NOTES ON THE

HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF MALAYA

AND SIDELIGHTS

ON THE

MALAY ANNALS

by

W. DOUGLAS.
Braddell starts his Study of ancient times in Malaya with an examination of Book VII of Ptolemy’s Geographika written about 160 AD. The Arabs translated this work in the 10th century on the orders of Haroun Alrashid. The earliest Manuscript in existence is dated about 1000 AD and the earliest map as late as 1400 AD so it is probable that both contain emendations. If we attempt to identify place names in the Malayan region the first to be considered is his Aurea Chersonesus, the Golden chersonese. This is his name for the Malay Peninsula and he thereby helps to identify the same name used by Flavius Josephus who wrote in his History of the Ancient Hebrews a century earlier “the command of Solomon to his pilots that they should go along with his stewards to the land which was of old called Ophir but now the Golden Chersonese, which belongs to India to fetch gold”. Modern writers scoff at this name being applied to Malaya as so little gold is obtained, but the gold of Pahang and Kelantan is eluvial gold and mining men consider that nearly all has been worked out; if this is the land of Ophir then it has been worked for nearly 3000 years. Ophir is a Persian word now pronounced Wufir meaning abundance or plenty and there must be few parts of the world where nature repays the labour of man so abundantly.

The Bible constantly refers to the purity of the gold of Ophir. I received the following figures from Mr. Pentsiller manager of Raub mine in Pahang who died in Singapore interment camp as a result of illtreatment by Japanese.

The eluvial gold of Pahang is rated at 975 fine sometimes called guinea gold and is of a rich dark red colour. Much of the gold from his own mine at Raub was in stringers and of the same fineness but his average was just below .950. Gold from this mine was being sold at 3½ premium in Australia in 1883. Kelantan Gold is not as fine as that from Pahang: Gold from Acheh and the Minangkabau area in Sumatra is equally as fine as that from Pahang. Gold from Borneo averages .700 to .800. Gold from South Africa is rated at .900 to .920. Mr. Pentsiller was unable to give me any figures for Mindanao but Arabs compare the gold from the Wak-wak country appearing on their maps of 11th 12th centuries near Sofala & so probably from Zimbabwe as being very inferior to that from another Wak-wak country which Moens has located in the Phillipines. Tome Pires in his Suma Oriental of 1515 mentions the excellence of the Gold from Indochina but then mentions that the best was brought there from Minangkabau and one gets the impression that it had been minted.

It would seem that the gold of Pahang and Sumatra alone agree with the Bible tradition of the purity of the gold of Ophir.
Josephus locates Ophir in the Golden Chersonese and Ptolemy a century later fixes the Chersonese at the Malay Peninsula. It is possible that Sumatra 3000 years ago was joined to the Peninsula according to the tradition recorded by Eredia (1615). His map of which a photostat copy is serial no. 3 in the Mills collection in Raffles Museum, shows an isthmus connecting from Cape Rachado, Tanjong Tuan to Pulau Rupat in Sumatra, and is meant to refer to the period 1000 BC. He of course is merely recording the local tradition. It must be noted that in this part of the Malacca Strait the tides, from the north ie from the Indian Ocean and those coming up from the south thro' Singapore Strait, meet.

Wallace states that Borneo and Sumatra were at one time joined through the Peninsula and he mentions a Javanese tradition that Java was joined to Sumatra only 1000 years ago but tho he rejects this date as being impossible he agrees with the geological fact.

In the Kebra Nagat which records the traditions of Abyssinia and the descent of the Kings from Solomon's son Menelik by the Queen of Saba (Sheba) there is a tale of Solomon commissioning a trader Tamrin to fetch Red Gold and Black wood. Is any gold other than that from Pahang known for its red colour? and its purity? Sheba in Persian means gold.

There is however a link with very early Semitic civilisation in the Rejang script recorded on bamboo slips mentioned by Marsden and now in the India Office library. Park Harrison (Journal Anthropological Institute April 1875 vol iv) drew attention to the resemblance with Phoenician characters Laccuperie criticised and rejected this view. But in 1896 Professors Sayers & Renou (Archaeologica Oxenienesis pt vi) declare them to be "not only clearly phoenician in form but presenting marks of adaptation that point to Greek influence such as might have been exerted on Tyrian epigraphy during the course of Nearchus's voyage. Dr Neubauer considers "the shape of the letters to be those of the 5th 4th centuries BC which would synchronise closely with the destruction of Tyre and the deportation of Tyrian sailors to India".

