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Notes on North-Eastern Borneo and the Sulu Islands.

By W. B. PRYER, British North Borneo Company's Resident, Elopura.

THE north-east coast of Borneo, though apparently connected with the Sulu Archipelago by the promontory called Tanjong Unsang, and by a series of shallows and banks in continuation of it, is of quite different formation, most of the islands of the archipelago showing evidences of volcanic action, none of which are to be found in Borneo, or at all events not in the northern part of it, the nearest approach to anything of the sort being a hot mud spring on the island of Malwallee, which, however, I myself have only heard of, not seen. As might be expected, the soil of the archipelago is of a particularly rich and fertile character. In North-eastern Borneo, or Sabah as it is called, the formation is principally sandstone, with limestone in a good many places, the latter frequently forming steep, sharply angulated peaks.

One of the chief geographical features of Sabah is an enormous low plain, bordered on the north side by the Labuk Hills, the west by the mountains of the interior, and on the south by the hills crossing to the root of the Unsang promontory, comprising altogether some 4000 square miles. In this district there is a very heavy rainfall in addition to the drainage from the extensive series of mountains at the back, and as a consequence rivers are numerous and large, the principal being the Kina Batangan, the Labuk, and the Monud. The Kina Batangan is noticeable for its extraordinary windings, its stream having to be followed up for some 350 miles before a direct distance inland of 80 miles is gained; the Kina Batangan has been ascended by steamer for the first 150 miles of its course. Many other fine rivers there are, including the Terratum, the Sapi, the Segawah, the Maroap, the Alfred, the Segaliud, the Sekong, the Sapa Guya, and innumerable smaller ones; the banks of nearly all of these rivers are uninhabited. The greater part of the rest of the country is hilly, the formation of the ground being generally in somewhat sharp ridges. It is a question whether a considerable part of the interior is not a gradual slope, the land rising from the east coast till it culminates in the chain of mountains which run down south from Kina Balu; if so there should be a considerable extent of country at an elevation sufficient to render it suitable for European settlers.

The great lake to the east of Kina Balu, hitherto marked on all maps, is non-existent, nor is there even a swamp in its place, the country being very hilly, not to say mountainous. This fact, I believe, I was the first to absolutely ascertain during a journey to the interior which I made in August 1880.

The Sulu Archipelago is extremely lovely: none of the islands are very large, but they are mostly well shaped and hilly, with nearly all

the trees cut down upon them, and fairly well cultivated; they are surrounded by beautiful white coral strands, which, with the verdant hills, the blue sea, the coolness of the atmosphere, and the pleasant light breeze usually blowing, make them unusually attractive for places to reside in, in the tropics. They are fairly well populated; the little island of Sugh, the residence of the Sultan, measuring about 20 miles from east to west, and eight or nine miles north to south, is estimated to contain some 20,000 people; most of these are Sulus (Malays, with a considerable infusion of Arab and Chinese blood). Everywhere amongst the islands, leading a nomadic life in their boats, each boat containing an entire household, are to be found the Bajaws, or sea-gipsies; some of the islands to the south—the Tawa Tawis, Semoonal, Omaddal, Sepangar, &c.—being almost entirely populated by them. The Sulus are much the higher of the two in character, being proud and independent, with an aristocracy of their own, and being of a masterful but drone-like nature, they generally manage to get some one else to do any hard work for them. This refers more particularly to what may be termed the Sea-Sulus, or those living on the coast; the “Orang Gumber,” or men of the hills, are a much more industrious and hard-working people, and less addicted to roving than the Sea-Sulus. In build the Sulus are slight, and a good many of them, particularly the “aristocracy,” undersized; they are very courteous in disposition, well know right from wrong, and in the course of time a good deal may be made of them. The hill people cultivate their crops steadily, but they are a good deal harassed by their more powerful neighbours, while the Coast-Sulus take journeys to other countries, trading or collecting produce, with which every sandbank, reef, foreshore, and forest abounds; they are capable of violent exertion for a short time, but will then simply idle away their time, doing nothing whatever by the week together in the intervals.

