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TO MALAYA FOR A RHINOCEROS.

BY

R. C. MORRIS, F.Z.S.

(With 2 plates).

Sanction having been obtained by Mr. Arthur S. Vernay from the Government of Perak, F.M.S., through Mr. Hubback, the Game Warden of Malaya, to collect a bull *Rhinoceros sondaicus* for the American Museum of Natural History, I was asked early in 1935 to undertake the expedition with the assistance of Mr. H. C. Raven of the American Museum and Professor of Comparative Anatomy at the University of Columbia. Raven preceded me to Malaya by a fortnight with the idea of making all necessary arrangements on the spot, but he found the Game Warden away on tour and was unable to effect as much as he would have liked to. However, I do not think that this at all affected the final results.

Sailing from Madras on the s.s. *Rajula* on the 21st May I discovered that I could have joined the boat five days later at Negapatam! The Straits steamer from Madras meanders down the east coast picking up and discharging cargo at the ports of Pondicherry, Cuddalore, Porto Nuovo, Karikal and Negapatam. However this enabled me to land at and see Pondicherry and Karikal, both French ports, and unromantic places they are. Pondicherry especially gives the landing visitor the impression of being 'unfinished' with the Place de Dupleix surrounded by tall unconnected pillars (apparently taken from some ancient temple) and the work on the statue of Dupleix never completed. Four iron stanchions, supports for a canopy over the statue, stand out in ugly contrast and spoil the beauty of the work. Here one sees those curious vehicles, the *push-push* carts, the only specimens of its kind in the world; built on the model of a Victoria horse-drawn carriage, of the size of a rickshaw but with four wheels and pushed from behind like a bath chair, the rickety-packety *push-push* cart is a comic spectacle. The coolies and boatmen that throng round the visitor on his arrival on the jetty insisting that his presence is required by the Commissioner of Police, the Collector of Customs or, if the names of these two officials make no impression, the Postmaster (!!), the idea being to extort bakshish as guides, are an intolerable nuisance. Karikal is said to flourish on smuggling. I landed at Negapatam to see a friend and found it uncomfortably hot and mighty unclean. Negapatam had to my mind the appearance of a dying port which had once seen far better days.

Sailing from Negapatam on the 26th we arrived at Penang at dawn on the 30th. The crossing was uneventful, the southern islands of the Nicobars were passed on the 28th and the northern end of Sumatra the following day. I was fortunate in having the Director of Irrigation and Drainage in Malaya and the

Director of Immigration with me on board, both very pleasant companions, and the former was especially helpful in giving me a letter of introduction to his superintendent in charge of Irrigation at Teloh Anson in Perak, F.M.S. On my arrival at Penang I was met by Mr. Coulson, the Government Treasurer, and received from him the greatest help. It is perhaps not generally known that both Penang and Singapore are islands and form, together with Malacca, the three Straits Settlements of Malaya. Malacca is itself a part of the Malay Peninsula, which also comprises the nine Native States of Perak, Pahang, Selangor, Negri Sembilan, Johore, Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu, the first four of which are federated and the remaining five unfederated. Penang is quite rightly called the most beautiful town of the East: the whole setting is truly gorgeous and the range of hills rising to 2,000 ft. on the eastern side, to the top of which runs a funicular railway from the town of Penang, forms a superb background to a beautiful scene. Very attractive are the Chinese girls in their gaily coloured 'pyjamas'-like clothes (surely these must have given rise to the modern Western beach-pyjamas). Late in the afternoon I boarded the Straits steamer, the s.s. *Krian*, arriving at Teloh Anson, on the mighty Perak river, at 7 a.m. on the following morning. Here I was met by the Superintendent of Customs who very kindly saw my things through and found R awaiting my arrival at the Rest House. The day was spent in fixing up the hire of a launch from the Superintendent of Irrigation, taking out Arms Licenses, seeing the District Officer, Mr. de Moubray, and in making final purchases. Mr. and Mrs. de Moubray were most kind and helpful to us. R had paid a visit to Mr. Hubback's headquarters at Kuala Lipis, Pahang, and had brought back with him four Pahang Malays as camp coolies. I was fortunate in that R could speak Malay, having picked it up some years ago while collecting in the Dutch East Indies, and it speaks well for R's memory that he had forgotten little. Malay is undoubtedly one of the easiest languages in the world to learn, it is indeed absurdly easy to pick up. It struck me as amusing that a Malay cooly could spell a Malay word in English without knowing a word of English! Although Malaya has a script of its own their language is now mostly learnt by the Malays themselves in Roman characters and the use of the Malay script is fast dying out. I found the Malays, nearly all are Mohamedans, a pleasant and cheery crowd, though notoriously lazy. Living in a wonderfully fertile and rich country the Malay has never had to work hard for his living.

