

Kelantan and my trip to Gunong Tahan.

BY MR. JOHN WATERSTRADT.

Gunong Tahan, the supposed highest mountain in the Malay Peninsula had always a great attraction for me, ever since I had ascended the Kina Balu mountain in Borneo, situated in about the same latitude, as I wanted to compare the fauna of the former with that of the latter. However it was not until ten years after my first ascent of Kina Balu, that I found an opportunity of undertaking the journey to Gunong Tahan. My plans for the trip had been laid long beforehand, and I had decided to take the Kelantan route in preference to that of Pahang, as several expeditions which had tried to reach the mountain by the latter route had failed, mostly I believe owing to the difficulty of obtaining food supplies. I decided to abandon everything in the shape of comforts for this trip, taking with me only things that were absolutely necessary, and utilising all the coolies I could get for carrying provisions. Leaving Singapore towards the end of April in a small coasting steamer, I arrived in Kelantan four days later, the steamer calling at most of the ports along the coast, on the way up. The mouth of the Kelantan river is on the map given as farther south than it really is, but that entrance has long ago sanded up, and ships have now to enter by the northern entrance. Lately a fairly good light house has been erected by the Siamese, and a Siamese gunboat is always stationed there. Owing to the shallowness of the river all steamers are obliged to anchor just inside the bar, behind a sand spit that affords good shelter; and passengers and cargo are taken up to Kota Bahru in small native boats.

Kota Bahru, the capital of Kelantan, is situated about eight miles from the mouth of the river, on the right bank of the same, and contains according to the Rajah's account, about 20,000 inhabitants. The town consists really of two villages;

one of them called Taratchin, is divided from the other by a branch of the river, and is chiefly inhabited by Chinese. Formerly nearly all the business was done in this place, but the ever changing river silted up just there, and now nearly all business is transacted in the native town, a little farther up river, where there is deep water close in to the bank. The Rajah at the instigation of the Siamese is now making fairly good roads in every direction through the town. Just before I arrived, there had been a tremendous fire in the Chinese village, half of which was burned down one night, when most of the inhabitants were attending a fête given by the Rajah on account of his marriage with the Rajah of Singora's daughter; and a number of young children who were left alone in the houses were burnt to death. The Rajah used this opportunity to make a broad street right through the whole village, where there formerly had been only narrow crooked paths. During my stay in Kota Bahru, before going up stream, I was the guest of the Siamese Commissioner and was introduced by him to the Rajah, who immediately offered to provide me with boats and men for the trip up the river. The present Rajah is a young man of about thirty-five years, and owes his position to the Siamese, who on the death of the old Rajah installed him as such, in preference to the rightful heir, on the supposition that he would conform to their wishes. So far the Siamese have interfered very little in the internal affairs of Kelantan, keeping only a Commissioner there, who acts as a sort of adviser to the Rajah, and a small garrison; but signs are not wanting that they want to get a more direct control of affairs, and probably before very long Kelantan will be to all purposes, except in name, a Siamese province. The Rajah's palace is just in the middle of the town, and every forenoon from about 10 to 1 o'clock he holds his court there, afterwards going for a drive out to his villa, that he has built in a garden outside the town. I visited him there one afternoon, and found workmen everywhere building cages for wild animals, and the Rajah told me he intended to start a small Zoological Garden there.

It was the dry season when I arrived in Kota Bahru and the heat was very intense, the thermometer seldom going below 100° in the daytime and 90° at night. The Kelantan river,

which in the rainy season often overflows its banks, was now nearly dried up, so we had great difficulty in getting up stream with the three large house boats that the Rajah supplied for me and my men. The river is about 250 yards wide at Kota Bahru, and continues to be about the same width up to Sungie Lebeh, which river falls into the Kelantan river from the right, thirty to forty miles up stream. The banks of the river up to Quala Lebeh are pretty thickly populated, and are lined with coconut groves most of the way. It took us four days to reach Quala Lebeh, as we had only one gang of men to pole the boats, and consequently had to stop at night. I decided to try first to get to Gunang Tahan by the Lebeh river, as that, according to my idea, was the nearest way, and we therefore proceeded up that river for another day, when the rapids were reached, and we had to stop, as it was impossible to get our heavy boats over them.

On the way up the river we had passed a number of bamboo rafts, with small huts built on them, either moored along the banks, or drifting slowly down stream. They were inhabited by Malays from Kota Bahru, who go up stream to trade or to plant paddy, and prefer living on the river rather than ashore. When therefore a suitable place is found, these people make a raft and build a hut thereon, wherein they live until they have traded away or exchanged all their goods for jungle produce, whereon they drift down stream with their barter or their paddy.

Just below the rapids a number of these rafts were moored, forming a floating village on the river; and as I had to wait there some days before I could get smaller boats to take me up river one of these huts was given up to me, and I discharged the three large boats and sent them back to Kota Bahru, as they were of no further use to me. I had to wait a week at this place before I got smaller boats and other men, to take me further up river, and in the meantime, I and my collectors that I had brought with me from Borneo, did a little collecting; but the species found there were of little interest being the same as are found everywhere in the low land of the Peninsula. At last we got away again in three smaller boats, all heavily loaded; and for the next few days we had a very rough

