

THE PAGAN TRIBES OF BORNEO

A DESCRIPTION OF THEIR PHYSICAL
MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL CONDITION
WITH SOME DISCUSSION OF THEIR
ETHNIC RELATIONS

BY

CHARLES HOSE, D.Sc.

FORMERLY DIVISIONAL RESIDENT AND MEMBER OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF SARAWAK
AUTHOR OF 'A DESCRIPTIVE ACCOUNT OF THE MAMMALS OF BORNEO'

AND

WILLIAM McDOUGALL, M.B., F.R.S.

FELLOW OF CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE
AND READER IN MENTAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

WITH AN APPENDIX ON THE PHYSICAL CHARACTERS
OF THE RACES OF BORNEO

BY

A. C. HADDON, D.Sc., F.R.S.

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PLATE I. YOUNG KAYAN CHIEF WITH MIDDLE-CLASS COMPANION.

CHAPTER I

GEOGRAPHY OF BORNEO

BORNEO is one of the largest islands of the world. Its area is roughly 290,000 square miles, or about five times that of England and Wales. Its greatest length from north-east to south-west is 830 miles, and its greatest breadth is about 600 miles. It is crossed by the equator a little below its centre, so that about two-thirds of its area lie in the northern and one-third lies in the southern hemisphere. Although surrounded on all sides by islands of volcanic origin, Borneo differs from them in presenting but small traces of volcanic activity, and in consisting of ancient masses of igneous rock and of sedimentary strata.

The highest mountain is Kinabalu, an isolated mass of granite in the extreme north, nearly 14,000 feet in height. With this exception the principal mountains are grouped in several massive chains, which rise here and there to peaks about 10,000 feet above the sea. The principal of these chains, the Tibang-Iran range, runs south-westward through the midst of the northern half of the island and is prolonged south of the equator by the Schwaner chain. This median south-westerly trending range forms the backbone of the island. A second much-broken chain runs across the island from east to west about 1° north of the equator. Besides these

of the alluvium brought down by the many rivers from the central highlands. This belt of alluvium extends inland in many parts for fifty miles or more, and is especially extensive in the south and south-east of the island.

Between the swampy coast belt and the mountains intervenes a zone of very irregular hill country, of which the average height above the sea-level is about one thousand feet, with occasional peaks rising to five or six thousand feet or more.

There seems good reason to believe that at a comparatively recent date Borneo was continuous with the mainland of Asia, forming its south-eastern extremity. Together with Sumatra and Java it stands upon a submarine bank, which is nowhere more than one hundred fathoms below the surface, but which plunges down to a much greater depth along a line a little east of Borneo (Wallace's line). The abundance of volcanic activity in the archipelago marks it as a part of the earth's crust liable to changes of elevation, and the accumulation of volcanic matter would tend to make it an area of subsidence; while the north-east monsoon, which blows with considerable violence down the China Sea for about four months of each year, may have hastened the separation of Borneo from the mainland. That this separation was effected in a very recent geological period is shown by the presence in Borneo of many species of Asiatic mammals both large and small, notably the rhinoceros (*R. borniensis*, closely allied to *R. sumatranus*); the elephant (*E. indicus*, which, however, may have been imported by man); the wild cattle (*Bos sondiacus*, which occurs also in Sumatra); several species of deer and pig (some of which are found in Sumatra and the mainland); several species of the cat tribe, of which the tiger-cat (*Felis nebulosa*) is the largest; the civet-cat (*Viverra*) and its congeners *Hemigale*, *Paradoxurus*, and *Arctogale*; the

CHAPTER IX

LIFE IN THE JUNGLE

ALL the peoples of Borneo support themselves in part by hunting and trapping the wild creatures of the jungle, but for the Punans alone is the chase the principal source of food-supply; the various natural products of the jungle are, with the exception of cultivated sago in some few regions, their only marketable commodities.