June 1st saw us leave Teloh Anson and work up the Perak river, finally turning off up the river Kinta, a large tributary of the Perak, arriving at our first camp, Changkat Budiman, late in the afternoon. Here we camped in a hut in a patch of rubber owned by some Indians. Mosquitoes were bad but luckily R had included in our outfit mosquito nets for our party. Some of the eggs we had purchased in Teloh Anson were not too good and Mahmet, our excellent servant, informed us that he had found

'little fowls' inside several of them! Leaving camp early next morning with Ngah, the Game Ranger, kindly lent to us by Mr. Hubback, and four Sakais (aborigines of Malaya) I trekked northwards marching by compass, across the Kroh Reserve and had my first experience of the Malayan jungles. The going was extremely bad at times, swamp after swamp had to be crossed either knee, waist or, in one case, shoulder deep. Old tracks of elephants and fresh tracks of pig and tapir were seen but no sign of any rhino. Ngah, a nice old rogue, knew only a few words of English and described one track to me as that of a 'ham'. It took me quite a minute to realise that he meant pig. Very easy it must be to get lost in the dense and vast evergreen jungles of Malaya and a compass is most essential. Langurs of two types were seen, *Pithecus cristatus* and *P. obscurus*. The white-handed gibbon (*Hylobates lar*) and seermangs (*Symphalangus syndactylus*) were either seen or heard, as also the common tailed-macaque (*Macacus mandibularis*). The seermang is outwardly very similar to a gibbon and was formerly, in fact, classed among the *Hylobates*. Several hours of tiring struggle through swampy areas brought us to the Sakai villages at Pinggan and further on to a Chinese Rubber Plantation and shop on the Kinta river. R turned up an hour later in the motor launch. Returning with him to the Sakai villages we discussed with them the prospects of finding a *Rhinoceros sondaicus* and a reward was offered. The Sakais were anything but optimistic. No tracks of *sondaicus* had been seen, we were informed, for a long time. On our way back to the river we were drenched to the skin in a torrential thunderstorm. Heavy rain fell almost daily although June is supposed to be one of the dry months. That night we occupied a Malay's new unfurnished house, the Atap or Nipa palm roof of which was effectively rainproof.

Leaving early next morning by boat we landed and searched one of the few areas bordering the Kinta river which was not under flood water. There were no signs of any rhino tracks, of tapir a few. Proceeding in our launch further down we camped that night at Kampong Laba Kubong. From here I marched through a part of the forest bordering the Kinta with the idea of meeting R further up river. Water got into my compass and it was not functioning properly with the result that I found myself travelling in the wrong direction. Leading our way back we struggled through swamps and dwarf screw-pine, to traverse which we sometimes had to fell and walk along saplings, and eventually found ourselves on the bank of the Kinta again just as light was failing. On the opposite bank luckily was a fisherman's hut, and the owner obligingly took me upstream in his small sampan until I met R. On our way downstream again we picked up my men and camped for the night at Laba Kubong. In the morning, after collecting two or three squirrels in a rubber plantation surrounding the village, we proceeded downriver and turning up the river Kroh camped at some fishermen's huts about 2 miles up. I noticed every time I raised my shot gun to my shoulder a pleasant smell, the source of which puzzled me con-

