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JULY 13TH, 1886.

CONFERENCE ON THE NATIVE RACES OF THE
STRAITS SETTLEMENTS AND BORNEO.

FRANCIS GALTON, Esq., F.R.S., *President, in the Chair.*

Mr. SWETTENHAM read a paper on the Native Tribes of the Straits Settlements.

Mr. PRYER read a paper on the Natives of British North Borneo. Sir GEORGE CAMPBELL and Mr. SWETTENHAM joined in the discussion.

A number of Ethnological objects from the Straits Settlements and from Borneo were exhibited and described.

*On the NATIVE RACES of the STRAITS SETTLEMENTS and
MALAY STATES.*

By F. A. SWETTENHAM, Esq.

At a conference convened by the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland to listen to a paper on the races of the Straits Settlements it might fairly be expected that you would hear some very learned and interesting details on a subject which has for years engaged the attention of scientific men. I beg to assure you at once that I am not a scientist. I shall not attempt to follow such writers as James Richardson Logan and Baron Mieluho-Maclay in a disquisition on the ethnology of the inhabitants of the Malay Peninsula.

My effort to interest you will be of the humblest and most commonplace description, and of necessity it will be brief.

Before I say anything about the races inhabiting the Straits Settlements I should like for one moment to detain you with a word about the country they inhabit.

The Straits Settlements consist of two islands, Penang and Singapore, and a strip of the mainland called Malacca lying between them. Singapore is about 1° 20' north of the equator, Malacca is 120 miles by sea north-west of Singapore, and Penang 260 miles further in the same direction. All three settlements are in the Straits of Malacca, and together they comprise, with a recently acquired strip of territory called the Dindings, an area of less than 1,500 square miles, containing a population of half a million inhabitants. The very interesting and instructive colonial statistics which are printed in the

Exhibition near that gigantic chart of the world, and under the clocks which show you that the Queen's flag really does wave over an empire where the sun never sets, disclose a fact so remarkable that I may be permitted to call your special attention to it in connection with the subject under consideration: it is this, that whereas the area of the Dominion of Canada is so enormous that it more than doubles that of the whole Indian Empire, the value of the trade of Canada is actually less than that of the Straits Settlements colony. The figures in the returns for 1884 were roughly, Canada, thirty-nine millions, the Straits Settlements, forty millions sterling. I mention that because it is certainly a curious fact but little known, and it adds an interest to the consideration of such a subject as the races inhabiting these settlements. I need hardly tell you that up to the year 1867 the Straits Settlements formed one of the Presidencies of India, a non-paying Presidency, that in that year they became a Crown colony and remain so. There are no duties, all the ports are free, and I believe the colony is financially the most prosperous of any of its class. At any rate it pays £50,000 a year for imperial troops, it contributed £100,000 towards military operations in its neighbourhood, and it has just spent £100,000 at the request of the Imperial Government in fortifications. It may therefore be concluded that those with whom lies the responsibility for the defence of the Empire regard Singapore as an important strategic post.

I trust you will not think that in mentioning these facts I am digressing from the subject, and I confess I should like, if time had permitted, to tell you more of a colony which must be of considerable importance to the British producer and consumer, though I doubt if its existence is much known outside the narrow circle of those whose interests have brought them in direct contact with the place.

I said that the population of the Straits Settlements colony was half a million, and I may add that thirty years ago the number of inhabitants was 248,000. The races were divided as follows at the last census in 1881:—

Malays	174,326
Chinese	174,327
Natives of India	41,106
Europeans	3,483

the balance being made up of representatives of between twenty and thirty different nationalities.

In regard to the division of races the interesting facts to be noted are that the Chinese, whilst by far the most important race, the most laborious, intelligent, wealthy, and the largest

contributors to the revenue, are also increasing in numbers by far the most rapidly, mainly owing to the enormous number of immigrants who year by year leave China to seek their fortunes in the Straits of Malacca. A fact of equal if not greater interest is that the Malays, while they appear to be dying out in those Malay states which are under a purely Malay government, are slowly but surely increasing their numbers under the British Government in the Straits Settlements colony, and this increase is a natural increase, and not one to be ascribed (except in a minor degree) to immigration.

The natives of India are increasing from the same cause as that which influences the Chinese, but to a lesser extent, because though they find in the Straits Settlements a prosperity which is very unusual in their own country, the Government of India has until quite recently placed all kinds of hindrances in the way of free emigration of natives of India from the Indian Peninsula to the Straits Settlements.

So far I have referred, as the notice of this conference bids me, to the races of the Straits Settlements, but I would ask you to let me include the races of the Malay Peninsula, for the chief interest to ethnologists is probably in the aborigines of the Peninsula, none of whom are found in the more civilised colony.