job pulling the boats over the rapids, of which the river was full. We had to stop at each village we passed on the way, to get fresh boatmen, as none of these would go any farther with me than to the next village, and this continual stopping and changing men delayed us a good deal. On the third day Quala Aring was reached; and as it was my intention to go up that river, we had again to wait to procure still smaller boats, but we soon managed to get six of these and plenty of men, so were able to proceed the next day. It was at Quala Aring that the Skeat expedition stopped, while Mr. Skeat went across to Pahang and tried to get up the Tahan from that side, but failed, I believe owing to want of provisions, the same as Messrs. Ridley and Davidson before him. The river Aring is of course much smaller than the Lebeh, and is full of rapids, but it was not very difficult to get the boats over them. I counted them several times, and found that on an average we passed over about ten of them an hour the whole way up. There are very few people living on this river, there being only one village of any size, about three days up stream, so I had not to stop on the way to change men, as those from the Quala took me right up to that village. The village is called Buntie, and is the last inhabited place in Kelantan, so I had to halt there to get together coolies and to find out the best way of ascending the mountain, of which I got a good view away to the southward on clear days. The natives there called it Gunong Siam. There is plenty of game to be had round the village, as there are lots of old clearings, where deer and pigs are plentiful, and tigers are also found in numbers. On the very first day I stayed there, while out collecting butterflies close to the house, I heard a noise in the thick low jungle close by, resembling the purring of a cat, only louder, but took no notice of this until a couple of Malays came running after me telling me to come back at once, as there was a tiger quite close by. As I had then about forty Malays with me I wanted them to go into the jungle and drive the tiger out into the open, a distance of not more than twenty or thirty yards, where I could get a shot at him; but though they were all armed with spears and I offered them some of my guns also, they were afraid of doing so, and I did not get a sight of the brute though he stayed in that

thicket not 150 yards from the house the whole day. On my return from the mountain however I got him, as he had just then killed a buffalo, and came back in the afternoon to have another meal.

About a day's journey to the westward of the village at another tributary to the Lebeh river, called Sungei Aring, was situated a small encampment of Sakais and as I wanted these men to show me the way to the mountain, I got the headman of the village to send word to them to join me at once. The whole tribe of Sakais living there are considered to be the property of a Malay living half way up the Aring; and this man brought all the full grown men to me a couple of days later. There is only this one settlement of Sakais in this part of the country, whereas there are said to be thousands of them living up the Ulu Kelantan river. Those that I had with me (ten or eleven men), were all remarkably strong and healthy looking, and were not so much troubled by skin diseases as is usually the case with the Sakais. After getting all the information I could about the Gunong Tahan or Gunong Siam, I decided to follow the Aring as far as it was possible to go with the native boats, and then strike across country straight for it. We therefore loaded the provisions in eight or nine small dug-outs, and went up stream with these, most of the coolies following us along the bank. After going on in this way for a couple of days I found it impossible to get any farther with the boats, as the river was getting too small, and the boats had continually to be hauled over trees that had fallen across the river and barred the passage. We therefore stopped at a small tributary called Sungei Tamu, and while my Malays made everything ready for the march inland, I sent the Sakais in the jungle to cut a path for us along the bank of the Tamu, which I had decided to follow seeing that it seemed to come from the direction that I wanted to take. The Sakais came back in the evening of the same day and reported having found an elephant track, which they had followed up a high ridge, and they were of the opinion that by following this track we should reach the foot of the mountain. They had come up with the elephants about half way up the mountain, there being seven of them, but as there were no tuskers amongst them, they had not fired on them, and the elephants continued

their journey to the top of the ridge and then disappeared down the other side. We halted two days while the different packages were divided amongst the coolies. The rest of the provisions which we could not take with us were hoisted up in a high tree, for fear of the elephants getting at them, and well covered with mats to protect them against rain, and then we started. In the beginning we got on very well, the ground rising gently the whole time, but as we got higher up on the spur, walking became more difficult, and we had to catch hold of roots and branches to help us in getting up, and had it not been for the deep footprints made in the soil by the elephants it would have been nearly impossible for the coolies to get up with their heavy burdens. I reached the top of the ridge, which proved to be about 3500' high, about noon, together with a few of my Borneo men and a couple of Sakais, and wanted to proceed along the comb of the ridge, which was running in the direction I wanted to take, but the Sakais insisted on our going down the slope on the other side, as they said we should find no water near the top; so I had to give in, and we went down about 1000' till we came to a tiny stream, where I decided to camp for the night. I had not taken any tent with me, but my men soon made a shelter with some large palm leaves, some three feet broad and seven feet long, which we found growing in abundance in altitudes from 500' up to 4500'. None of the other coolies reached our camp that night, and next morning we went farther down the slope till we reached a stream, which the Sakais declared to be the Sungei Tahan, and waited there until all the coolies had arrived. From the river bed we got a fine view of a mountain, that I judged to be about 5000' high, standing straight up and looking very formidable and inaccessible with a magnificent waterfall near the top. The natives declared that this mountain, which was not more than 2 miles distant, was part of Gunong Tahan, the higher part of which was shut out from sight by the high ridges running parallel with the river. We followed up the river for some time, but it was very difficult climbing and when we had reached an altitude of 2500' the coolies declared that they would not go any farther, so I had to make my camp there. Most of the coolies then returned to their villages; but I kept the Sakais and my collectors with

me, and with these I ascended to the top of the mountain that we had seen from the river. The ascent was however so difficult, that it was impossible to carry anything with us, and we had therefore to return to our old camp every night. Especially the last 500' proved to be very difficult to negotiate, as there was a sheer wall of rock about 300' in height, down which the Tahan river come thundering, forming the splendid waterfall that we had seen from the bottom, and which I christened the Lama Falls. After several failures we at last found a way to the top of the falls and were then confronted by two peaks, nearly inaccessible, and the river seemed to wind its way in between them. We tried to follow up the river, but soon had to stop, on account of huge boulders and deep pools, with sheer walls on each side, making it impossible for us to get through; so we had to give it up, and attempted instead to scale the least forbidding looking of the two peaks.