The Bajaws are a stronger and rougher race, broad-shouldered and muscular, of a far lower type, hardly knowing wrong from right, timid almost as wild animals, but capable of a dog-like fidelity to those in whom they have gained confidence; they have such indistinct ideas as to personal property, that even their chiefs in some places cannot plant coco-nuts because the buried nut is sure to be dug up for eating within a fortnight, and so little thought for the future that it is actually a fact that Bajaws have been known to throw overboard rice by the bagful rather than carry it about with them in their boats, although within a few days the family would for want of it be certainly reduced to a diet of nothing but limpets and fish. It is dangerous for trading boats to go into some parts where the Bajaws form the bulk of the population, as the crew may be murdered at any time and the cargo divided without their being conscious that they are doing anything particularly wrong. They are in a great measure oppressed by the Sulus, whose chiefs “requisition” them for anything they want that the Bajaws can make or collect,

while Sulu traders establish themselves near every community, and carry on a barter business at extraordinary rates of profit.

The archipelago is almost entirely peopled by these two races; but on the coast-line of Borneo there is to be found an extraordinary mixture of people. At Melapi, the first village up the Kina Batangan (60 miles from its mouth), for example, there are to be found Sundryaks from the interior (the nearest approach to a true aboriginal type), Malays from all parts, Javanese, Sulus, Bajaws, Bugis, Chinese, Arabs, Klings, and many others; while of the Buludupies, the indigenous inhabitants of this district, there are hardly any of pure blood left. In the course of time a most extraordinarily mixed race will arise in Sabah.

The Buludupies inhabit the country bordering the coast-line from Paitan on the north to Silam on the south; they are an interesting race, their ancestry being doubtful, and they seem to show distinct signs of a Caucasian type. Probably they are but a tribe of the Sundryaks of the interior, which however, I must say, they themselves strongly deny. It may be expected that in a few years this race will have become extinct, or merged into a common stock which is rapidly spreading over this part of Sabah.

The rest of the interior of Sabah is inhabited by various tribes of the race styled Eriaans, Dusuns, or Sundryaks, the latter being by far the preferable name. These people are, I believe, descendants of the original Dyak stock of the country, with some admixture of Chinese blood. This has been denied by some writers, but I think existing traditions and facts are both too strong to be contradicted. It is, at all events, strange how thoroughly all traces of Chinese art, speech, and dress have disappeared; but undoubtedly in former times a large trade was carried on between China and North Borneo, and I take it that many of the sailors and traders going inland married amongst the tribes, and, as is usual even now, were not allowed to take their wives away, but had to settle down in that particular district, no doubt, as also is sometimes the case even now, adopting the dress and speech of the natives. According to this theory, there never was a Chinese-speaking place on this side of Borneo (as I have seen it asserted there was on the Kina Batangan), but the infusion of Chinese blood was a slow infiltration, the native speech, manners, and dress always being paramount.

The slavery of these parts is of a very mild character, the slaves frequently dressing as well and wearing as fine creeses as their owners, and frequently going long journeys with or without leave, occasionally even visiting British ports without claiming their freedom, and returning to their master's house when in any difficulty; the whole institution, in fact, partaking of the nature of clanship rather than of what is understood by slavery. Of course the more of these slaves or retainers a Dato or chief had the greater was his reputation; and in proportion to his power the people were content to take shelter behind him, allowing him

very much what he wanted as long as he was able to protect them against others. It was not considered "good form" for a Dato to sell his own people, though there was a good deal of trafficking in slaves who came into their hands in payment of debts, or as captives, &c. The tendency of slavery, however, is demoralising, as tending to prevent people thinking for themselves, as leading to too easy relations between the sexes, and thereby preventing domestic life, and in various other ways.

All the sea and shore tribes in these parts are Mahomedan, but not of a very strict type, and many of their customs are looked upon as very reprehensible by more orthodox Mussulmans. They are, of course, polygamists. One of their customs is rather curious: when a Dato of any consequence marries he settles upon his bride a dowry of so many slaves, male and female, so many pieces of T cloth, of silks, chintzes, and sarongs, all to trade with, as well as some seed-pearls or other valuables in hand as a capital to fall back upon; a house is built for her, and she is settled comfortably. At the end of a few months the roaming fit comes over the Dato and off he goes elsewhere, where generally a similar performance takes place. Nearly all women of any rank are clever, somewhat masterful, and very well able to take care of themselves (these qualities are engendered in them by having under their charge from an early age slaves whose intelligence is entirely surrendered to them); so the temporarily abandoned wife chooses one or two of the more capable men from those given her, who are fitted out and sent away on trading or produce-collecting excursions, while others are set to clear the ground, plant potatoes, bananas, &c., and the women are employed about the house. Matters proceed in this way till some fine day the Dato sails back again to find in every port a house, a wife, and surroundings all comfortable and ready for him.

