Short Notes

Two Bone Tools in the Raffles Museum

(Received May, 1956)

A. From Da Phuc (Ho-binh), Tonkin, Indo-China.

This specimen (R.M. No. 36.653 C., excavated by Mme Colani) compares closely with a pair of objects from Star Carr, Seamer, Yorkshire, England, made from portions of elk femur. In each a section of long bone has been split and then shaped by flaking in a manner similar to stone-working. The flaking has been carried out from the outer margin of each side of the inner face towards the medullary cavity; also at the butt end from the inner face; and at the working end, again from the inner face, though traces of this flaking have mainly been obliterated by subsequent polishing. In both the hollow working edge has been polished smooth, mainly from the concave interior face, but also to a lesser degree from the outside. The only variations I can see are that the Indo-Chinese specimen is made from a thicker bone and that the working edge is rather narrower in relation to the maximum width of the tool than in the case of the Starr Carr specimens.

B. From Bukit Chuping, Perlis, Malaya.

This specimen appears to have been made from a splinter of thick tubular bone. There is only a slight and dubious trace of flaking at one point on one edge. I would imagine that such a tool might be of wide occurrence. For European parallels see Phillips, Giant's Hills Report, Archaeologia, 85, 1938, fig. 8, p. 58.

Prof. J. G. D. Clark.

1. See plate 9 (a), the bone tool from Da Phuc, Tonkin. (b), the specimen from Bukit Chuping, Perlis. (c) & (d) the two examples from Starr Carr cited in the first section of this note. All approximately two-thirds natural size. The specimens from Starr Carr are described as leather-stretching tools.

2. Elk bones would not have been available in Tonkin. Mme Calani's example may have been made from a long-bone of the Gaar, the Banteng, the Kouprey or even the Water Buffalo.

Kuala Lumpur in 1884?

(Received November 1956)

The photograph reproduced here on plate 10 comes from an old family album which Sir Roland Braddell has generously presented to the MBRAS. The book contains some thirty undated photographs, six of which are of public buildings in Singapore, while a further fourteen are of groups of people or landscapes in the Malay States.

Dr Gibson-Hill has examined the remaining nineteen of these twenty pictures carefully. He tells me that on internal evidence four of the Singapore pictures must have been taken between about 1875 and 1885. And while on present information he cannot date the other two with any precision, there is certainly nothing in them to suggest that they were taken outside this period. The latter point applies also to the majority of the Malayan views, but even here he is able to place six of them more closely. Two of the prints are clearly from the series of pictures taken when W. W. Birch and J. G. Davidson visited Lukut, Selangor and Perak early in 1875. Another two are apparently from the set said to have been made by the Colonial Engineer, Major Fred McNair, R.A., in Perak in 1875/6, during and immediately after the Perak War. A fifth undoubtedly shows Speedy drilling a small and very ragged guard at Taiping, and must therefore have been taken between 1875 and 1877. A sixth, which depicts a diverse and partly blurred collection of people grouped round a richly caparisoned buffalo, can even more surely be attributed to the end of 1878 or January the following year: it is from the same negative as the print which Miss Isabella Bird collected when in Sungai Ujong early in 1879, and subsequently had copied

1. An engraving based on a print similar to one of the two in Sir Roland's album appears in McNair's book, Perak and the Malays: "Sarong and Kris", Tinsley Brothers, London, 1878: see the plate, 'General aspect of a Malay village on a river bank', opp. p. 229. The title-page includes the statement, 'Illustrated with Thirteen Engravings by R. Knight, from Photographs taken by the Author'. Surviving prints from the Perak war series are in every respect similar to surviving prints from the series illustrating the tour of Birch & Davidson a year earlier. The latter were taken by the official government photographer, who was also in Perak in 1876: but it is not unlikely that McNair used while camera in Perak, and the official photographer's subsequently left him to prepare all the prints required. There is, Dr. Gibson-Hill tells me, a third author in the field claiming two of McNair's negatives—McNair, opp. p. 57 & opp. p. 138. Prints from both are reproduced by Brigadier H. R. Kelham, C.B. (British Malaya, 3, (2), 1928, pp. 48 & 49) who attributes them to a Capt. Monckton, R.A., who accompanied the Indian troops to Perak.
Bone tools from (a) Da Phuc, Tonkin. (b) Bukit Chuping Perlis, and (c) & (d) Starr Carr, England. See text p. JMBRAS, 32, (1), 1959, pl. 9.
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for reproduction in the published account of her travels in Malaya.²

Since the print under discussion here comes from this same collection (and is of the same size, quality and age as the others), it has been assumed that it represents a Malayan scene of approximately the same period. If this is so, there is a good deal of internal evidence, both general and particular, for identifying it as a photograph of Kuala Lumpur, taken in or about 1884 from the slopes of Bukit Nanas, looking west-south-west across the Sungai Klang, and showing the main features of the outskirts of the town on the west bank of the river. The original Chinese town on the east bank must be assumed to be hidden behind trees at the left of the picture. If this tentative identification is correct, this is a most important addition to the few photographs extant of Kuala Lumpur before its rapid growth in brick and tile during the later eighteen-eighties.