In this we succeeded at last, only to find however the top involved in thick mist, so that it was impossible to see anything and to ascertain whether we were really on a spur of the Tahan range or not. As it was impossible to stay up there for the night without any food or shelter, we had to return to our camp, my intention being to get up there again early the next day and have a good look at the surrounding country before the clouds commenced to gather round the mountain tops, as they always do in the afternoon. In the night however I got an attack of fever and was unable to walk for some days, so I sent my men up to try and find out the whereabouts of Gunong Tahan, and they returned with the information that the mountain that we were on was in no way connected with the Tahan, which they said they had seen a long way to the westward, but according to them it would be impossible to get up that mountain from that side, as we were separated from it by a deep chasm, which ran along for many miles, with sheer walls of rock on the other side, up which they declared it impossible for anybody to get. The Sakais stated that they had seen another river coming nearly from the top of the mountain, and this they took to be a branch of the Galas river, another tributary of the Kelantan river; and they strongly advised me to go back, and try to get up the mountain by that route. As they absolutely refused to

follow me when I wanted to try and get up from where we were, I had to give it up, though I myself believed it to be possible; and, as after events showed me, it proved to have been the easiest and nearest route to the top. However I made up my mind to return to Kota Bahru and get up another expedition up the Galas river; so I returned to the village Buntie with a few of the Sakais, leaving the rest of them together with my Malays and all our provisions on the mountain; as we had found a number of rare birds there, and I was desirous of getting some more of them. I told my men that they must try and find an easier way to Tahan, and if they succeeded in this they were to wait for me near the top of the mountain. I may as well mention here that some time after I left, my men did find a way up Gunong Tahan, and stayed there for some time waiting for me; but I never met them, as it took me a much longer time to get up the mountain by the Galas route than I expected, and so at last they returned down towards the coast by the same way as they got there. The trip back to Kota Bahru occupied ten days, and I had to wait there another month before I got new provisions and material up from Singapore for my next expedition. When these at last arrived a new start was made but this time I got rather a poor lot of boatmen, the Rajah having lent most of his best men to Messrs. Duff and Lathyen who went up stream just before me to prospect for gold. It therefore took me six days to get up to Quala Lebeh, and there I found the above gentlemen busy prospecting the river bed, having with them a great number of coolies. This time I went past Quala Lebeh, following the true Kelantan river, and in four days reached Quala Galas, where we were detained a short time, owing to the river being in flood. We passed several small tributaries on the way, most of them being uninhabited, being the Rajah's rattan preserves. Once in five to six years he farms each of these rivers out to some of the Chinese traders in Kota Bahru, who then collect all the rattans and other jungle produce, and after that nobody is allowed to touch anything for the next five to six years, thus giving the rattans a chance of growing to a fair size before they are again cut down. We then proceeded up the Galas, which a short distance from its Quala is only about 50 yards wide, and gets narrower farther up, and full of rapids. There

are a number of small villages on its banks, from which I obtained relays of boatmen, those I had with me from Kota Bahru having by this time all got fever, or were at least pretending to have. As we got farther up, the river got very shallow, and I had to leave the big boats behind, and go on in small dug-outs. We passed a few Chinamen on the way, washing gold, and they told me they could make about 75 cents a day, when working hard. At other places where the Chinamen were working farther inland, they had dammed up the river to obtain sufficient water, causing us a lot of trouble, as we had to unload the boats before we could haul them over these obstacles.

At last the village of Pulai was reached, and there I had to stop, as it was impossible to proceed any farther by boat. The village contains a couple of hundred inhabitants, nearly all Chinese, there being only a few Malay traders there, who occasionally come up from Kota Bahru and stay there a month or two, until they have have bartered all their goods away for gold. Formerly all the Chinese living there were gold miners, but now that all the gold-bearing sand in the river bed has been washed over and over again and the returns are getting less, many of them have settled down as agriculturists and have large paddy fields all round the village. Formerly there must have been a much larger Chinese population in these parts, as traces of very large alluvial workings are found up nearly all the small creeks, being now overgrown and covered with dense jungle. At present there are only a couple of Chinese Kongsis working on anything like a large scale, and I believe they are doing fairly well. Lode working has also been tried by the Malays, but though the ore obtained was of very good quality they soon gave it up, the work proving too hard for them. The formation of the country about there is mostly hard blue limestone which crops through everywhere, the hills in some places rising to a considerable height, mostly impossible to ascend owing to their steep or overhanging walls. All these limestone hills are full of caves and passages made by the water in bygone days, and in places some very curious dripstones* are formed, the best specimen of which is found in a cave close to the village, about

*Stalagmites ?

100' up in a hill, and the Chinese, on account of this bearing some resemblance to one of their deities, formerly used it as a temple, and there is still an old rotten table up there with some candlesticks full of burned joss sticks, and remains of half-burned paper. It has however not been used for a long time, and the ladders that led up to it have long since rotted away, so I had to climb the face of the rock to get up; but I should not recommend anybody to try that experiment, unless he is a good climber. My men that were with me looked at it, and decided that it was safer to stop at the bottom; so I let them remain there, while I went up with a young Malay who had been up there once before. The Chinese are rather afraid to go near these limestone hills as they say that the tigers use the caves as sleeping apartments, and this is very likely, though I never found traces of them in any of the many caves that I visited, whereas I found plenty of traces of elephants in the larger caves that were level with the ground, and the Malays told me that these animals often made them their homes for months at a time. The floors of the caves were often strewn with the remains of dead and broken snail-shells, which had fallen down from the roof in the dry season, when most of the snails die. However I also found a number of live shells hidden away in the dark and moist crevices of the rock, among them several new and rare species. Most of the snails have a great liking for limestone rocks, and the collector will find more specimens in one hour on these rocks than in the jungle for one month.