siderably until I found my gun had been cleaned with our skinner's 'Brilliantine'! Leaving R here I paddled up the Lampam river, a tributary of the river Kroh, in a sampan with four Sakais. Landing about 3 miles up we followed a path and then searched for rhino tracks all over that area. Fresh tracks of tapir were seen and old tracks of elephant, but none of rhino. The ground was mostly dry though three or four deep swamps were encountered. The leeches were bad here, although under similar conditions in other parts of the jungle we found none. On June 5th we again worked up the Lampam river with six Sakais and four Malays as porters and camped that night in one of the Elephant Control Patrol huts on a forest reserve boundary. Here we found the jungle had been quartered by lines cut through the forest prior to being felled for paddy cultivation. The Sakais made a fire with a modern petrol cigar lighter! I was also amused at seeing a message written in pencil on a tree blaze from one Game Ranger to another to the effect that food had been left for him in one of the Patrol Huts: *Barang-makantingal*, literally ('things to eat remain'). Leaving camp early we returned to the Lampam river and boated down in sampans to the launch at the fishermen's huts. Here the Sakais were paid off as we had satisfied ourselves that rhino were not to be found in the Kroh Reserve. Two or three more squirrels were collected. Travelling down the Kroh and Perak rivers we reached Teloh Anson by noon. In the afternoon Mr. Theodore Hubback with Mr. Plane, the Elephant Control Officer and Deputy Game Warden, turned up and our plans and future operations were discussed. Mr. Hubback agreed that it would be best to transfer our activities to the large area north of the Bernam river bordering the State of Selangor. On the following day we transported ourselves, our men and our kit in a hired lorry to Lima Blas Estate, a large oil palm concern, French-owned. Mr. Hubback had on the day before telephoned to the Danish Manager, Mr. Iversen, and we were most hospitably received and entertained. I cannot adequately express our appreciation of the hospitality and help we received from Mr. Iversen and his French assistants, Mr. Talau and Mr. Hine, especially the latter. I was glad at the opportunity of meeting again a first cousin of my wife who had married Talau. Hine turned up for dinner at Iversen's bungalow and I was amused to note that the four of us were of different nationalities; Iversen Danish, Hine French and R American. After an early breakfast we left next morning in one of the estate lorries guided by Hine on his motor-bike to the boundary of the estate. Here our kit was dumped while Hine and I walked to a Sakai village across the Bernam river and then on to a further Sakai 'kampong' half-a-mile on. We had to cross the swollen Bernam river singly in a small sampan, the seat of which collapsed while I was in midstream. Hine's shout: 'Be careful, the crocodiles here are awful' just as the sampan was rocking dangerously and shipping any amount of water did not tend to increase the comfort of my mind! Arranging with Sakais there to procure others as porters for the following day we returned to the estate. Shortly afterwards some

of the estate Tamil coolies carried our kit across to the Sakai village (Buloh Seruvas). These Sakais are often referred to by the Malays as '*oran utan*', literally 'people of the jungle', and this also is the meaning of the term used for the ape. I was interested to hear from Hine identically the same yarn as is to be heard in South India regarding the existence of Negrito Pygmies living on trees in the forest, never being seen by any one, and that the Sakais leave rice for them at the foot of trees, just as the jungle tribes in South India are supposed to do. I am convinced this is entirely a myth.

One of our Malay camp coolies developed a badly swollen face through coming in contact with a 'Rongas' tree. He certainly looked a pitiable sight with his face all swollen, eyes nearly closed and swellings on his neck and chest where he had spread the inflammation by scratching. The effect of touching the bark of this tree is similar to that of the Poison Ivy in America.

Most of the Sakais possess long blow-pipes and use them most skilfully, the poison on their darts being that of the 'Upas' tree as in North Burma and the Dutch East Indies, the tree in Malay being known as the 'Ipoh': probably the town of Ipoh draws its name from this tree.

Heavy thunderstorms were of daily occurrence. The loud and musical call of the Argus pheasant was frequently heard all day, as also the calls of the Seermangs and the 'Wah-Wah' or white gibbon.

Plane had put me on to the best anti-leech footgear I had hitherto seen; ordinary rubber boots with canvas uppers, tongue sewn to sides, and *cloth extensions up to just below the knee sewn into the boot*. Putties over this increase the life of the extensions and the whole is very effectively leech- and mosquito-proof.

