A HISTORY OF PERAK

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PREFACE.

A great part of this book deals with the Victorian era. So perhaps one may be pardoned for recalling how Huxley once said that tragedy for Herbert Spencer was a deduction killed by a fact. So chimerical have been the theories of historians that the modern student demands the evidence before he will accept the finding. Meticulous, even tiresome detail must precede generalisation. There is hardly a deduction in this book: it is a plain unvarnished record of facts. Certainly the scaffolding of history consists of facts and this book pretends no more than to provide scaffolding for a definitive history of Malaya.

Most of the Malay material for this work was collected by us in Perak a quarter of a century ago. Since that time many Portuguese, Dutch and English records have been made accessible.

His Highness Sri Sultan Iskandar, G.C.M.G., K.C.V.O. has graciously provided several illustrations. Doctors Bosch and van Stein Callenfels of the Archaeological Department of Netherlands India have been good enough to confirm my surmise that the dish figured in Plates VI—VIII is of Majapahit style. A note on the Sanskrit Coronation Address, has been obtained by the good offices of Dr. C. O. Blagden. Mr. H. D. Noone of the Perak Museum has supplied the latest scientific views on the Sakais, and Mr. T. D. Hughes, a Portuguese scholar in the Malayan Civil Service, has rendered assistance for the chapter on the Portuguese Period.

Chapters VII and VIII and part of X and Appendices (a) and (f) and much of (d) in their original form were the work of Mr. R. J. Wilkinson and have been printed in slightly different form elsewhere. For other chapters he is not responsible.

R.O.W.
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INTRODUCTION.

On the stage of Perak's modern history there have been many actors: the Malays, the Portuguese, the Achinese, the Dutch, the Bugis from Riau and Selangor, Siam and her vassal Kedah, and the British. To some small degree it was dynastic pride that made Acheh and the Bugis her aggressors, and Siam had hardly any other conscious motive. But at the back of all Perak history has been trade. Trade alone attracted the Europeans, an unassuagable thirst for the purchase of tin and the sale of cloth. Of this thirst, as I have written elsewhere "the most evil symptom was monopoly, the confining of trade to one market, where the purchaser bought not at competitive prices but at prices fixed by the guns of his ships. As far back as we know, monopoly had been a feature of Eastern trade, Hindu, Parthian, Persian and Arab, and it was the desperate effort of the Gujaratis to maintain their monopoly that led to the clash between Malays and Portuguese at Malacca. It was the good fortune of England that the spirit abroad at the beginning of the XIXth century gave her no chance to establish monopolies and induced her to declare for free trade." Along with their struggle for monopoly, the powers also attempted to take toll of all shipping and compel it to resort to their ports. Long before the Portuguese, the great Sumatran state Srivijaya or old Palembang had derived large revenues from toll levied on sea-borne trade: as Chao Ju-Kua wrote in 1225 A.D., "If a merchant ship passes without entering, their boats go forth to make a combined attack and all are ready to die in the attempt; that is why this country is a great shipping centre."

From her foundation down to the time of British protection Perak suffered every sort of humiliation and defeat and domestic tragedy. The Portuguese built a fort at the mouth of her river in order to command a monopoly of her tin. Jealous of her dealings with the Portuguese, Acheh attacked Perak fifty years after the coming of her Malacca dynasty. It removed five thousand of her subjects and carried ruler after ruler into captivity, until royal descent on the male side was broken. It made treaties directly with the Dutch for the disposal of Perak's tin, and it sent Achinese officials to control the weighing-station at her estuary. For nearly a century the State was the vassal of Acheh. Moreover during half that century Perak was also plagued by the Dutch, who demanded her tin at a price concerted with Acheh, deducted a war indemnity from that price, erected a fort at the Dindings and blockaded the river-mouth. Long before the Dutch had gone, Perak was implicated in the Kedah wars between the Bugis and the Minangkabau followers of the famous Raja Kechil of Siak. The Bugis invaded her in 1728 and in 1742, later compelled her ruler to install a Bugis chief as Sultan of Selangor and then sent their most notable warrior, Raja Haji, to obtain the hand of a Perak princess for the new potentate. From 1804 till 1806 Perak was
“by right of powder and ball” subject to Selangor. In 1818 she was conquered by Kedah at the dictates of Siam. In 1822 she turned to Selangor to expel the Siamese, who three years later re-established their suzerainty. Down to 1826 when the British intervened, Perak was no more than a shuttle-cock between Selangor and Siam. In truth she was always a shuttle-cock: between Portugal and Acheh, between Acheh and the Dutch, between Minangkabaus and Bugis, between Selangor and Siam. And after the Kedah wars at the beginning of the eighteenth century nearly every decade of her history was disfigured by fratricidal struggles between princes of her own royal house.