HUNTING

The wild pig (*Sus barbatus*¹) is the principal object of the chase, but deer of several species are also hunted and trapped. The largest of these (*Cervus equinus*) is rather bigger than the English fallow deer; the smallest is *plandok*, or mouse deer (*Tragulus napu* and *T. Javanicus*), standing only about eight inches at the shoulder; intermediate in size is the muntjac (*Cervulus muntjac*). There are also small herds of wild cattle (*Bos sondaicus*), a small rhinoceros (*R. sumatranus*), large lizards (*Varanus*), various apes and monkeys, and a large porcupine (*Hestrix Crassispinus*), and several small mammals, such as otters (*Lutra*), bear-cats (*Arctictis*), and civet cats (*Paradoaurus*) of various species, all of which are hunted for their flesh, as

¹ There are said to be two other less common species of wild pig, but probably there is only one other.

well as several birds. The tiger-cat (*Felis nebulosa*) and the bear (*Ursus Malayanus*) are hunted for their skins and teeth, and the dried gall-bladder of the bear is sold for medicine.

The pig and deer are most commonly hunted on foot by a party of several men with a pack of four or five dogs. The dogs, having found the trail, chase the pig until he turns on them. The dogs then surround the pig, barking and yelping, and keep it at bay till the men run up and despatch it with their spears. Both men and dogs sometimes get severely bitten and torn by the tusks. During the fruit season the pigs migrate in large herds and cross the rivers at certain places well known to the hunters. The people lie in wait for them in little huts built on the banks, and kill them from their boats as they swim across.

Kenyahs and Klemantans sometimes catch deer by driving them into a *jaring*. This consists of a strong rope of plaited rattans stretched in a straight line across the jungle, from tree to tree, some five feet above the ground. It is generally laid so as to complete the enclosure of an area that is almost surrounded by the river. Dependent from the whole length of the rattan rope is a series of running nooses also of rattan, each of which, overlapping its neighbours on both sides, forms a loop about two feet in diameter. Men armed with spears are stationed along the *jaring* at short intervals, and the rest of the party with the dogs beat the jungle, driving any deer in the enclosed space headlong towards the *jaring*. Some of the deer may escape, but some will usually run their heads into the nooses and fall victims to the spears of the watchers. Both pig and deer are sometimes brought down with the blow-pipe, especially by the Punans, whose favourite weapon it is.

The wild cattle are very wary and dangerous to

attack. They sometimes take to the water and are then easily secured. Punans, who hunt without dogs (which in fact they do not possess) will lie in wait for the rhinoceros beside the track by which he comes to his daily mud-bath, and drive a spear into his flank or shoulder; then, after hastily retiring, they track him through the jungle, until they come upon him again, and find an opportunity of driving in another spear or a poisoned dart through some weak spot of his armour.

Birds and monkeys are chiefly killed with the blow-pipe.

TRAPS

Traps of many varieties are made. For pig and deer a trap is laid at a gap in the fence about the *padi* field. It consists of a bamboo spear of which the end is sharpened and hardened in the fire. This is laid horizontally about two feet from the ground, resting on guides. Its butt end is lashed to one end of a springy green pole at right angles to its length; the pole is laid horizontally, one end of it being firmly fixed to a tree, and the other (that carrying the spear) bent forcibly backwards and held back by a loop of rattan. This spring is set by means of an ingenious trigger, in such a way that an animal passing through the gap must push against a string attached to the trigger, and so release the spring, which then drives the bamboo spear across the gap with great force. (The drawing (Fig. 22) will make clear the nature of the trigger.)

In one variety of this trap the spring is set vertically. The trap is varied in other ways. A curious practice of the Ibans on setting such a trap is to measure the appropriate height of the spear by means of a rod surmounted with a carving of a human figure (Fig. 23).



PLATE 82. KENYAH HUNTERS AT WORK WITH THE BLOW-PIPE.

Of many ingenious traps for small animals the *jerat* is the most widely used (see Fig. 24 and Pl. 85). A rude fence some hundreds of yards, in some cases as much as a mile, in

