shelters of Gunong Cheroh.

THE FEDERATED MALAY STATES MUSEUMS

The amalgamation of the Perak and Selangor Museums to form the Federated Malay States Museums in 1904 provided an even stronger foundation for Peninsular Malayesian archaeological researches. It allowed the Perak Museum to expand its frontiers and collect information in other Federated Malay States. This action made the Perak Museum the centre for archaeological researches in the Malay Peninsula, a position that it held until the emergence of the Raffles Museum of Singapore in the 1930’s.

9 G. de G. Sieveking. 1954/55. Notes ...
13 G. de G. Sieveking. 1954/55. Notes ...
The *Journal of the Federated Malay States Museums* came into existence in 1905.\textsuperscript{14} It would continue to be published until the outbreak of World War II in the Malay Peninsula. While not being restricted to archaeological reports, this journal became the main outlet for the publication of these reports for the Perak Museum.

**IVOR HUGH NORMAN EVANS**

Ivor Hugh Norman Evans became an assistant curator and ethnographical assistant of the Perak Museum in 1912.\textsuperscript{15} Even though Evans was primarily an ethnologist, he made a great impact on Peninsular Malaysian prehistoric archaeology. He built on the foundations laid down by Hale and Wray. Evans' contributions to the archaeological cause can be divided into two periods.

When Evans first came, he had an interest but was untrained in archaeology. This interest led Evans to excavate the rock-shelters at Gua Kajang,\textsuperscript{16} Gunong Kurau,\textsuperscript{17} Gunong Senyum,\textsuperscript{18} and Kota Tongkat.\textsuperscript{19} His excavation methods were less than desirable, but were an advance in comparison to the methods of earlier investigators such as Hale and Wray.

Evans compiled the data of both his and Wray's excavations and made the first ever attempt to synthesize Peninsular Malaysian prehistory.\textsuperscript{20}

Evans also collected information on the various archaeological discoveries. He investigated and published various articles on isolated archaeological finds. Evans even wrote-up the report for the excavations carried out at Gua Kerbau by W.N. Gordon, a Temporary Assistant of the Federated Malay States Museums.\textsuperscript{21}

An important event that marked the beginning of the next period in Evans' archaeological activities was his collaboration with Peter Vincent van Stein Callenfels (then serving as the Inspector of the Archaeological Service in the Netherlands Indies) in the excavations of Gua Badak and Gua Kerbau.\textsuperscript{22} Evans adopted many of van Stein Callenfels' excavation and reporting techniques, as evidenced by Evans' reports on later excavations.\textsuperscript{23}

Soon after the excavations at Gua Kerbau, Evans summarized his findings up to that point in *Papers on the Ethnology and Archaeology of the Malay Peninsula.*\textsuperscript{24}

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\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid
In the later period of his career, Evans produced his best effort in excavating the proto-historic site of Kuala Selinsing. He even investigated a rare neolithic open-site at Kuala Nyong.

PETER VINCENT VAN STEIN CALLENFELS

Van Stein Callenfels' main contribution to Peninsular Malaysian prehistoric archeological investigations was the introduction of a scientific approach to archeology. While his method of using a theolodite in measuring and recording the locations of artifacts is antiquated in comparison to present-day methods, his approach was the most systematic up to that point (unlike the haphazard excavations and reporting of Wray and Solheim).

Van Stein Callenfels also introduced for the first time in Peninsular Malaysia archeology the problem-oriented research approach. He excavated Gua Badak and Gua Kerbau for the purpose of tracing ‘the spread of lithic culture from Indo-China through the peninsula into Sumatra” While his methods undoubtedly primitive (when-compared to today's standards) and his hypothesis was not necessarily correct, his excavation techniques documentation methods and problem-oriented approach were breakthrough in the science of archeology in Peninsular Malaysia.

After his collaboration with Evans in the excavations of Gua Kerbau. van Stein Callenfels was involved in two other excavations. The first was at Guar Kepah in 1934. When he joined forces with Michael Wilmer Forbes Tweedie, a Naturalist from Raffles Museum, and Henry Dennis Collings, an Archaeologist from Raffles Museum, who at that time had just arrived from Britain. His third excavation in the Malay Peninsula was with H.D. Noone in 1936 at the Gua Baik rock shelter near Sungai Siput. Noone was then serving as Field Ethnographer of the Federated Malay States Museums (centred at the Perak Museum).

THE RAFFLES MUSEUM OF SINGAPORE

The importance of the Perak Museum as the centre of archaeological research was diminishing. This was partly caused by the emergence of the Raffles Museum in Singapore in the 1930’s.
Raffles Museum came into the picture after the "Second Congress of Prehistorians of the Far East" passed a resolution to select it as the"...repository for centralizing typological and comparative collections of prehistoric objects from the whole of the further East". 33

Under the leadership of F.N. Chasen as its director, the Raffles Museum received the first of two grants from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, funds that were specifically targeted for supporting prehistoric research in the Malay states in 1934. 34 The second grant was later awarded in 1938. 35 These funds generated a flurry of prehistoric archaeological activity with Collings and Tweedie involved in most of it. The list of archaeological sites investigated using these funds include Gua Bintong, 36 Bukit Chintamani, 37 Gol Baik 38, and Gua Cha. 39

The funds from the Carnegie Corporation also helped to improve the standard of archaeological reporting. 40 It created a special series (Series B) of the Bulletin of the Raffles Museum that was designed specifically for the publication of archaeological reports.

The culmination of the Raffles Museum's activities was the holding of the Third Congress of Prehistorians of the Far East in Singapore in 1938 41. A new gallery of the museum, Hall of the Asiatic Prehistory, was officially opened during the congress. Preceedings of the congress was also published. 42

HENRY DENNIS COLLINGS

Henry Dennis Collings first appeared on the local scene while participating in an excavation at Guar Kepah. 43 Van Stein Callenfels and Tweedie were also involved in these excavations. As a trained archaeologist attached to the Raffles Museum, Collings was involved in a lot of excavations in the Malay Peninsula. However, he is best known for reporting the finding of the paleolithic site of Kota Tampan, Bukit Chuping, Gua Debu(Baling) etc. 44

MICHAEL WILMER FORBES TWEEDIE

Micheal Wilmer Forbes Tweedie was primarily a naturalist at Raffles Museum.

34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
38 van Stein Callenfels and Noone. 1938. Report on a excavation in ...
39 G. de G. Sieveking. 1954/55. Note, ...
40 Solheim. Floyd Wheeler Jane Allen Wheeler. 1986. Archaeology in Malaysia ...
41 Alexandra Avieropoulou Choo. 1987. A Guide to ...
42 F.N. Chasen and M.W.F. Tweedie. 1938. Proceedings of the third ...
43 van Stein Callenfels. 1936. An excavation of three ...
However he was also extremely interested in archaeology. The influx of funds from the Carnegie helped him to pursue his interest in archaeology especially on the east coast. He was involved in numerous excavations. His main contribution to the field of Peninsular Malaysian archaeology was his synthesis on the Stone Age and the prehistory of Malaya.

HORACE GEOFFREY QUARITCH-WALES

Horace Geoffrey Quaritch-Wales and his wife (Dorothy C.) were involved in an independent investigation of the protohistoric sites in Kedah, Perak, and Johor. They did an extensive report on the individual sites found in Kedah, Perak, and Johor. Quaritch-Wales also summarized his findings in a book, Prehistory and Religion in South-East Asia.