From the top of some of these cliffs I got a good view of the surrounding country, but I looked in vain for a mountain that looked anything like 10,000' high. Towards the East were two mountain ranges which I supposed to be about 6,000' high, the natives calling the most northern Gunong Siam, and the other Tulang Rabong. Gunong Siam appeared to be slightly higher than the other, and the Malays stated that this was the same mountain that the Malays of Pahang called Gunong Tahan. I did not believe this possible, but seeing that the people on the Aring river also called Tahan the Gunong Siam, I decided to ascend the mountain to make sure of it. I had great difficulty in obtaining any coolies to go with me owing to the rivalry

between two of the native chiefs, and had at last to be contented with eight Pahang Malays; so we were only able to carry provisions with us for ten days. The first part of the road lay through fairly flat country and we had no difficulty in cutting a path through,—going northeast by the compass, for none of the Malays had been in that part of the country before. At night we camped on the banks of a fairly large river, which proved to be the Kateh, a tributary of the Galas; and next day we followed this up till we got into the hills, passing an old deserted mining camp on the way. We only had one glimpse of the mountain on our journey, though we climbed several hills to obtain a good view, but always found other hills in front of us obstructing the view towards the mountain. That night we also camped on the banks of the river, which here reaches an altitude of 800' above sea level, the men making a rude shelter of palm leaves, under which we slept undisturbed, though we that day had come across several tracks of tigers. Next day we started up a ridge which we thought sprung from the mountain, but when we at last reached the top of it 2500' up, it proved to be separated from the mountain by another branch of the Kateh river, and so we had to climb down again on the other side. The descent proved to be very difficult, especially the last 300' to 400', and I have no idea how the coolies came down, as each man chose his own way over the face of the cliffs, where overhanging boughs and roots afforded the only support for lowering oneself. All got down without any mishap, and we all collected together in the river bed, which was only about 20' wide, and commenced to look for a way out of the cañon or gully that we had got into, and this we found to be no easy task. It was impossible to get up on the other side of the stream, the walls of rock there being even more forbidding looking than those we had descended; and to get up by following the stream was equally impossible as there was a waterfall about 100' in height in front of us, from which the water came rushing down with a deafening noise. There was therefore no alternative left us but to go down stream; and this we did for a short distance, scrambling over huge boulders, wading through deep pools of water, and clinging to narrow ledges of rock where the pools were too deep to wade through; but at last we

got to a place where it was impossible to pass through, the bed of the stream being only about four feet wide, and through this narrow passage the water came rushing down over boulders and falls, making it impossible for any living thing to get through. Luckily we found a place where the rocks were less precipitous and we managed to get up these, following the direction of the river till we at last got on more even ground; and as we were by this time all thoroughly done up, we decided to camp on a small level piece of ground, that was situated just where another small mountain stream joined the one we had been following. There was no doubt that this stream came right up from the mountain; so next day we followed it until we reached a ridge. This we commenced to ascend, finding it rather difficult at first to cut a path through the jungle, but when we got farther up we found a fairly good track, evidently made by wild beasts, and the ascent was rather easy after that for the next 2000 feet. We passed a number of the argus pheasants' sporting places, on the way up, and heard their shrill cries all round, but never saw any, though I often tried to get near them and have a shot; but they were very shy and cleared away before I could see them. As we got higher and higher up, the path was evidently less used by animals, and got overgrown, until it was completely lost; and we then had to cut our way through low but very dense and thorny jungle, full of a kind of thin rattans, the leaves of which with their hundreds of bent thorns proved a great hindrance to our progress, as they caught hold of our clothes everywhere, and as soon as we had got loose from one of the leaves, we were hooked on to by half a dozen others. About two o'clock in the afternoon we came out on a small plateau at a height of about 4000', and from there we had a good look at the top of the mountain which was not very far off; but as at the rate that we were travelling, it would not be possible to reach it that day, we left the plateau, and followed the slope of the ridge until we reached a dried-up water course; and finding a little water in a hollow, we decided to camp there. There were no large palm leaves to be found thereabout, and so darkness and rain came upon us before we had finished our shelter, and we passed a miserable night, wet and shivering with cold, as the rain had put our fires out. Next morning we had

a hurried breakfast, being anxious to reach the top as early as possible before the clouds commenced to gather round it. The rain had made everything nasty and slippery, and as we had to get up the steep slope, it took us some considerable time before we again got out on the ridge, and both I and the coolies had some bad falls and got a good deal bruised. After getting out on the ridge the ascent was again easier, going up very gradually, but the rattan jungle still gave us lots of trouble, and as I had to go ahead myself and clear the way I got the skin of my face and hands torn a good deal, and smeared all over with blood. At last we reached the top of the mountain, which proved to be only 5500' high, so I was quite certain that it could not be Gunong Tahan.