Thus the sea people lead a free, wild, nomadic life with many virtues and but few vices, are idle and healthy, have a strictly adhered-to code of morality, strong feelings, and at all events are capable not only of being governed but of being of considerable assistance to Government if dealt with in an easy but firm and just manner; one of the strongest sheet anchors of Government in these parts is the maintaining the power of every one, down to the lowest Bajaw, to have the right of personal audience with the representative of Government. This is of course altogether at variance with our Western notions.

Being used to small well-cleared islands over which the sea breezes have no hindrance in playing, the coast tribes find the rivers of the mainland very unhealthy, running as they do through high primeval forest, mist-laden in the morning, hot in the day, cold at night, and with the houses generally built on the lowest ground possible, frequently swampy, for convenience of obtaining water. The Sundryaks, by generations of acclimatisation, are pretty well used to it, but nevertheless fever is common, and natural selection of the strong and tough is

always at work amongst them ; it is indeed partly due to the constant presence of fever amongst them that their increase in number is so small, the population in fact being almost stationary. On the west coast the Sundyaks (there called Dusuns = villagers) have got the upper hand of the forest, and are gradually felling it and clearing it away before them in an easterly direction. The chief tribes of Dusuns on this east coast are the Tunbunwhas, on the Kina Batangan, Labuk, and Sugut rivers, further inland than the Buludupies, the Tingaras inland of them, the Romanows inland of them again, and the Tingaluns inhabiting the upper waters of the Quarmoto, and the Sibuco. The Tunbunwhas are for the most part fairly civilised, are rapidly becoming converted to Islam, and for the most part wear the Sulu dress ; Tingaras retain the manner and dress (or want of it rather) of their Dyak forefathers almost intact ; while the Romanows and Tingaluns are little else than wandering savages, at present of a dangerous type, and not unfrequently still indulging in head-hunting.

The Tunbunwhas are the largest and most important of these tribes, and being nearest to the coast, next to the Buludupies, are also the people we have most to deal with. They live a peaceable rural life and have no very particular points of interest about them ; it is their custom to move from one place to another on the banks of the river, building a very slight house, clearing the ground, and planting in an idle sort of way paddy, bananas, indian corn, sweet potatoes, and the like ; grass sooner or later makes its appearance, very slight attempts are made to keep it down, after a time (generally about three years from first clearing) it has gained the upper hand, and the flimsy house about this time usually showing symptoms of a sudden collapse, a move is made for a fresh location where a similar series of operations takes place. It would seem that these people ought to increase rapidly in numbers, but there are one or two circumstances that strongly interfere with such an increase : one is the vast forest they live in, against which with their lazy ways and the ease with which food and other necessities of life come to them, they make little headway, and the humid shades and the water they drink, which is necessarily forest-drainage, cause fever to be constant amongst them ; another is, they are subject to epidemics, which—living in the small houses they do, men, women, and children, ill and well, all occupying a space not bigger than one room in an ordinary English house, and having no ideas of hygiene or of isolating a sick person whatever illness he may be suffering from—commit frightful ravages amongst them. About ten years ago the Tunbunwhas were getting to be quite a numerous people, the forest was beginning to go down before them in earnest, and their fields to spread some distance back from the margin of the river, so that air, light, and warmth came in, and there was some chance of the river running through clear ground and not through piles of rotting leaves in the forest shade ; but the small-

pox came, and I believe that something like nine out of ten died of it, and the forest closed up over the fields again. Intertribal wars, feuds between one chief or village and another, and raids by head-hunting savages down the rivers from the south have always brought about a slight drain on the population, but nothing in comparison with the two main causes I have mentioned, and when once the people have been properly vaccinated, and one or two tracks made from military stations on one coast to the other, no very difficult or expensive matter, so that small feuds can be prevented, a rapid increase of population may be expected. No one will be more pleased than the natives themselves at thus being controlled, and the only matter seriously to be feared in future will be cholera, not half so terrible or loathsome a scourge, however, as small-pox amongst an unvaccinated community.