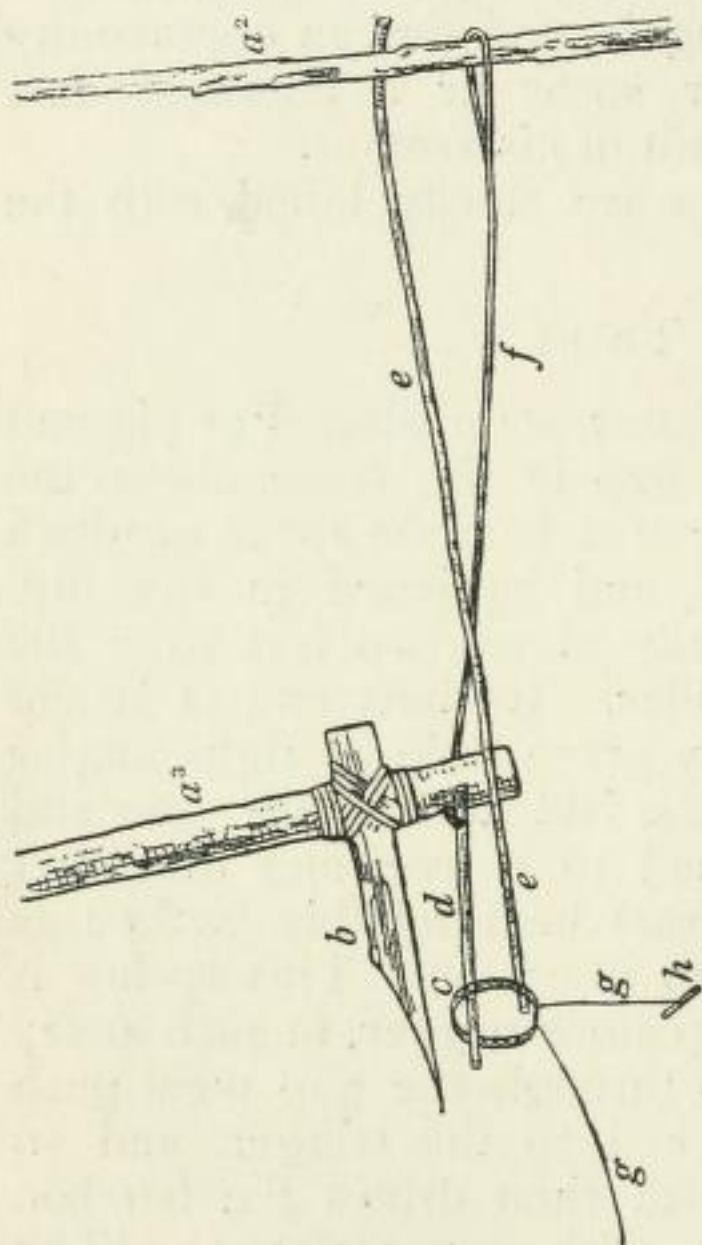


FIG. 22.—Trigger of Pig Trap.

length, is made by filling up with sticks and brushwood the spaces between the trees and undergrowth of the jungle. At intervals of ten or twenty yards narrow gaps are left, and in each of these a *jerat* is set to catch the small creatures that, in

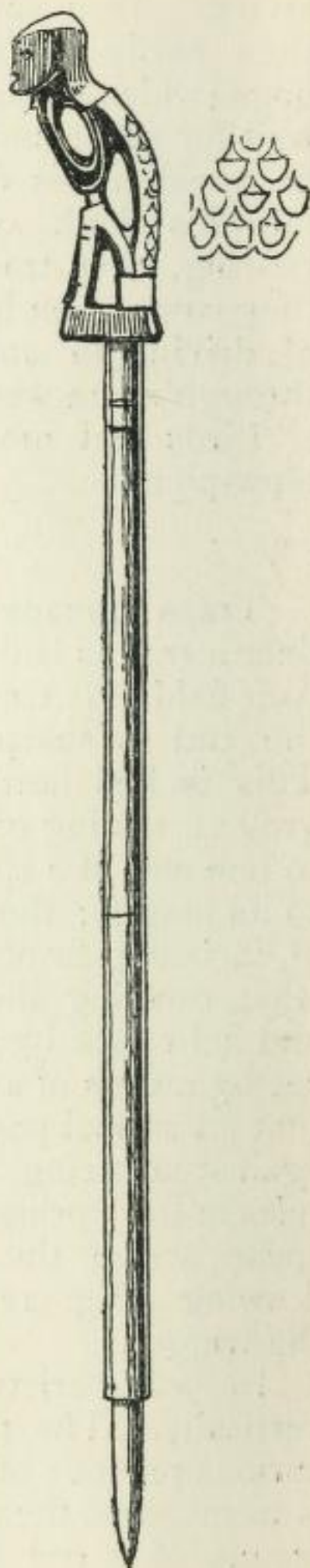


FIG. 23.

wandering through the jungle and finding their course obstructed by the fence, seek to pass through the gaps. The gap is floored with a small platform of light sticks, six to eight inches long, laid across it parallel to one another in the line of the fence. The ends of these are supported at one side of the gap, about two inches above the ground, by a cross-stick lying at right angles to them. This stick in turn is supported about one inch above the ground in the following way: the two ends of a green stick are thrust firmly