The Malay Peninsula covers an area of about 75,000 square miles, and contains about 670,000 inhabitants, *excluding* Chinese and other recent settlers. These people belong to three distinct stocks.

The Thai or Siamese	(about)	150,000
The Malay	(about)	500,000
And the Negrito or Aborigines	(about)	20,000

Under the protection of the British crown and the direction of the Governor of the Straits Settlements are three important Malay states, Perak, Selangor, and Sungei Ujong, all of which have contributed specimens of their products to this Exhibition, and the first mentioned has sent here and erected the Malay house which you may see in the garden. I do not propose to refer to the races of the unprotected states of the peninsula, and in those I have mentioned the Siamese element is so small that it may be dismissed from consideration.

The Malay and Negrito races are both of the highest interest from whatever point considered, but it is quite impossible, in the time at my disposal, to do more than refer to them in the briefest possible manner.

It is unlikely that the Malays can be really indigenous to the peninsula, and where they came from, whether Java, Sumatra,

or elsewhere in the archipelago, is a question which has never yet met with a satisfactory answer. The Malay tradition is that they had a supernatural origin, and that they crossed from Sumatra to the Malay Peninsula. The tradition concerning the swords in the Perak Regalia will give some idea of what amount of confidence can be placed in Malay history. Wherever they came from, the Malays spread themselves and their language over an enormous area, and Malay is now, and was 400 years ago, spoken throughout the Malay Archipelago from Sumatra to the Philippine Islands. There is a colony of Malays at the Cape of Good Hope and it is supposed that the Malay language can be traced in the dialect spoken by the savages of Formosa.

As regards the weapons, I will read to you what Raja Dris says of the sword with pearls in the handle; it is one of the most valued pieces in the Perak Regalia.

(The Perak Regalia were here exhibited and described.)

History of the Pêrak Regalia.

By H.H. Rajah Dris, C.M.G.

Translated by F. A. Swettenham, Esq., H.M.'s. Resident at Selangor.

" THIS is the history given by men of olden time, regarding the Regalia of the Sultans of Pêrak, the home of peace.

" There was a Raja named Raja Chulan who came out of the sea clad with splendour; he it was who originally sprang into being at the mountain called Sa'Guntang Mahâ Biru. Now when His Highness rose out of the sea he was wearing a crown studded with precious stones. Behind his ear he wore a seal called Lalinter (Lightening), with a handle of the wood called Gâmat and a sword called Chorek Sa'manjakinin. It was said by the men of old time that this sword was made by a king called Japhet, son of Noah, the Prophet of God, and it is a most deadly weapon. In the handle of the sword are the two priceless stones called 'Lok-Lok,' while at the end of the sheath there is a stone called 'Kachûbong.' This sword was brought by Raja Chulan from out of the ocean to become the Regalia of the country of Pêrak. Secondly there is a writing called Chiri brought by Bahta out of the sea. It was Bahta who was vomited by the Cow at the mountain called Sa'Guntang, hence the class called 'Cow-vomit' now existing in Pêrak. Thirdly there is a golden betel-nut box called 'Puan Nâgatâroh,' that betel box also came out of the sea. The sword called 'Sêda Mêlêkah,'

“and the sword called ‘Pěbûjang’ and a ‘Kris alang’¹ named ‘Pěstâka’ are said to have come from Acheen; there is also a ‘pětî bėnian’² and a golden mundam which were brought from Johor by the late Sultan Tānah Abang.

“Moreover there is a Guliga found by a woman of Těmong named Che Teh Pěrbu. She it was to whom the title of Toh Těmong was given and she presented the Guliga to H.H. the late Sultan Tānah Abang when he was on the throne of Pêrak. Finally many articles of the Regalia owe their origin to the custom that prevailed whereby each Raja when on the throne should add to the Regalia some fitting article of novel description.

“That was called an instituted custom, that is to say a recent custom.”

The other daggers are specimens of the Malay kris, and though the owner likes to put his weapon in a pretty scabbard, it is not the golden sheath but the highly tempered blade he values. Those two krisses with curious handles in the shape of a Malay comedian’s mask are modern weapons, but they are only made in the heart of the Malay Peninsula, at a particular spot, and they are most difficult to procure. It used to be the custom for Malay Rajas to sleep with their weapons on such a cushion as that, placed at the bed head, and this silver border is some 60 or 70 years old.

The earthenware water jar is of recent manufacture, and was made in the interior of Pahang, where I got it a year ago. The design is called the “pomegranate,” and the clay being unglazed is porous, and the water in the vessel is thus kept fairly cool.