These jungles lie directly under the mail-plane route between Europe, India, Burma, Siam, the Dutch East Indies and Australia. So used had the Sakais become to planes flying overhead that they did not deign to look up on hearing them.

We left our camp at Buloh Seruvas, having slept in a vacated Sakai's hut, and arrived at the Sakai village of Changkat Kereta, on the Erong river, in the evening. The going was not too bad but swampy in parts. Two or three old pits were passed, previously used by poachers for trapping rhino. Strangely enough this part of the forest between the Erong and Bernam rivers appeared to be leechless although conditions seemed to be favourable for them. The 'Jelutang' tree, the sap of which is tapped by the Chinese for the manufacture of chewing gum, occurs in these jungles. At Changkat Kereta I tasted my first Daurian, but I was quickly put off by the sickly smell without which the fruit would be quite palatable. Patches of Liberian coffee are cultivated round the Sakais' huts at Changkat Kereta, also pineapples, sugarcane, plantains, cocoanuts, areca palms, betel vines and limes. In their clearings (the usual shifting cultivation of jungle tribes) the Sakais grow rice and Cassava (Tapioca). We hired a Sakai's house for ourselves at Changkat Kereta and decided



Kroh River.

Fig. 1



Sakai hut we occupied at Changkat Kereta (Base camp).

Photos by author.

Fig. 2

to make our base camp here. The headman's house was adorned with a large clock and four lamps, two being of the petrol type, one acetylene and the fourth an oil lamp: I think only the last was in working order! The headman was not very helpful at the outset, expressing fear that Sakais would not be available for shikar as they were all out cutting rattan. I felt sure that he was fishing for a present, and on learning from him on the following morning that he *hoped* to be able to supply six men he was told that there was to be no hoping and that we required *eight* men without fail. This firm attitude had immediate results and all the men we required were easily procured. We did not find the climate pleasant, it was like that of a hot-house. R was feeling far from well the whole time and I found that scratches and insect bites on my legs were apt to suppurate. I spent the next three days in searching the forest for miles around for *sondaicus's* tracks but without success, although tracks of *Rhinoceros sumatrensis* were quite common. Here and there patches of ground in the forest, about 12 ft. in diameter, swept clean by the Argus pheasant were to be seen, as also fresh tracks of the Malayan bear (in Malay 'bruan', probably the origin of 'Bruin' for a bear). Small hornets were a common feature in these forests and our Sakai trackers were frequently stung. On one occasion we had to run from hornets for 200 or 300 yards much to the merriment of the Game Ranger Ngah who thought it was a great joke until he was stung on the neck when his mirth ended in a yelp! The Sakais, like nearly all jungle folk, possess a keen sense of humour and are a cheery crowd: crossing the Erong river on a fallen tree on the first day the leading Sakai was deposited into the river by the log breaking in two, much to the joy of the others. Pig-tailed monkeys (locally known as 'beroke'—*Macacus nemestrinus*) were common, as also the white-eyed langurs, specimens of both being collected. When the weather is fine the dry parts of the interior of these forests are really beautiful, but their beauty would be better appreciated but for the myriads of mosquitoes and other insects that bite and sting, in which respect these forests must surely correspond to those of Brazil. The fruit of one of the jungle trees, somewhat similar in appearance to a mango and locally known as 'Poonti' was quite good eating, a little like a custard apple. The water in the small rivers in this area was bright red in colour, especially in the case of one stream where the water had the appearance of having been dyed with potassium permanganate, probably due to the fact that these rivers are fed by swamps, the water being coloured by the roots of trees and rotting vegetation. It is noticeable that many of the scientific names of fauna are actually the Malay names for the creatures concerned such as *Tupaia* (tree shrew) from 'Tupai', the Malay word for a squirrel; *Rusa* (sambhur = *Cervus rusa*), the Malay name for sambhur. The word 'godown' used in India is probably derived from the Malay word 'godang' (shed) and a 'compound' is said to be derived from 'kampong' (village) though this may be open to doubt. The traps laid by the Sakais in the jungle are chiefly for the Chevrotain or *Tragulus* (mouse deer) known in