Head-hunting occurs amongst these people, but can hardly be spoken of as a regular custom; in their intertribal or village fights, the heads of the slain are usually carried off as trophies, and there are head-dances around them sometimes, but the skulls are not usually kept. Towards the west coast, however, head-hunting is much more of an institution, and there are still head-houses garnished with the trophies of former victories. It is towards the southward, however, towards Bulungan, that head-hunting flourishes in full vigour. In former times the country round the Sibuco river used to be well populated, but so constant were the attacks of head-hunters, that chiefly owing to them that district was depopulated.

“Summing-up” (a custom even more revolting than head-hunting) used to prevail amongst the Eriaans (Sundyaks) far down towards the mouths of the rivers; it was the sacrifice of slaves or captives, usually on the death of a chief or other leading personage. On the Kina Batangan the victim was tied up and danced round by the assembled villagers, each with a spear in his hand; after a short time each one thrust his spear a short way, an inch or thereabouts, into the unfortunate’s body. The custom of the Bulungan people was for as many as possible to take hold of a spear, and, all thrusting together, to stick it through the victim’s body. All these customs are looked upon with great horror by the sea tribes.

The more remarkable animals of the forest are the elephant, rhinoceros, and orang-utan, besides buffalo, deer, pigs, and bear, the clouded tiger (*Felis macrocelis*), the marbled cat (*Leopardus marmoratus*), some twenty different sorts of monkeys, of which the curious long-nosed monkey (*S. nasalis*) is perhaps the most remarkable; many insectivora, both arboreal and ground species, including the gymnena (*G. Rafflesii*), squirrels, animals of the stoat tribe, civets, binterrongs, and very many others too numerous to mention.

The elephant and rhinoceros are confined to the Sandakan and Darvel Bay districts, most of the other parts of Borneo having been at one time

or another cleared and populated, while in the vast continuous primeval forest of the above districts they have roamed undisturbed by sound of axe or trace of man from time immemorial. The orang-utan is more usually found in the same districts than in any other parts of Sabah. The largest orang-utan I have ever seen, measured 4 feet 4 inches; the height of these creatures is very deceptive, as when seen, even if close to, the impression left on one's mind is that they are very much taller.

On the Sulu Islands naturally the larger animals are not found; it is rather curious, however, that on the island of Sugh, there is a spotted deer, which is not, that I am aware, found in Borneo.

Ice in the Spitzbergen and Barents Seas in 1882.

DURING the past season the state of the ice in the Spitzbergen and Barents seas has been singularly unfavourable to exploration, and the purely geographical results of the year in this part of the Polar basin are consequently almost nil. It is therefore specially interesting to compare the experiences of the Norwegian walrus-hunters, which have been recently published in Norway, with those already communicated from other sources. Captain G. A. Sørensen, of the jagt *Aurora*, sailed to the west side of Spitzbergen in May without any hindrance from ice, but found it impossible to reach the usual hunting-grounds to the northward of the group. He therefore sailed southward again to Stor Fiord, where he remained during the months of July, August, and September, being unable to get to the eastward of Stans Foreland. In the first week of October, he followed the western edge of the ice to Bear Island, without finding any opening to the eastward. The *Aurora* paid a visit to Bel Sound, where it was found that the heavy snow which fell in the beginning of September had almost disappeared, the rivers being consequently much swollen. Judging from the strips of seaweed and small stones which were visible above high-water mark, Sørensen considers that the west coast of Spitzbergen must have been kept open during the winter of 1881-82, the south-westerly and westerly gales which prevailed during that time having driven the ice to the northward, and packed it towards and beyond North-East Land. The north-easterly winds which prevailed during the spring of 1882 appear to have driven the ice back again on both sides of Spitzbergen, leaving a tolerably broad open channel along the south side of that group and Franz-Josef Land. In ordinary years Stor Fiord is covered with what the walrus-hunters call "fast ice," or fiord ice with a tolerably smooth surface; but last season Sørensen found it, for the first time in his long experience, to be blocked, especially on the east side, with heavy broken