We had a splendid view from there toward the north across immense stretches of low and flat land,—Gunong Siam being evidently the last peak to the northward of that range of mountains in the middle of the Peninsula, whereof Gunong Tahan forms a part. The mountains to the south and south-east were hidden from view, being enveloped in the clouds. The top of Gunong Siam is only a long and very narrow ridge, being in some places only four feet wide, and covered with thick brushwood. After the coolies had rested for an hour I sent them down another side of the mountain, which I thought would take us down to the Kateh river sooner, with orders to stop as soon as they found water and suitable camping ground. I remained on the top of the mountain together with one of the Malays, in the hope that the clouds would clear away and enable me to get a view of the other mountains. In this I was not disappointed, as the mist cleared during the afternoon, and I got a good view of the Tulang Rabong range to the south and south-east, from which we seemed to be separated by the river Kateh. This range is about the same height as Gunong Siam, and behind it, far away to the southeast, I now and then got a glimpse of a higher mountain the top of which was continually hidden by the clouds; and I felt certain that this must be Gunong Tahan, there being no other mountain in sight approaching the same height as that. I saw at once that it would be impossible to reach it by going straight from where we were, as we should have to cross ridge after ridge of Pulang Rabong to get there, and

after the experience that we had had of the Kateh ridges I thought it most probable that we should never get there that way. We could either go round to the north of Gunong Siam, and then due south till we reached the foot of the mountain (and this would certainly save us a lot of trouble as the country round that way seemed to be fairly flat), or else we could go to the southward of Tulang Rabong and then straight to Gunong Tahan. This route appeared to be the shortest from Pulai, and I selected it though I knew the country to the southwards to be very mountainous, and difficult to get through; but as I wanted to do a little collecting on the Tulang Rabang, this suited me the best. After being fully satisfied that it was really Gunong Tahan that we were looking at, we commenced our descent, a shower of rain hurrying us on, and we soon overtook the coolies, who had not yet found any suitable place for camping. It was already commencing to get dark, and we were threatened with heavy rain so we hurried on as fast as the ground would allow us to travel, and just before it got dark we found a place beside a small stream, with plenty of large palm leaves close by, so all hands were soon busy making a shelter; and just as the rain came pouring down we had got it ready, and could cook our dinner. The camp was at 4000' so it was rather cold up there, and we had to keep a large fire burning the whole night; but still the Malays complained about the cold, and were glad when we started next morning for the valley. We expected to strike our old track from Pulai during that day, but somehow we missed it, and got into country unknown to us; so I decided to follow the Kateh down stream, until we reached the village which I knew existed close to its junction with the Galas. We reached the place late the next afternoon, and slept that night in a small Malay hut. Next day I got a couple of Malay guides, who took us back to Pulai where I arrived shortly after noon; but some of the poor coolies did not arrive till shortly before dark, being thoroughly done up, with their feet full of thorns and bleeding from innumerable leech bites.

We now remained some days in Pulai to recoup ourselves, during which time I tried hard to get some more coolies; but only succeeded in getting two more from a village down river

as none of the Chinese from Pulai would go with me into the jungle. It was now the beginning of September, and the rainy season was commencing, so we were likely to have a rather bad time of it during our journey. The night before we started on our second trip it rained very heavily, and in the morning all the jungle paths in the low land were transformed into small streams, and the rivers were all in flood. For half a day we followed a track which ran due south into Pahang, the borders of which are only one day's journey from Pulai; but coming across an old Chinese gold mine, all overgrown with jungle, we completely lost sight of the path, and after wasting some time trying to find it again I decided to cut a path myself, going in a more easterly direction as I was afraid we were getting too far south. After doing this for some time we came across another old disused path evidently leading to some other old workings, and this we followed till evening, when we camped at a small stream. Next day we reached a large limestone cliff, at least 500' high, very long but narrow, being in one place where a narrow passage ran right through it, not more than 20' wide, whereas it must have been several miles long, for I started to go round it, but after marching for one hour and seeing no sign of the end of it, I gave it up and returned. We found a small cave (Goa the Malays call them), and we camped in it for the night, the Malays however preferring to sleep outside, as a cold wind seemed to be coming down through some opening in the roof. I sent a couple of my best men out to try and scale the cliff and obtain a view of Tahan, which we had not yet seen on this journey; but they found it impossible to get up, the sides being everywhere perpendicular or overhanging, and there were no bushes or roots growing on the sides, to hold on by. The following day we struck a branch of the Kateh river, which ran in a southerly direction, and following it up we came to a deep pool full of fish; so I discharged a dynamite cartridge in the midst of them, and that night my Malays had a real feast, fresh fish being very scarce at Pulai, for there are none to be found in the Ulu Galas, where all the deep pools in the river have long since been filled up by the washings from the gold mines, leaving the fishes no place to breed or hide from their enemies. We then ascended a ridge running parallel with the

Tulang Rabong range, and reached a height of 2500', but had to descend again on the other side, as a river had to be crossed which proved to be a branch of the Tenom, which again is a tributary of the large Pahang river. The descent was very steep and very slippery from the rain and just as we reached the river bed I slipped on a large boulder, and fell with great force against a large root, hurting my right side very much, and was unable to move for some time. I was afraid I should be unable to continue the journey, and we had to camp there that night, but next morning I felt much better and so we pushed on for another two days, when we struck another of the Pahang rivers, but whether this was another branch of the Tenom or whether it was the Kechau I was unable to determine. It rose near the top of Tulang Rabong, as I found out later by following it up very nearly to its source, about 5000' up. We camped at the only level place that we could find, about 1500' above sea level, but at night after a heavy rain we were nearly routed out of our camp by the river, which rose with startling suddenness and nearly flooded us out. The roar of the water rushing past us at a tremendous speed dashing against boulders and over falls was something not to be easily forgotten, and made sleep impossible that night. I decided to let most of my men remain at this place, while I went back to Pulai to obtain a fresh supply of provisions, but before doing so I ascended another range of hills that ran parallel with the river on the opposite side, and reached a height of 4500' from where I had a fine view of Gunong Tahan. I thought it would take us 4 to 5 days to reach the foot of it, and told my men to commence cutting a path up to it while I was away, at Pulai. I then went back, taking with me only two coolies, and walking hard for $2\frac{1}{2}$ days we reached Pulai. It proved very difficult to obtain sufficient coolies at once, so I had to send 10 men off first, with provisions for my men, while the headman of Pulai sent for the Malays living farther down stream to come up and go with me. Twelve days were lost in waiting for them, and when they at last arrived there were only 15 of them instead of 25 that I wanted, but finding it useless to wait any longer I started off with these men, taking as much provisions with us as they could carry. These men came from the low land down river and