Malay as 'Plandok', pheasant, and porcupine, the same trap serving for all: a wall of *Zalacca* palm leaves being placed on either side of, and across, a game path with a small doorway left for the victim to pass through straight into a noose. The undergrowth in large tracts of the forest is mainly *Zalacca* palm which adds a great deal to the beauty of the jungle. I noticed far less creepers and vines in these jungles than in similar type of forests in Upper Burma. In other parts the ground is covered by three or four species of plants with leaves akin to the Arum lily, and many of the swamps grow three species of tall and dwarf screw-pines. I came on the nest and eggs of a green forest-partridge one day having inadvertently disturbed this very beautiful bird. Sakais attach no value to empty bottles and tins and a lot of these can be seen thrown away round their houses.

On June 13th I left for my advanced camp, having had huts prepared in the forest some 12 miles north of Changkat Kereta, leaving R at our base camp. On my way I shot with my .22 a fine specimen of a male seermang and sent it back to Raven. On arrival at my camp, on the upper reaches of the Erong, I had a bathe in the river while the Sakais completed a hut for themselves. That night I slept little being devoured by myriads of midges that invaded my mosquito curtain. For three days the jungle was searched for *sondaicus*'s tracks without success. I had Sakais out in different directions quartering the jungle with the offer of a good reward for the discovery of a *sondaicus*'s tracks. On the fourth day while some miles north-east of camp two Sakais caught me up and produced a 8½ in. stick which was declared to be the measurement of a fresh rhino track they had found. Although this was a bit small for a *sondaicus*'s track I decided to follow it up. Returning to camp at noon I sent a Sakai to R with the information, and with Ngah and three men reached the spot where the rhino's tracks had been found 45 minutes later. The rhino's tracks had been found on a forest boundary separating the Chawang and Sungkei Reserves. Following up the tracks we eventually reached its wallow and from here on for a considerable distance the undergrowth through which the rhino had gone was caked with grey mud and our clothes were very soon similarly covered, and very much the worse for wear, following the rhino's path through rattan and *Zalacca*. Ngah's excellent tracking surprised me. We later came on a heap of the rhino's faeces, somewhat similar to a horse's droppings. It is well known to a rhino poacher that a rhinoceros is wont to return to the same spot to defecate, a habit it shares with some of the antelopes, and this, as often as not, leads to its destruction, the poacher occupying a machan over the spot. A rhino is worth Rs. 1,000 or more to the poacher, its chief value is in its horn, but every part of it possesses a definite value, including the blood, as an aphrodisiac. Shortly afterwards we came on the fresh tracks of a solitary elephant which sometimes covered the tracks of the rhino; and our difficulties were increased by a heavy thunder-storm which made it well nigh impossible to distinguish new from old rhino tracks. Added to this the light was becoming



Bernam River. Boundary between Perak and Selangor States.

Fig. 1



Camp in dense evergreen forest in the Bernam area.

Photos by author.