Braddell has kindly drawn my attention to the opinion of R C Majumdar (a very high Indian authority) who says that this Rejang script has a Javan-Hindu origin. The latest edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica printed in Chicago has apparently accepted this view as follows-"Rejang; a tribe of proto-malayan origin or mixed Indonesian stock, partly akin to the Achinese Bugis & Mangkasars. Though now moslem they were formerly
influenced by Indo-Javan culture and retain an alphabet derived from that source speaking a language of the Austro-nesian family. Their alphabet has been described as purely phoenician, but it is intimately related to others derived from Indo-Javan culture. They are a turbulent race & work the gold mines: in this being a prototype of all alluvial gold miners. Braddell thinks that this has exploded the opinions of Professors Sayers, Renou and Neubauer recorded above. I would prefer to say it is an alternative view. Indian scholars have a natural tendency to trace all early Malay culture to early Hindu immigrants. In the area of Central India comprising Orissa, Bihar, Bundelkund as far west as Allahabad, the sacred junction of the Jumna and the Ganges, there are still traces of the Munda-Mali race which gave a pre-dravidian civilisation to India. Gaya where the Lord Buddha received enlightenment lies in this area. The Liang annals 502-556 say that the people of Poli claimed to come from the land of Buddha. There must have been an earlier migration from the southeast by land and sea, leading to intercourse and higher civilisation.

These islanders had gold silver spices and incense in abundance all articles which the ancient world valued highly. They had abundance of food. All this would create a high standard of civilisation. They could move by sea and so would more quickly contact other races than migration by land.

Brahmi script used by Asoka is acknowledged to be derived from Sabean. One must however mention the Rejang an astrological term used by Javanese as a means of divining lucky days and described by Skeat in his Malay magic. In one respect these resemble the Hindu Nakshatras as the first Rejang is always a horse but none of the other Malay names agree with the Hindu names. Skeat quotes Newbould as saying that the Malays probably got the system from the Hindus and not from the Arabic Awana system. Hewitt in his primitive traditional history associates the worship of the horse with very remote cultures in India when the Pleiades gave the date for the new year and the year was divided into 72 weeks of five days. In Java the five day week still survives.

In the Rejang country there are slab graves very similar to the peninsula type I first suggested that the builders of the Slab graves in western Malaya might possibly be Indians because the beads found therein were stated to be similar to those found at Selinsing which had been accepted as Indian; but now Q Wales says they are local Javanese work. If so then the whole slab grave culture may be Malay. The granite of the slabs at Slim
and Changkat Mentri certainly were obtained from the Bil river which joins the Slim opposite the slab grave site. About two miles south of Slim village where the Bil crosses the main trunk road one can see in the river huge boulders from which slabs have been flaked off. Who knows perhaps some knocked off two thousand years ago by these experts in stone.

There remain the iron socketted tools. So far the iron has not been tested to see whether it is local. It would seem possible that it is some special iron as the makers of Kris Majapahit apparently endeavoured to get these old tools, to work up. This form of Kris had magic properties.

But they must be the work of local Malay blacksmiths as nowhere else have similar tools been recorded yet. The Encyclopedia Brittanica says that the distribution of tribes in the Malayan region 1500BC was very much the same as today and that they already knew the art of smelting iron.

Hewitt in his Primitive Traditional History writes about the aboriginal races of Bihar Orissa and western Bengal. He was Commissioner of Chota Nagpur and his knowledge of these peoples traditions and customs is clearly reliable.

There is a tribe "named the Oraons sons of the Malay orang meaning man". Their village accountant is the Mahto (? the title of the Bugis Chief of Luwu the Matua). Their priest was the Pahan (the Malay Pawang?) They mixed with a northern Turanian race and the descendants became the ruling race of Chota Nagpur.

He then expands his views but here perhaps treads on controversial matters "There was a prevedic migration to the Persian Gulf and story of their arrival in the Euphratean Delta is told in the legends and institutions of the Sumero - Akkadians — the first civilisers of the country were the people led by the god Ia-khan or Ia the fish (? Malay ikan) — these people with whom the eastern Munda or Malay sun worshippers were intermingled settled as the race known as Sumerians on the coast of the Euphratean Delta and of the Persian Gulf and south eastern shores of Arabia— The modern representatives are the Sabaean Mandaeites — they are now artisans and traders in Mesopotamia, but the Sabaean race to which they belong were once the Rulers of southern Arabia called Saba". Such a view makes one feel that C N Maxwell was right, in his claim that one finds the root of many Sanskrit words in Malay which he claims to be one of the oldest languages. It was a thousand pities that the MSS of his unpublished book was lost when Singapore fell.

The authors of the History of the Orient (American
and Phillipino professors) are most emphatic that the people of Ancient Saba were trading in the Far east long prior to the Xtian era.

Johnstone in his study of the Oceans writes "The Arabs systematised the trade between China & the west in the 3rd century B.C and trade with Ceylon in 2nd century B.C was wholly in their hands."