were not used to work in the mountains, so they very soon got tired, and I had continually to sit down and wait for them. We reached the camp of my Malays in four days, and it was my intention to push on the next day for the foot of Tahan; but my Pahang Malays, who had been out cutting part of the path while I had been away, had found this such hard work and such difficult climbing that they refused to go on. I argued with them a long time but it was no use, and promises or threats of punishment had equally little effect on them, and next morning they had disappeared, leaving behind them their parangs and spare clothing, which I had taken from them the previous evening, thinking thereby to prevent them from running away. When the Kelantan Malays saw this they also refused to go any farther, and the whole lot of them went back to Pulai leaving me only six men that I had with me from Kota Bahru, and a couple of Pahang men that joined me a few days later. Including myself and my Chinese boy we were nine in all, and to push on for Gunong Tahan with so few men would have been useless, as we should only have been able to carry enough provisions to take us to the foot of the mountain and back; whereas I wanted to stay some time near the top of the mountain to collect specimens. Therefore I decided to remain where we were, in the hope that the headman at Pulai would send the Kelantan Malays back to me, when he heard how I was situated; and this proved to be correct, the men returning to me at the end of twelve days. In the meantime we had done some collecting, and got a few rare birds and some orchids. My boy who had seen the Chinese at Pulai working gold amused himself by prospecting in the river bed; and one day he brought back to the camp a large piece of quartz which proved to be very rich, the gold being visible running right through it. The lode that it came from could not have been far off, as the mountain which the river sprang from was quite close, but we had no time to look for it.

It was my intention to take that piece of quartz back with me to Pulai on the return journey; but, as luck would have it, I never came back that way; and so it is still lying there waiting for somebody to come and pick it up. Having got the men back we then made another start, having first to climb the ridge

4500' high in front of us, and this proved such hard work that the men could not walk any farther when we reached the top, and so we camped there, going down the other side next morning. There we again got into Kelantan territory, crossing a branch of the Galas river, and went up a long and high ridge forming the boundary between Pahang and Kelantan. It was right from the foot of Tulong Rabong to Gunong Tahan, and as it did not appear to be known to the Malays, we christened it Bukit Gajah on account of the number of elephants that were to be found there, the top of the ridge seeming to be their regular highway. We saw only female elephants, the males being very scarce in Kelantan, where everybody is allowed to shoot them, and before long these will be quite extinct. We kept along this ridge for four days, reaching a height of 4500' and then commenced to descend, being then opposite to Gunong Tahan, and only separated from it by a river, which proved to be the Relai, a tributary of the Lebeh. None of the branches of the Galas come from the mountain, and it was evidently a great mistake my trying to get up from there, as the way up from the Relai or Aring rivers is much nearer and easier. The descent was difficult and would have been well nigh impossible if the elephants had not been there before us; but by following their tracks, and using the deep indents made by their huge feet, we managed to scramble down and reach the river, which is here 1200' above sea level. Arriving there the Kelantan Malays left me and returned to their homes, and I was not sorry to lose them this time, as these men had enormous appetites and were eating up nearly all my provisions. The rest of us stayed a couple of days at the river, and then, having found a spur that seemed to go in the right direction, we commenced the ascent.

The first 1000' were very difficult, and took us a long time to negotiate, but after that we got out on another spur and the ascent got much easier, there being a fairly good track made by wild beasts. Reaching a height of 4000' we got into rattan jungle, which seems to grow on all the Kelantan mountains of any height; so we left the comb of the spur and went down the side until we found water, where we then camped; but could not find any level place for our shelter, and had to build it on the side of the hill, and as it came on to rain

heavily towards evening we had a rather bad time of it that night, as the water came pouring down the hillside on the ground that we slept upon I, myself, was lying on a few raised sticks and was fairly well off; but the Malays had been too lazy to cut enough of these for themselves, and so had to sleep on the ground on a few leaves, with the water running in streams under them. Next morning on starting we soon got into rattan jungle again, and owing to the difficulty of getting through this, we only got up another 1000' that day, camping at night by the side of a small stream. As this seemed to be a likely place for collecting purposes, I decided to make it my headquarters for the time that we stayed on the mountains. It took us two more days to cut a path to the top of the mountain, the jungle being very dense and difficult to cut through. Every afternoon it rained heavily, so that we always got drenched before we could get back to camp; and as the path we had cut was only a very poor affair, we had to go bent double half of the way on account of overhanging branches, and it was very annoying to feel the water running from my cap down my neck, finding its way down my back, and finally coming out of my shoes. In the camp it was very cheerless too, in the evening, there being only very few leaves suitable for making a roof in the neighbourhood and consequently our shelter was very small and badly made. From the top of the mountain, we saw the village on the Aring river where I had stayed on my first trip, and as that appeared to be the only place within measurable distance from which we could obtain any food, I decided to send some of my men there to get a fresh supply of provisions, as we were running short of these. I told the men to follow the Relai river, when they reached the foot of the mountain, until they were clear of the hills, and then strike across country till they reached the Aring, when they were to follow that stream till the village was reached. There they were to buy provisions and get some coolies to carry them back to us. I sent three men, and when they left we had only provisions left us for another ten days; but by giving out short rations I hoped to get them to last until the men could come back from the village. The rest of us stayed up there collecting, and I found the best collecting ground to be between 5000' to 7000', but we also went several times right up

