On Unusual Forms of Burial by People of the East Coast of Borneo

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Source: *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 26 (1897), pp. 33-36

Published by: [Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2842329>

Accessed: 14/06/2014 02:43

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of them to be specimens of genuine Mexican art. In many examples, especially in the case of the pictographs before them, the line of demarcation between the indigenous and the Spanish styles was very hard to draw. He thought that it was premature to form far-reaching theories with regard to the origin of Mexican civilisation; the more immediate links in the chain would occupy investigators for a long time to come. Certainly the ancient Aztecs were found in possession of inventions which it seemed difficult to attribute entirely to their own powers of discovery; but the whole question must for the present remain *sub judice*.

Mr. C. H. READ drew attention to the necessity of carefully distinguishing between imitations and forgeries especially in dealing with a country like Mexico. An imitation might be a genuine instance of native style, and consequently possess a value of its own. A forgery on the other hand usually betrayed itself by the presence of inharmonious and incongruous elements out of keeping with the style which it aspired to represent, and was consequently worthless.

Sir HENRY HOWORTH pointed out that we should discriminate between migrations of culture and migrations of race. Culture might travel both rapidly and to a surprising distance; the movements of peoples were far slower and far more difficult to trace. For this reason, amongst many others, arguments drawn from racial similarity should be examined with very great caution.

Mr. GOWLAND doubted any regular communication between Japan and Mexico. At any rate Japanese literature was silent on the subject.

Mr. H. BALFOUR believed that a musical instrument exhibited by Mr. Howarth must have been introduced into Mexico through the medium of negro slaves. It was of distinctly African type.

On UNUSUAL FORMS of BURIAL by PEOPLE of the EAST COAST of BORNEO. By C. V. CREAGH, Esq.

[WITH PLATE V.]

EXTRACT from DIARY for MARCH, 1895.

"*March 13th.*—Visited some caves in a limestone hill on the left bank of the river near the Batu Puteh estate. These caves

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were used as burial places by a former race of inhabitants of whom none of the present settlers or traders on the Kinabatangan could give me any information. The entrance to the upper cave (being in the face of an almost perpendicular rock at about 70 or 80 feet from the ground) is somewhat difficult to reach. It contains about 40 bilian (= ironwood) coffins, artistically carved with figures of buffaloes, crocodiles, lizards, and snakes, containing skeletons of men, women, and children; and also sumpitans, spears, and articles of Chinese and other pottery, with brass ornaments of native and foreign workmanship. The relics appear to me to be of Javanese origin, but there is no tradition on the river of settlers of this nationality. The carvings and scroll work on some of the coffins are superior to those now executed by native workmen."

The above extract from my diary refers to some caves in a limestone hill on the left bank of the Kinabatangan River, in British Borneo. This hill, which is called Batu Puteh (white rock) by the natives, is situated in a large forest of bilian and other valuable timber, at a distance of about a mile from the river, and about two miles below the Batu Puteh tobacco estate.

The caves appear to have been formed by the action of water on the limestone rock, but I saw no stalagmites or stalactites in any of them. Those near the foot of the hill contain several bilian coffins of rude workmanship, and quantities of human bones. These lower caves appear to have been frequently visited and ransacked by natives. Most of the coffins were uncovered and empty, and the bones strewn over the surface of a brown guano deposit with which the caves are floored, formed by the droppings of innumerable bats, which cling to the roofs and walls, and flew out in clouds on our approach. I have no very distinct recollection of the form or size of these caves, but I think none of them exceeds 20 or 30 yards in length; most of them are narrow and irregular, and in one instance I noticed what appeared to be the remains of a bilian coffin, placed in a mere cleft in the face of the rock about 15 feet long.