In the Tufat al nasis written by Raja Ali Haji in 1860, he records the tradition that the Rulers (Bugis) of ancient Luwu in the bay of Boni in Celebes claim descent from the Queen of Saba perhaps a transfer of the Abyssinian tradition. These Luwu rulers were certainly immigrants, as yearly they would repair to Pamono where there were stone altars on which they laid offerings of gold dust parched rice beads etc in payment to the aboriginal Toraja tribes, whom they had driven into the hills, for the land which the Bugis occupied on the coast. The royal family of Selangor are descendants of these Luwu rulers.

Ptolemaic names on the Malay Peninsula.

Braddell in vol. XIV JRASMB bases his comments on Renou's book. A place named Sabana appears at the southern tip of the peninsula. Ungku Aziz of Johor in a note printed by Braddell at the end of his chapter points out that there is a small river and hill of this name in Johor opposite Pulau Tekong Besar in Johor strait. Flinders Petrie comparing names appearing in the Amarna letters of 1400BC, with modern names in Palestine and Syria says "When we see names - lasting with no change - or only small variation in the vowels it needs no further proof that ancient names may be safely sought in the modern map. "The mouth of this Sabana river lies in latitude 1.25"N. whereas the Ptolemaic Sabana is placed 3.8. But even Cotinho in his map of 1540. places Malaka 14"S. instead of the correct 2.13"N.

If we accept this Sabana as a survival of the ancient Ptolemaic name & use the distances of latitude quoted from Renou by Braddell and the Ptolemaic degree of 500 Stadia we get results which connect many names with places which we know have a story of ancient occupation by man and so a possible identification of his positions:
Ptolemy

West Coast

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Ptolemaic Corrected by Renouf</th>
<th>Modern Place names</th>
<th>latitude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sabana</td>
<td>3. S 1.25N</td>
<td>Sabana river &amp; hill</td>
<td>1 25'</td>
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<tr>
<td>Palandas river</td>
<td>2 S 2.15'N</td>
<td>Muar river</td>
<td>2 05</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Linggi river</td>
<td>2 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Palanda town</td>
<td>1 S 2.45N</td>
<td>Jugra</td>
<td>2.50</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Klang</td>
<td>3.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>Khrysoanas river</td>
<td>1 N 4.45N</td>
<td>Mouth of Bruas &amp; Jeram</td>
<td>c.4.35</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mas rivers</td>
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<td>Selensing</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Mouths of the Muda &amp; Merbok rivers</td>
<td>c 5 35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tharra</td>
<td>1.20N 5.05N</td>
<td>Krian swamp area</td>
<td>c 5. N</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kokonagara</td>
<td>2. N 5.35N</td>
<td>Selensing</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mauu of the Muda &amp; Merbok rivers</td>
<td>c 5 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promontory</td>
<td>2.20N 5.50N</td>
<td>Kedah Peak</td>
<td>5 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takola</td>
<td>4.35N 7.20N</td>
<td>Trang</td>
<td>7 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promontory</td>
<td>4.30 7.45N</td>
<td>Southern tip of Pulau</td>
<td>7 45</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Salang</td>
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<td>East Coast</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cape Maleikolon</td>
<td>2. S 2.15N</td>
<td>Tanjong Tengarok</td>
<td>2 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attabas river</td>
<td>1 S 3.05N</td>
<td>Bebar river</td>
<td>3.05</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pahang river</td>
<td>3.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kole</td>
<td>equator 3.35N</td>
<td>Kuantan river</td>
<td>3.48</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Kemaman river</td>
<td>4.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kalongka</td>
<td>1 20N 5.05N</td>
<td>Pulai area Kelantan</td>
<td>4.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perimula</td>
<td>2 20N 5.55N</td>
<td>Besut or Great Redang</td>
<td>5.50</td>
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<td>Island</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Perimulikos Gulf</td>
<td>4.15N 7.20N</td>
<td>Singgora at entrance to inland sea Tale Sap</td>
<td>7.13</td>
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</tbody>
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Palandas River. The choice lies between the Muar and Linggi rivers. Up the Linggi river near Alor Gajah there are stone alignments and at the mouth some menhir which are believed to have been brought down from Alor Gajah area. This is definite proof of ancient occupation by man whereas there is no such evidence on the Muar. In addition there was a tribe of aborigines named Belandas who may have either given their name to or been named from the river.