The general view in the photograph is of a large village, or a small town, in a valley with the ground rising fairly steeply on either side to low hills. There is certainly one river and there appears (the print, which has suffered a little with age, is not entirely clear) to be a confluence of two rivers: both are comparatively small. The main block of buildings in the centre of the picture are Chinese in style, and the expanse of water (on the middle-right) suggests a mining pool. The buildings on the higher ground further back look like government offices or police barracks. The bridge across the river is a competent engineering job. No Chinese tin-mining magnate of 1880 built such a bridge; he saved his money and let his men go across in a boat! Below the bridge can be seen two boats, and possibly more: this suggests that there was at least some traffic along the river.

This description fits very well with what we know of Kuala Lumpur from written sources at this time. Moreover, the par-

2. Isabella L. Bird (Mrs Bishop), The Golden Chersonese, and the way thither, Murray, London, 1883; see the plate facing page 202. The book is composed of letters written by the author to her younger sister during her travels, with the subsequent addition of introductory passages where necessary. Miss Bird’s thirteenth letter is headed ‘Residency, Sungai Ujong, January 30th,’ [1879], and begins ‘We have been here for four days . . .’ Later in the same letter she says, ‘. . . It is a great pity that this Prince [the Dato’ Klana of Sungai Ujong] is in Malacca, for he is said to be a very enlightened ruler. The photograph which I enclose (from which the engraving is taken) is of the marriage of his daughter, a very splendid affair. The buffalo in front was a marriage present from the Straits Government, and its covering was of cloth of gold thick with pearls and precious stones’ (see pp. 184 & 201). Nothing further is said about the wedding, which must have taken place shortly before Miss Bird’s visit.

ticular features seem to be in about the right position relative to each other. Take a modern map of Kuala Lumpur and lay a ruler from Bukit Nanas to the Federal Police Headquarters (which stands approximately where the Selangor Government offices stood between 1882 and 1896). The Klang/Gombak river junction and the Market Street bridge bear roughly the same relation to the line of the ruler as the presumed river junction and the bridge in the photograph bear in relation to the line of the camera looking towards the remoter group of buildings. It is difficult to think of any other Malayan town of this period which could correspond better with the photograph than Kuala Lumpur does. The conjuncture of Chinese village and a substantial bridge is unique for this period: there was little money for bridge construction in the Malay States in the eighteen-eighties.

Some of the major topographical features of the photograph also deserve individual scrutiny. First, take the river or rivers. In the middle and right of the photograph it is difficult to analyse with certainty. The present writer's interpretation may be seen in the accompanying sketch. The channel nearest the camera is assumed to be the Klang River; the broader expanse behind is a pool; the Gombak runs in front of the main block of buildings, with its effluence in front of the building furthest to the left of the block. The definite and markedly straight 'boundary' of the block of buildings suggests the existence of a line of commu-

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We must remember that the course of the Klang and Gombak rivers through Kuala Lumpur has been much altered since 1880 to reduce the risk of flooding. The first of these changes occurred in 1884. The Klang River was widened, and its course modified, near its junction with the Gombak. There is no trace of any such work in the photograph, and this point helps us to date it. It will be seen that below the bridge the river appears to run away to the west as far as the buildings or sheds beyond the boats. This is consistent with the known course of the Klang River in the eighteen-eighties. The present north/south line below the Klang/Gombak junction is the result of works undertaken just before 1890.

The other natural feature which deserves mention is the line of hills beyond the town. The high ground of Carcosa and Federal Hill would stand out in this fashion if viewed from a moderate height above river level on the east bank of the Klang River.

The bridge is presumed to be the first Market Street bridge which was built in 1883. There is no other bridge in the photograph except the pole-bridge across the Klang River above its junction with the Gombak. Yet a bridge costing $54,000 was built at this point (that is, above the junction) in 1884. These points enable us to restrict the date of the photograph to the years 1883/4. The Market Street bridge, which is visible, is described in contemporary reports as built of timber and 150 feet long. It was replaced by an iron bridge in 1890.

The central block of Chinese houses and shops corresponds well enough with a view of these same buildings taken across the

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3. See JMBRAS, 28, (4), 1955: pl. 5, lower picture, from Sir Frank Swettenham, British Malaya, 2nd revised edn, 1948, opp. p. 257. This picture, and one of Kuala Trengganu from across the river of about the same date, are described by Swettenham on pp. xx & xxi as 'Taken for the author'. The Kuala Lumpur pictures were probably taken to show the appearance of the town immediately before the inauguration of Swettenham's rebuilding programme (JMBRAS, 28, (4), 1955: 38-40). Originally all walls and roofs were of atap. In September 1884 a rule was made requiring property owners to rebuild in brick or wattle with tiled roofs.