The most bigoted Little Englander, the most convinced supporter of the rights and customs of small people, must admire the pax Britannica in Perak and bless the work of British protection in bringing out of centuries of great tribulation this rich and beautiful country and her ancient line. Beset by Selangor, threatened by Siam, Sultan ‘Abdu’l-Malik Mansur Shah could yet write with truth in 1816, “I am the oldest of all the kings of these parts, such as the kings of Siak, Selangor, Riau, Kedah and Trengganu. I will not send tribute of Golden Flowers to Siam.”
EARLY CIVILISATIONS AND PRIMITIVE TRIBES.

Some seven thousand years ago the caves of Perak were inhabited by people who used palæoliths, namely stone scrapers and **coup-de-poing** in almond-shaped, oval and elongated forms, painted their bodies with a red pigment, used grinding slabs and pounding stones and fed on fresh-water and marine mollusks. The relics of this civilisation are associated not only with roughly shaped stone-implements of a type found in Sumatra having one side chipped and the other in its natural water-worn condition but also with proto-neoliths or artefacts chipped but having polished edges. The evidence points to the diffusion of palæolithic civilisation using implements of the Sumatra type through the south-eastern parts of Asia and as far as Sumatra. It has been traced in Perak at rock-shelters at Goa Kajang near Lenggong and at Gunong Pondok. Scientific excavation at Gunong Pondok discovered no pottery in the lower layers. Pottery plain and cord-marked was associated with the later proto-neolithic remains. The makers of the proto-neoliths, chipped artefacts with only edges polished, may have learnt the art of polishing on bone and horn or from contact with a neolithic people. So far as is known as yet, the mixed palæolithic and proto-neolithic culture of the Perak caves did not reach Sumatra, though it occurs in Siam, Borneo and Luzon: from the abundance of its relics at Bak-son in northern Tonkin it has been called the Bacsonian civilisation.

In remains of a neolithic civilisation when tools completely polished took the place of chipped palæoliths Perak is rich. Specimens of West Indonesian types such as occur in Sumatra and Bali have been unearthed in the rice-fields and mines of Kinta and Larut and on the bank of the Bernam river at Tanjong Malim. This neolithic civilisation has been ascribed to the second millenium B.C. Though there is still need of further data to complete the chain of evidence the surmise has been hazarded that the older palæolithic civilisation of the Perak caves may have been that of continental ancestors of the modern Papuans and that polishing may have been introduced by Indonesian tribes. This tentative surmise is based on the evidence of skulls from the caves of Tonkin.*

A civilisation apparently associated with river-banks produced in Perak graves built of granite slabs. These graves have been unearthed at Changkat Mantri on the Bernam River, and at Sungai

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*On a trouvé, rien qu’en Indo-Chine, des crânes de race mélanésienne, indonésienne, australoïd et negrito, c’est à dire de quatre races différentes. Mais de là quoi de plus probable aussi, que ce n’est pas encore dans une famille, mais même dans **plusieurs familles** de langues, qu’on pourrait arriver un jour à grouper les parlars de cette partie de L’Asie, c’est à dire que ce n’est pas une mais plusieurs familles austro-asiatiques auxquelles on pourrait aboutir.” **Une Fausse Famille Linguistique “L’ Austro-Asiatique.”**

G. de Hevesy. III Congres International des Linguistes, Rome 1933.
Kruit off the Sungkai River, while another is recorded from the Slim River:—one of them has been rebuilt in the garden of Taiping Museum. These cists are closely related to the dolmen and are of a type not uncommon in Java where they extend from a late neolithic to an iron age:—the Philippines, also, have tombs said to be of a similar type. With the Perak cists have been found iron socketted tools, cornelian beads, stone pounders, rough pottery and bronze utensils. These iron tools have also been unearthed at Klang in Selangor, on the Tembeling in Pahang, at Tanjong Rambutan and Sengat in Kinta and at Bengkong in Batang Padang.