Palandas town. Either Jugra or Klang. Jugra is marked on Portuguese maps as an island and also on the Wu Pei Chi charts which are dated around the beginning of the 15th or end of 14th
century, & also on Jeffery's map of c 1790. The hill stands up from
the surrounding flats and is the leading mark for ships sailing
down the coast to avoid the dangers of South Sands. In MS 18
of the Malay Annals (romanised) the name appears as Jongkra.
Possibly this should be Jongkar meaning outstanding prominent
in Malay. There are many legends about the hill, of a were
tiger which carried the fairy Princess of Gunong Ledang to Jugra
for safety when Malaka was conquered by the Portuguese.

In a Malay poem written about 1850 addressed to Raja
(later Sultan) Abdul Samad describing his voyage from Malaka
to Klang, the Malay sailors on passing the hill asked the Dato' for
a favourable wind. This might be the origin of the name Parcellar
appearing on Portuguese maps. Par great & Salar chief in both
hindustani & Persian. The burden of the poem is a proposal that
the Rawa Malays then working the gold in Ulu Pahang should
bring it down the Langat valley where the Raja lived instead of
to Malaka. These would seem to be comparatively recent traditions.

At Klang however have been found the iron socketted tools
and a bronze bell a proof of ancient occupation by men. Gold
has been worked in the Klang valley and is still being found at
Petaling. C N Maxwell suggests that the name derives from
Landa melanda to pan for gold, or tin ore. Ten miles east of Klang
the Damansara river joins it. Daman in Hindustani means the
foothills, a very correct description of the area. Sara in Sanskrit
means water, & in Hindustani a mansion or wealth.

There has been an ancient kampong here with a tale of an
old couple whose son went off to seek his fortune and returned
in his own ship but when he saw his old mother still living as
an aboriginal without clothes he was ashamed and denied his
relationship tho' his mother recognised him. She then cursed him
& he and his ship were turned into stone. This is a common
tradition along the west coast and probably records the arrival
of strangers who later faded out owing to malaria. At the source
of the river is the stream Palampas which bears a faint resem­
lance to Palandas Khrysoanas river. The latitude fixes it at the Bruas River & the
Jarum Mas now a tidal estuary. All maps shew the Bruas as a
mouth of the Perak river down to Rennels map as late as the
end of the 18th century and this confirms the Perak tradition
that the rice fields of Bruas were formerly a harbour. The name
may derive from Kherna to flow and sonasa golden from the
peaty colour of the water and doubtless connected with it being
one route leading up to the gold mines at Bidor and Ulu Pahang.
The 5th century Fu Nan Chi mentions the Chin Lin meaning
torrent of Gold. Does this connect with the name Jarum Mas. Jarum meaning a needle & Jeram meaning a torrent are written the same in Jawi. Jeram Mas the torrent of gold, and the Khryssoanas the golden river.

_Dharra_. The position agrees with the Krian swamp area and so may derive from Tarai a swamp in hindustani. At Selinsing we have the remains of 4th/5th century settlement but this does not preclude an earlier foundation in the neighbour-hood.

Braddell says there are many positions given for Dharra. Malaya is a land of swamps & so the name would be applied to different sites.

_Kokko Nagara_ or _Konko Nagara_. The former might be the malay Kukoh Negri, the strong or fortified city and the latter Gangga Negri the wonderful or fabulous city. The position is about the Merbok or Muda rivers in Kedah. The Kedah annals fix the malay Langkasuka here. The point at the northern mouth of the merbok is Tanjong Dawei the cape of the gods and up the Merbok Q Wales has excavated Buddhist and Saivite shrines but all dated later than the 4th century AD. Both the Chinese annals & the Mohit locate Langkasuka at Patani on the east coast but close to the Merbok river in Kedah we have the Sungei Patani thus connecting the name with both coasts. Patan means a mart and we know that there was a cross peninsula trade where goods from the east would be exchanged for those from India between the periods of the NE and SW monsoons. So we must visualise a state controlling both coasts.

_Promontory_. The latitude agrees with Kedah Peak. Gunong Jerai. The Kedah annals record the tradition that when the legendary founder of the State came from Gumrun in Persia, Kedah Peak was pointed out to him "as just being joined to the mainland" & other islands as having become Hills, due to the rise of land. Gambrun is marked on maps of the 18th century on the mainland of Persia behind the island of Ormuz at the entrance to the Persian Gulf. But Yule in his edition of Marco Polo names it Jerun. Perhaps Gurun a village at the eastern end of Kedah Peak may derive from this name. The Malay letter jin is pronounced as a hard 'G' in Egyptian Arabic.

_Takola_. Trang now some miles inland but the present coast is mangrove mud and so recent. There is a well known track, dividing half way across the peninsula one leading to Ligor the other to Patalung. Also it is possible to travel up the Trang river and then with a short portage to descend the Girirat river to Bandon. The name Trang may derive from Taran in Hindustani meaning a crossing. Tom Pires actually writes Teram.