very poor and I abandoned the search for the day. Although I felt fairly sure that the tracks were those of a large *sumatrensis* I decided to have this confirmed. It took us two hours to reach camp and a large part of the going was perfectly poisonous, we were frequently up to our knees in mud and water. Early next morning I left with Ngah and two men sending the remaining Sakais on to the Chawang river to prepare a new camp. Taking up the rhino's tracks again we found at about mid-day that the tracks had led under a fallen tree under which it was obviously impossible for a *sondaicus* to pass. This settled the question beyond doubt and we found our way to the Chawang camp by compass bearing. Later in the day we returned to our first camp and found R had arrived, and that night we discussed our future plans. We both felt that there was little chance of our coming on the tracks of a *sondaicus*, and R decided to catch the P. & O. boat to Hongkong from Singapore on the 20th, which involved his leaving for Teloh Anson early on the following morning. The forest west and north-west of the Chawang river had still to be examined, and I did not wish to abandon the search until this had been done, although I felt there was very little hope of success. Further I now had low fever nearly every day, and my legs were in a bad state from suppurating scratches and insect bites. R left early next morning still feeling none too well. Soon after he left I shifted everything to the new Chawang camp and arrived there feeling unable to do any tracking that day. Ngah and the Sakai trackers were sent out to continue the search. 'Miowk', my gibbon, who had been my devoted companion all through, was stung by a hornet on a tree near the camp and retreated yelling. Ngah and his men returned in the evening without having found anything but new elephant and *sumatrensis*' tracks. The next day found me still feeling feverish, but I accompanied Ngah while the other trackers went off in different directions as usual. No success attended our efforts either this or the following day. As our search had fairly covered this last area I decided to strike camp and return to headquarters, Teloh Anson. We left the Chawang river camp next morning and reached Changkat Kereta that afternoon. Here I paid off the Malays and all the Sakais, retaining those of Buloh Seruvas to accompany me to Lima Blas estate on the following day. My heavy outfit I sent round by boat down the Erong and Bernam rivers to Utan Milintang in charge of Gabriel, my skinner, with instructions to engage carts or a lorry for the kit and himself, Ngah, and our hardworking camp boy Mahmet, to Teloh Anson. The camp supplies that remained over in the shape of tinned fruits, rice, sugar, salt etc. I divided up between the camp staff. That evening I went over to the headmans' house hearing music and much noise, and found the Malays and Sakais gambling away all their pay! One of the Sakais was playing a violin quite well.

Leaving Changkat Kereta next morning I walked, carrying my gibbon, with the Buloh Seruvas Sakais arriving there at about noon. Here we were greeted by two damsels. These two young

ladies, pretty girls in their way, went through the most blatant vamping tactics, directed at Raven and myself on our previous visit to the village, strutting around in gay rags and faces covered with powder and to our surprise using lip sticks and mirrors. Their remark in passing 'We are following you, Tuan', an idiom in itself, evoked our reply that we were taking no camp followers.

The Sakais of Malaya are considered to be the surviving representatives in the Malay Peninsula of the Indo-Malayans, as the Nagas, Kachins, Chins, Wahs, etc. are in Burma and Assam. The Tarajas of the Celebes, the Dyaks of Borneo and the hillmen of the mountains of Formosa and Philippines exhibit many of the same characteristics, have many of the same customs, and even similar words in their languages and nearly all are spirit worshippers. The 'Nat' poles, topped with funnel-shaped caskets, of the Burma races have very similar counterparts with the races of Malaya, the Dutch East Indies, Formosa and the Philippines.

A message that I was returning to Lima Blas had been sent on ahead and Hine met me between the Bernam river and the estate boundary. Arriving at Iversen's bungalow I arranged to leave for Teloh Anson the same evening in a hired car. Cars and lorries can be hired in Malaya at just about one-third of the rates in India. I reached Teloh Anson in what must have been almost record time, the driver being of the reckless speed-fiend type. Back in Teloh Anson I felt considerably better although pretty tired with my long day. The forests we had been through were, except for a few *sumatrensis*, tapir, pig, bear and elephant well-nigh gameless as was our experience in most of the evergreen forests of Upper Burma.

The next day was spent in drawing out funds from the Bank, in farewell visits to Mr. and Mrs. de Moubray and Mr. Ferguson and in re-sorting and packing up my outfit. My skinner Gabriel, Ngah, and Mahmet having turned up at noon I left the same evening on the s.s. *Krian* and arrived at Penang at 9 a.m. on the following morning. After making arrangements for the transfer of my luggage to the Madras boat, the s.s. *Rohna*, I spent the morning in Penang getting tickets for passages (Mahmet to Rangoon) and export licenses for my weapons. The s.s. *Rohna* sailed at 2 p.m. and the shores of Penang and Malaya were soon out of sight. Our route lay close in to the shores of Sumatra which we finally left behind us at noon on the following day. Our arrival at Madras on June 30th brought to a close an expedition which, though unsuccessful in its main object, was both interesting and instructive.

A further attempt to procure a specimen of a *Rhinoceros sondaicus* will probably be made in Sumatra where this species still exists.