Later still in the iron-age comes the Indian settlement near Kuala Selinsing. Along this beach have been picked up hundreds of cornelian, glass (or paste) and shell beads, portions of bracelets in stone and in blue green glass, some pottery and cross-hatched pottery stamps. The commonest types of glass-beads are opaque yellow, opaque blue, opaque green, clear blue, clear yellow, dark red, and orange paste with dark-red striations. One type has "a core of non-translucent yellowish paste, plated with gold-leaf which is covered with clear yellow glass." Parti-coloured beads thought to be of Indian type have been found in an East-Java dolmen, and beads of most of the Selinsing types occur in Philippine graves of the iron-age and at Santubong in Sarawak and glass-beads on Papan Island off Borneo. A gold ornament possibly of the late Majapahit period, possibly much earlier, was unearthed at Selinsing and in a hole left by the roots of a fallen tree a cornelian seal engraved with the words Sri Vishnuvarmamasya, in Pallava characters of the 7th century A.D. or later. The Selinsing settlement, therefore, was an Indian trading station like others with Pallava inscriptions, Taruma in West Java and Kutai in Borneo. Sri Vijaya used Nagari or north Indian characters but it may have swept over a Pallava Selinsing and left no trace. Perhaps in the eleventh century A.D. it was sacked by the Chola raids on Srivijaya and her dependencies: raids to which the " Malag Annals " seem to allude in the account of the conquest by a " Raja Suran " of Gangganegara "situate on a hill very steep in front and low behind, whose fort still exists inland at the Dindings, a little above the Perak." The name recalls the Ganga-Pallavas.

Thirty years ago in a mine at Tanjong Rambutan was dug up a little bronze Buddha* of the Gupta type. In 1931 there were found at Pengkalan near Ipoh a bronze throne for a seated figure and a very beautiful standing bronze Buddha (Pl. II).* apparently of the earlier Gupta school though Dutch scholars opine that its date is about 750 A.D. and that it is a specimen of Srivijaya work similar to one found in the Palembang river.

* From photographs, Prof. G. Coedes (discoverer of Srivijaya) surmises that both are of the Gupta school. There is a poor illustration of the Tanjong Rambutan Buddha in " Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya "; it is in the possession of Mr. Alma Baker, C.B.E., formerly of Batu Gajah.
Among the human remains found in Kuala Selinsing have been identified Negrito and Proto-Malayan elements. The Negrito is a small, very dark bullet-headed frizzy-haired individual called in Kedah and Upper Perak a Semang. He is thought to be related not only to the Aetas of the Philippines for whom Spanish writers invented the name Negrito but also to the Mincopies of the Andamans. The Semang are a very primitive people, nomadic, using only wall-less leaf-shelters propped on sticks, ignorant of agriculture and boat-making and subsisting on fruits and wild game. Unfortunately in the 1931 Census no attempt was made to discriminate between them and their more numerous neighbours the Sakai but they are all to be found in Kedah, Perak, Kelantan and Trang and the fact that they live on the northern outskirt of the big Sakai wedge, inhabit swamps and have hardly invaded the mountains suggests that they may have migrated to the Peninsula at a later date than the less primitive Sakai.

Perak is pre-eminently the house of the fairer wavy-haired long-headed Sakai who are now thought to be of Nesiot (Indonesian) stock with admixture of Negrito blood in the north and Proto-Malay blood in the south and some very early Proto-Australoid and Papuo-Malanesoid strain. The Nesiot is a typical hill breed, akin to numerous hill tribes in Indochina and the Malay Archipelago. The older more primitive elements occur in tribes inhabiting the foot-hills and persisting up the main tributary valleys of Perak and Kelantan. The Perak tribes have been divided into the Northern Sakai of Kuala Kangsar and the Central Sakai of Batang Padang. The Sakai language has Mon-Khmer affinities. Their weapon is the blow-pipe. They live in well-built pile houses and plant sugar, millet, tobacco, plantains and hill-rice. Some 20,000 in number, they enter no more than the Negritos into the real life of Perak, though in some districts the Malay shows traces of Sakai and Semang blood.

Malay borrowings from the aborigines are few. With the Malay liking for a matrilineal title to land, Perak legend introduces a negrito girl and her bamboo-born daughter as owners of the land of Perak but with patriarchal inconsistency leaves the mother childless and the daughter a virgin saint. The sword or dagger of office presented to Perak chiefs bears the name of baur, a Sakai word for “staff.” In the name of one of Perak’s guardian genies occurs the Sakai word alak meaning “shaman,” and there are aboriginal elements in the Perak medium’s séance (berhantu).

This, then, was the stage set for the coming of the Malaccan Malays, an interior peopled by the remnants of primitive races that had passed centuries before down to the Malay Archipelago, a country so noted for tin that it had attracted bronze-workers from India, a coast with foreign Hindu settlers exploiting the aborigines.