I would now ask you to look at the fabrics, which are fair specimens of Malay weaving. They are all but one of silk, woven in the roughest hand looms; but the designs are, I believe, peculiar to the Malays, and it is a pleasure to me to mention that the President of the Royal Academy, visiting the Exhibition in the earliest days of its existence, was specially struck with the artistic value of these Malay fabrics. The cotton painted cloth is what is called a “kain batek”; it is made in Java, and this class of “sarong,” as the Malay national garment is called, is highly valued by the Malays. The colours are permanent, and the pattern is obtained by covering the cloth with a thin layer of wax, tracing the design for each colour separately, and then dipping the cloth in the dye. All the fabrics, whether silk, cloth of gold, or cotton, will wash without injury, but the prices of these stuffs are high.

¹ A “Kris Alang” is between the “Kris panjang” and the “Kris pandak” in size.

² A “pětî bėnian” is the Treasure box of a Regalia, a kind of ancient safe.

Malay women pride themselves on their skill in mat-making and needlework, and you will find here specimens of both. The mat and betel boxes are made from the bleached inner portion of the pandan leaf.

I should like for a moment to call your special attention to these specimens, as illustrating what I think is an unusual degree of artistic taste and creditable work when the implements at command are taken into consideration. The gold box belongs to the Pêrak Regalia, and is similar in shape to the silver box though of different design. Both are meant to contain the betel-chewing apparatus, and both are of a pattern no longer used. I believe they are at least 100 years old, and they were probably made by Sumatran workmen in the employ of the Sultan of Pêrak. The golden bowl, with a mixed gold and copper support, is to hold drinking water, whilst the double silver stand is for rosewater in which to wash the fingers before and after eating. These two vessels also belong to the Pêrak Regalia, and to judge from the appearance of the latter it must be of great age. I think it will be admitted that this silver rosewater dish, with its immense variety of design in the highly repoussé work on both body and stand, is an exceptionally beautiful vessel. The silver dish, betel boxes and scissors, and the water bowl with cover are also good specimens. They are about 40 or 50 years old and the work of Sumatran Malays. The small golden pomegranate is modern work, made in Trengganu. It is intended to hold attar of roses and to be tied to the corner of a pocket handkerchief.

Until about the year 1250 the Malays were pagans or followed some corrupted form of Hindu worship, and Sultan Mahmud Shah, who reigned over the Malacca dominions in the 13th century was the first Malay Prince converted by Arab missionaries to the Mohammedan faith. His reign was a long one and his power extensive, so that when the Portuguese arrived in the Straits of Malacca in 1511, they found the greater part of the Malays of the Peninsula professing the religion of Islam. It is a curious fact that up to the time of this conversion the Malay, of all the Sumatran languages, should have possessed no written character of its own, and those Arabs who spread the Mohammedan faith taught also the use of the Perso-Arabic character and introduced many Arabic words into the Malay language. Malay is essentially a dissyllabic language, but it contains a considerable number of Sanskrit words, supposed to have been introduced by the Hindus, who appear to have settled in Java and Sumatra in the 4th century. Relics of Hindu superstitions are still found amongst the Malays and Negritos of the Peninsula, and the customs even now observed, especially

in Pêrak, on certain occasions are especially interesting, utterly opposed as they are to Mohammedan teaching, and savouring strongly of devil-worship.

The Malay people were a very important power in the archipelago before their conversion to Islam, but I cannot tell you anything of the state of their then civilisation, for their so-called histories are not trustworthy, and I am not aware that any specimens of their manufactures in those days exist. I have brought here for you to see some gold and silver vessels of ancient origin—from 50 to 200 years old—some weapons of more recent date, a water jar, and a few fabrics used as wearing apparel. I doubt whether the influence of the Islam creed can be traced in these manufactures, but there is no question that it has proved most congenial to the Malay character; a character which cannot be described in a sentence, but the leading features are pride of race and birth, extraordinary observance of punctilio, and a bigoted adherence to ancient custom and tradition. I can only speak of what the Malay is now, and I am inclined to think that six centuries of the Mohammedan faith has moulded his character in respect of the features I have mentioned, while an enormous belief in the supernatural is possibly a relic of the præ-Islam state.

Finally, there are the Negrito tribes of the Malay Peninsula, in reference to whom Mr. Abraham Hale has written an interesting paper, which was read at a meeting of the Anthropological Institute early this year. M. De Morgan has also written recently on the same subject in the French publication "*L'Homme*," and the Russian traveller, Baron Miçluho-Maclay, has made these people his special study.

In the Straits Settlements Court of the Exhibition will be found the most complete collection of the clothing, weapons, and ornaments of these people ever yet brought together, and specimens of some of these are now before you.