The existence of the upper cave was not generally known until about twelve months ago, and I believe Messrs. Shaw and Breitag, who conducted me to it last March, were the first Europeans to visit it. It consists of two or three irregular chambers, connected by short passages, and is situated about 80 feet from the ground. In the largest chamber, which is about 60 feet long by 30 or 40 feet wide, I counted 40 bilian coffins of men, women, and children, most of which were elaborately carved. Some of them were arranged in tiers one above another, while others

were placed separately on the floor of the cavern. In some instances the lids (which were only kept in place by their own weight) had been removed, disclosing the apparently complete skeletons of men, women, and children in perfect preservation. I enclose a copy of a sketch, which I made in my note book at the time of one of these coffins, which contained the skeleton of a male adult, and I noticed that most if not all of those similarly ornamented with the protruding heads of buffaloes or cows, contained male skeletons, while figures of snakes, lizards, and crocodiles appeared to be used for the decoration of those of the women and children. None of the relics in the upper cave showed much evidence of decay; the hair as well as the bones of the skeletons, and the woodwork of the coffins, being in many instances in a remarkably sound state of preservation. Most of the coffins contained fragments of common Chinese porcelain and other earthenware vessels, as well as the spears and sumpitans (blow tubes) of the men, and the brass ornaments of the women and children. The latter consisted chiefly of wire bracelets and armlets similar to those worn by the natives of the interior, but brass tiaras of Javanese or other foreign workmanship imparted a singularly ghastly appearance to some of the female skeletons, the hair on which was still kept in place by these ornaments.

Although Mr. Breitag, who accompanied me, had provided a scaling ladder for the purpose, it was not without some difficulty that we reached the entrance of the cave, as the cliff up which we clambered, was almost perpendicular, and in one place slightly overhanging. We were at a loss to conjecture how the coffins had been brought there, as some of them were so large and ponderous that at least four natives would be required to raise them. Opposite the entrance of the cave there is another opening, about ten feet high, and six or seven feet wide, from which there is a sheer fall of some 70 or 80 feet to the ground, and it was suggested at the time that the coffins and their contents must have been hauled up to this aperture by means of ropes, from the base of the rock.

But from information subsequently given to me by Rajah Tuah, an Ilanun chief in Darvel Bay, corroborated by the statement of another native chief to Mr. Cook, in Sandakan, there is reason to believe that the caves were formerly reached by means of a spiral or zigzag pathway cut in the face of the rock, all traces of which have now disappeared.

Rajah Tuah informed me that his own people, and several other tribes of the East Coast formerly practised this mode of burial, and he showed me the remains of a bilian coffin in one of the Madai caves in Darvel Bay, where edible birds' nests are

now regularly collected, which caves he said had been used for a like purpose in the old days.

With the approval of the Kinabatangan chiefs (who assured me that I might do so without wounding the susceptibilities of any of the present inhabitants) I authorised the removal of one of the Batu Puteh coffins, with its contents, to the Sandakan Museum. But on subsequently learning that this method of disposing of their dead was probably practised by some of the river tribes up to the beginning of the present century, and that the relics may possibly still be held in veneration by some of the interior tribes, or those of the South-East Coast, I took steps to preserve the remainder of them intact.

From the superior workmanship of most of the coffins, ornaments, and arms, deposited there, it seems probable that the upper cave was used exclusively for the interment of persons of rank.

The CAVE DWELLERS of PERAK. By L. WRAY, JR., M.I.E.E., F.Z.S., Curator Perak Museum and State Geologist.

AS far as the writer has been able to ascertain, the only published account of explorations of cave deposits in Malaya is that describing those carried out by Mr. A. Hart Everett in Sarawak, Borneo, between the years 1878 and 1879. The Royal Society and the British Association voted £50 each, and £200 was contributed from private sources towards the expenses of the investigation, which was carried on under the auspices of a committee appointed by the British Association, consisting of Mr. John Evans, Sir John Lubbock, Major-General Lane-Fox, Mr. George Busk, Professor W. Boyd Dawkins, Mr. Pengelly and Mr. A. W. Franks.

Mr. Everett examined some 20 caves in all, but the results obtained were stated to be of no "special interest, either from an anthropological or a geological point of view." "The animal remains discovered" were all "of recent species, the human bones are probably of no very great antiquity, and none of the few objects of human manufacture which have been found can be regarded as of palæolithic age."

One small V-shaped fragment of stone, seemingly artificial, was found, and a few chips of quartz, which might have been produced by human hands. There would appear to be little evidence that the caves examined were ever inhabited for long periods by human beings. The top layers seem in some caves