to the top when the weather was fine, in the hope of finding traces of the men that I left on my first trip; but could find none where we were, which, considering the immense size of the mountain, was not at all strange, as half a dozen different parties might have been on the mountain, without seeing each other. Far away we could see a large black patch that looked as if the low jungle had been burned away; but it was too far for us to attempt to reach it, as we should not have been able to do much collecting on the way, and I wanted to get together as large a collection as possible before our provisions gave out. Later on, I found out that it really was a piece of jungle that my men had burned down to attract our attention, but they had already left the mountain two months before we reached it. The mountain seemed really to consist of three separate ranges running parallel from about east to west, connected with each other at their highest points by a number of peaks, the one in the middle being the highest. In the ravines between the different ranges the following rivers had their sources, as far as I was able to judge with the help of my Pahang Malays:—towards the Kelantan side the river Relai and two branches of the Aring: towards the Pahang side the rivers Kechau, Tahan, and perhaps also another branch of the Tembeling,—as I am not sure that the river which we struck on my first trip was not a branch of that river, and not the Tahan as the Sakais stated. I found that all the branches of these rivers which sprung from anywhere near the top of the mountain, had very discoloured water, something like the water found in stagnant swamps; whereas the streams that came from an altitude of less than 4000' had beautifully clear water; but what might be the reason of this I did not find out. Nearly the whole of the mountain consists of white quartz. From my own experience on the Tahan or Tembeling river, and from what I saw from the top, I should say that it will be very difficult to get up from the Pahang side, as the mountain on that side is very precipitous (probably deriving its name of Tahan on that account) and provisions have to be carried a much greater distance than from the Kelantan side. I only saw one village on the Pahang side, lying beside a huge limestone cliff that somewhat resembled the shape of an elephant; but none of my men could give me any

information as to the name of the river by which it was situated. If anybody wants to try and get up from the Pahang side I would recommend him to start from that village. There was a very grand view from the top, especially very early in the morning, when the mist covered all the low-lying land, making it resemble a lake of snow; and so low did the mist keep to the ground that the top of some of the tall jungle trees could be seen, looking like masts of sunken ships, and the smaller mountains stood out dark and sombre like islands in this beautiful lake. Later on in the day the mist would gradually rise and come rolling up the mountain side, with the dark clouds gathering fast near the top, and in the afternoon and evening the rain would come down in torrents. The trees and rocks were all covered with masses of long moss in which the rain kept hanging, so that it was impossible to move about without getting wet; and we had to go about day after day in wet clothes, with wind and rain blowing in on us at night. Besides which my Malays suffered much from the cold at night, when the temperature often went down to 50°.

Altogether I stayed eighteen days near the top of the mountain, and I got a very good collection of birds and some orchids; but I was only able to take a small quantity of the latter, as transporting a large number of them to the coast would have been impossible with the few men that I had. Of mammals we only got very few, and the same was the case with insects, of which I had hoped to get a lot; but with the wet and miserable weather that we had, all the insects that we saw flew very high, and even if they had come down, it would have been nearly impossible to chase and catch them in the thick low brushwood that covered the whole of the upper part of the mountain.

For the last few days that we stayed up there we only got half rations, as I was very loath to go down, hoping that the three men would return from the village in time with the provisions; when it was my intention to remain up there for another fourteen days. But when the last grain of rice and all the tinned provisions were finished, we had to start on the way down, taking with us all my collections except the orchids, which I was forced to leave behind as we could not carry them with us. I expected to find the men with the provisions at the foot of the mountain,

but on arriving there we found no sign of them. However I had left there four tins of salmon and two pounds of biscuits when we went up the mountain, and we now made a scanty meal of half of these, reserving the other half for next day. At night we discussed what was to be done, and as all the Malays wanted to make for the nearest village to obtain food there, I gave in; though I would rather have remained at the foot of the mountain and waited for the return of the three men, living on the mountain on such game as we could shoot and snare. Early next morning we started, leaving most of my things behind in the camp, taking with us only a blanket each, and my collection of birds. My Malays wanted me to leave the latter behind to enable us to travel quicker, but I was afraid the skins would be spoiled before we could return for them, and so I made the men carry them along. Following the Relai river we soon came past the mountain, and as the three men who had gone before us had made a track for us we got on rather quickly. A couple of hours walking brought us to a shelter where these men had camped, and beyond this were two tracks, so it was evident the men had gone wrong first, and finding this out, had returned to this place and struck out in another direction. We kept on following the river, but soon got into difficult country, with spurs from the mountains running right down to the river, so that we often had to cross the same, to escape having to climb over these hills, some of which were rather high and steep. Having to cross the river so often delayed us a good deal, as the river was in flood, the water coming tearing down with great force; and great care had to be taken in crossing over. The course of the river was very crooked indeed; but we had to keep to the banks and follow all its bends and windings, as we got into the hills as soon as we attempted to cut off some of the corners; and the Malays declared they were unable to do any climbing, as they had had so little food for the last few days. So on the whole I do not think we got very far that day. After rigging up a shelter for the night we fired a couple of dynamite cartridges in some pools in the rivers, but only got a few small fishes, that would scarcely have satisfied the hunger of one man, so I got the Malays to collect some young palm shoots, and we made a meal of them; but the Malays declared that they were