The Negrito tribes are called by the Malays of different states by many different names, but perhaps the commonest is "*Ôrang Utan*," wild or jungle people. My own observation leads me to the conclusion that they are divided into two widely different sections, usually known as Sakai and Semang. The former, a people of moderate stature and large bones, rather fairer in complexion than Malays, with long unkempt, wavy hair, standing straight out from their heads. The latter, small and dark, with black frizzy hair, close to their heads like that of the negro races. Both classes are nomadic, live on roots and easily grown vegetables, fish, birds, and even snakes and lizards, while they avoid all strangers, whether Malays or Negritos of another tribe. Their clothing, when they wear any, consists for the women of

a bark cloth, tied round the waist and reaching to the knee (a specimen is before you), and for the men a similar cloth, passed round the waist and between the legs. For weapons they all use the blow-pipe with an arrow, the point of which is dipped in the heated juice of the ipoh or upas tree. In the use of this "sumpitan," they are very skilful, and can kill with it all kinds of birds and small animals. The Sakais use no other weapon but the Semangs have a very powerful bow and iron-barbed arrows, with which they can kill the largest game. For ornaments, the women wear round their necks and arms strings of brass rings, boars' or squirrel's teeth, beads or beetles' legs, and coins when they can get them. Sometimes also they paint their faces with red devices traced in the juice of the Bixa Orellana fruit, whilst both men and women wear, through the septum of the nose, a porcupine's quill, the bone of a fish, or a rolled piece of the leaf of the plantain tree. The more civilised Ōrang Ūtan live in wretched hovels built with jungle materials, while others sleep on the ground or in caves. Steel implements are highly prized by these tribes for they have neither the means nor the knowledge to make them themselves, but it is believed that comparatively recently some at least of them used implements of flint or slate.

None of the Negritos profess any religion or believe in any Supreme Being, but they are intensely superstitious, and imagine that the hills, the woods, and the rivers are filled with spirits, the majority of which are evil and must be propitiated. They call the sun a good spirit, and it is natural that they should have a high regard for it.

The rude art of the Negritos is confined to the ornamentation of their blow-pipes, arrow-sheaths, and hair combs, all of them made of bamboo, with primitive designs scratched by a hard point of wood or iron. The only fabric is the "kain trap," or bark cloth, you have seen; of pottery or metal work they have no knowledge, and it may be almost said that as far as manufactures go they want none and have none. Except in those cases where coming in contact with Malays they obtain the commonest knives and cooking vessels by a barter, which is always favourable to the more civilised race. Under these circumstances, it seems difficult to draw any close comparison between the Negritos without religion, arts or manufactures, and the Mohammedan Malays, who appear to be of a different type, and have some claims to rank amongst Eastern peoples as a race possessed of considerable artistic talent. Baron Maclay has, however, come to the conclusion, that in a comparison of language, a connecting link can be traced, not only between all the various tribes of Negritos, living quite cut off from each other,

but between them and the Malays, and he has expressed his opinion that the *Ôrang Ôtan* of the Malay Peninsula undoubtedly show traces of a Melanesian blood. This opinion appears to coincide with the result of Logan's researches so far at least as concerns a common præ-Malayan language.

DISCUSSION.

Mr. SWETTENHAM, referring to some remarks by Sir George Campbell, said that an interesting question had been raised, to which he could give a fairly satisfactory reply. The Chinese who came to the Straits Settlements as a rule brought neither wives nor families for the best of reasons, they had none and could support none. In nearly all cases the Chinese came originally as coolies, unable even to pay their own passage money from China. But after a few years' residence in the Straits they usually were in a position to return to China, marry, and again come to the Straits with a wife, or more commonly they married in the colony, sometimes Chinese, sometimes a woman of another nationality. The wealthier Chinese who had been one or more generations in the Straits, almost invariably married the daughters of Chinese in a similar position, and what was very curious was that these people, Straits-born Chinese, used the Malay language more often than Chinese. Indeed, all Chinese resident in the Straits found it more easy and more useful to acquire a slight knowledge of the Malay tongue than to attempt to carry on business with Chinese from another province in an unfamiliar dialect of their own language.

Mr. Swettenham said that this state of affairs prevailed specially in Malacca to which place the Chinese liked to retire in their old age: indeed, Malacca might be described as a popular Chinese cemetery, and it was more common, at least for Straits-born Chinese, to provide for their burial in Malacca than in China. It was certainly incorrect to suppose that a large number of the Chinese who immigrated to the Straits Settlements and the Malay States did not take up their permanent abode in those countries, whilst in many cases the height of their ambition was to become naturalized British subjects.

On the NATIVES of BRITISH NORTH BORNEO.

By W. B. PRYER, Esq., C.M.Z.S.

THE population of British North Borneo is very scanty, so much so that vast tracts on the east coast and in the interior are simply uninhabited forest. On the west coast the population in some districts is fairly large.

The want of people on the east coast is due to the ravages, in old days, of pirates by sea and head hunters by land.