Padang in 1884,\(^7\) from the other side. They were demolished by stages up to 1894 when the centre part of the site was taken over for the present secretariat building. The office buildings further back are on the far side of the Padang (which is hidden from view by the Chinese buildings). It is known that the Selangor Government had its offices on this site (now the Federal Police Headquarters area) in Bluff Road from 1882 to 1896.

The boats moored below the bridge agree with the known fact that this area was used as a landing place. But one would have expected that the east bank of the Klang River above Market Street, which can be partly seen in the photograph, would be crowded with buildings. It is known that Kuala Lumpur of Yap Ah Loy's time was close to the east bank of the river in this area. The stretch of the bank which can be seen corresponds with the Embankment (built in this century when the bank had been moved back and raised against flooding), and what used to be known as Jelore Street. It may be that this low ground was left vacant in the eighteen-eighties after the disaster of 1881, because it was especially subject to flooding. It may also be that this area, which came first in Swettenham's rebuilding programme,\(^8\) had been cleared for rebuilding when the photograph was taken.

A Forgotten Naval Battle

It is difficult to imagine anyone criticising Professor C. N. Parkinson's *War in the Eastern Seas* (London, 1953) on the grounds of lack of detail, or noting any significant omission. I was, therefore, so much the more startled by my discovery when I came on the report of a forgotten naval action fought in the Macassar Strait in 1806, hidden away in an early issue of the *Prince of Wales Island Gazette* (Georgetown, Penang Island, 1805-27). The engagement is not mentioned in Parkinson, nor can I find any reference to it in any other naval history available to me.\(^1\) Accordingly, as we, the British, won this particular action, I have disinterred it for presentation here.

The account (*P.O.W.I.Gazette*, 23 August 1806) states that late in the afternoon of 26 July, H.M.S. Greyhound (32: Captain Elphinstone), one of a detached unit of Admiral Sir Thomas Troubridge's fleet based on Penang, sighted four strange sail from the mast head. With H.M.S. *Harrier* (Captain Troubridge) it managed to watch them unobserved all night, lazily cruising to windward under a full moon, with the Celebes coast distant three to seven miles.

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1. There is, I am told, an account of this action in James's *Naval History*, 4:162.
Let the log of Greyhound take over. ‘At daylight perceived the ships to leeward to be as follows: a frigate in the van, a ship resembling one of our armed ships, a large two decked ship like an English Indiaman, and a corvette; at half past 5 a.m. bore up under French flag as if to speak the frigate, the Harrier close astern of us; the ship to leeward showed Dutch colours and closed in a line of battle ahead. At 6, being within hail of the frigate hauled down the French colours and commenced firing, which was returned with great spirit by the enemy.’

Note now the Nelsonian touch, the abandonment of the side-by-side hammer and tongs that had characterized engagements for centuries. ‘Harrier bore up and passing between the enemy’s van and second ship, raked them both to great effect; [we] wore round the frigate’s bow, raking her while passing and threw our sails back to regain Harrier, now engaged to leeward; our fire evidently superior to the enemy’s’ A brilliant piece of teamwork, which had subjected the leading Dutch frigate to fire from both sides.

At half past six the frigate’s fire ceased. ‘. . . hailed her to know if she had struck; sent the jolly boat on board to take possession of her, and brought our guns to bear on the ships astern, the Indiamen and armed ship immediately struck, the sloop of war making off to leeward’. Harrier wore and made sail in chase of her, but she could not show so much canvas as the enemy, who had apparently suffered little in the action. ‘Made Harrier signal of her recall, and her boat took possession of the Indiamen, as did ours of the armed ship.’

The prizes proved to be the Dutch Republican frigate Pallas (36 guns, 230 men), the Victoria, formerly Lucy Maria, (Captain Walter Dawes: 18 guns, 135 men), and the Batavia, (10 guns, 84 men); the vessel which escaped was the Dutch Republican corvette William (twenty 24-pounders, 110 men). The British had one seaman killed, and a boatswain, master’s mate, clerk and five seamen wounded, but not badly. At noon the corvette under all sail was standing for Macassar.

The conquerors and their prizes arrived at Penang on 19 August, and two days later Sir Thomas Troubridge made the following promotions. Into the captured Dutch frigate Pallas, which became H.M.S. Macassar, he placed as post captain his son, Captain Troubridge, of the Harrier. The latter took with him three of his lieutenants, the purser, surgeon, boatswain, gunner and carpenter. Into the Harrier the Admiral posted Lieutenant Wilbraham of the Blenheim, his flagship, with the rank of commander.