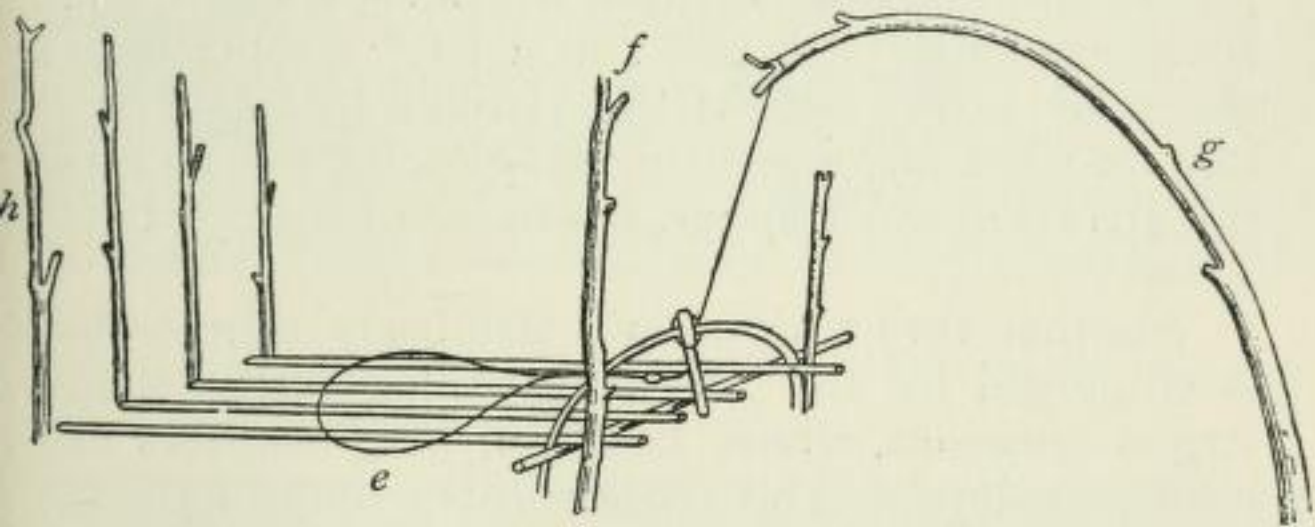


FIG. 24.—The Jerat.

into the ground forming an arch over the end of the platform, and the extremities of the cross-stick are in contact with the pillars of the arch, and kept a little above the ground by being pulled against them by the spring trigger. This consists of a short stick attached by a cord to a strong springy pole thrust vertically into the ground. To set the trigger it is pulled down, bending the pole, and passed under the arch from the platform side outwards; the upper end of the trigger is then kept by the pull of the cord against the curve of the arch, and its lower end is pulled against the middle of the cross-stick. The pressure being maintained by the tension of the cord, this end of the platform is supported by the friction

between the trigger and the cross-stick. The cord is prolonged beyond the trigger in a slip noose which lies open on the platform completely across the gap, so that any small animal entering the gap, and stepping upon the platform, necessarily places its feet within the noose. A few leaves are laid on the platform and cord to disguise them. When, then, a pheasant or other creature of appropriate size and weight steps on the platform, its weight causes the cross-stick to slip down from the hold of the trigger, and this, being released, is violently jerked with the noose into the air by the elastic reaction of the bent pole; in a large proportion of cases the noose catches the victim's feet and jerks him into the air, where he dangles by the feet till the arrival of the trapper, who visits his traps twice a day.

Another very curious and strikingly simple plan is employed by the Sea Dayaks for catching the Argus pheasant, whose beautiful wing feathers are highly valued. The cock-birds congregate at certain spots in the jungle, where they display their feathers and fight together. These spots they clear of all obstacles, pulling and pushing away sticks and leaves with their heads and necks, as well as scratching with their feet. The Dayaks, taking advantage of this habit, thrust vertically into the ground slips of bamboo, the edges of which are hardened in the fire and rendered very sharp. In the course of their efforts to remove these obstructions, the birds not infrequently inflict serious wounds about their necks, and weakened by loss of blood, are found by the Dayaks at no great distance from the fighting ground.

Traps of many other kinds are made for animals both large and small, especially by the Sea Dayaks, who use traps more frequently than the other