no good, saying there was absolutely no strength in them, and on the following days I could not get them to collect any. The next day we kept on following the river, hoping to find some bamboos, of which we then intended to make a raft and drift down stream until we reached the Sakai settlement which I knew existed there; but to our great disappointment there were none to be found in that part of the country, so we kept trudging along, now on this, and now on that side of the river, the Malays complaining very much, and getting more disheartened the farther we went. I tried my best to cheer them up and get them to hurry on, but finding this useless, I left them and went on by myself till some time in the afternoon; when having found a suitable place for camping I sat down and waited for them. When they at last arrived I had great difficulty in getting them to collect leaves for a shelter, as none of the large kind of palm leaves were to be found in the vicinity, and the men preferred to sleep in the open, rather than to take the trouble of making a shelter of the smaller leaves found there. However I insisted on having one built, and lucky it was that I did so, as the rain came pouring down as soon as it was finished, and this lasted half the night, so we should have been in a sorry plight had we had no roof over us. While the men made the shelter I fired another charge of dynamite in a pool, and this time I was more successful, getting a number of good-sized fishes. So we had enough for a fairly good meal that night and for another the next morning before we started, that being the last food we tasted before we reached the village four days later. The river was now in flood to such an extent that it was dangerous to cross over, and as we could not keep continually on one side of it owing to the many hills, we decided to leave it altogether and strike across country until we reached the Aring, where we could make a raft and drift down to the village. Soon after we had left the river bank, we got to some hills, and seeing no chance of getting round by the foot of them, I started climbing up, the Malays of course protesting; but as I did not take any notice of that, they had to follow me, grumbling very much as they went, and sitting down very often to rest. My Chinese boy proved to be the best man of the lot and kept fairly close behind me, whereas the Malays were soon left far behind.

The hill proved to be very much higher and steeper than I expected, being in fact a mountain range 3,000' high, dividing the Relai and Aring rivers, and the Malays were terribly done up when they at last reached the top. While I waited for them up there, I found a spur sloping gently down on the other side towards the north-east, and this we now followed right to the foot of the range, where we came across a small stream and camped close by it. We had no dinner that night, but there being still some tea left, we each had a cup of this before going to sleep. Following the stream next day we at last reached the Aring river, of which this was a tributary called Patei. It was about noon when we struck the Aring, and great was our joy on finding an old disused bamboo raft lying half way up on the banks. It had evidently been left there by some gutta hunters, and we soon had it in the water; luckily it was just big enough to hold us and our things, and after having cut some long poles to steer with, we started on our way down river.

Owing to the late heavy rains the river was in flood, and this was rather in our favour, as there would be no shallow places over which we otherwise would have had to haul the raft. We were travelling at a great rate of speed, it being impossible to stop the raft, but we did not anticipate any danger, as the Malays seemed well able to steer us clear of all rocks and snags. The men were all in high glee, now, at the prospect of soon reaching the village, shouting, singing and chaffing each other, and in their own estimation they were evidently great heroes. So we went dashing down one rapid after the other, the men yelling derision at them all, when just as we came round a bend in the river we dashed into the stem of a huge tree that had fallen across the stream and effectually blocked the whole river. The thing happened so suddenly that it was impossible to do anything to prevent it; there was a great cracking of the bamboos and down went the raft, throwing us all out in the river. We all managed to scramble up on the tree, and as all our things were light we fished them up again, with the exception of my only pair of shoes, which I had taken off as a precaution when we started, in case we should have to swim for it. We also managed to haul the raft up over the tree, and

as the Malays thought that it would still hold together, we decided to go on with it. A great many of the bamboos had been split open by the collision, so the raft was not nearly as buoyant as it had been before, and could scarcely carry us all. Going down over the rapids now became very dangerous, as the water would come rolling in over the raft, pressing now this now that side under water, so that we had difficulty in balancing ourselves on it, and I was afraid the raft would go to pieces at any minute. So after we had had about one hour of this dangerous sport, I thought it better to stop and keep to the jungle. So we landed and made a shelter, but it was a very poor one, the Malays being now again very disheartened, did not work very willingly, and the rain coming on again we passed a really miserable night in our wet clothes, with wet blankets, and the rain dripping on us from above, and running in streams under the few leaves on which we had made our bed, and without a morsel of food. Next day we looked for bamboos with which to repair our raft, but not finding any, we had to abandon it and start on our weary tramp again. I went ahead myself cutting a path for the others, as they all had something to carry, and a pretty bad time I had of it with my bare feet; for as I had to keep looking ahead, I could not always see where I put my feet, and as a consequence I often trod on thorns and sharp sticks; besides which there were thousands of leeches about, which took a great fancy to my bare legs, where they stuck till they had had their fill, as I often felt too weary to stoop down and pick them off. We knew that there was a native path on one side of the river, running from the village into Pahang; and so we went inland away from the river, trying to find it, but coming to a range of hills the Malays declared themselves unable to get over them; so we had to go back to the river and follow its many bends and curves. Often we had to make great detours inland when we came to tributaries of the Aring, which were deep and swollen, so that we had to find fords before we could cross over them. We walked the whole day, camping just before it got dark, and started off again early next morning, having then good hopes of reaching the village that day, as I had found some landmarks that I knew. The Malays were however very slow, so I got

far ahead of them all, by myself, thinking they would hurry on when they found that they were being left so far behind. Towards three o'clock in the afternoon, just when I had decided to stop and await my men, I heard a shout down river, and on my answering, a boat appeared, that had been sent up from the village to meet us. Two of the Malays whom I thought were far behind me had lost my track altogether, and in looking for it they had come across the real path to the village, and this cheering them up, they had hurried on to the village, and hearing there that we had not yet arrived, they sent a boat up stream to meet us. I waited till my other men came up, and then we all went down the river to the village, arriving there just as a heavy thunderstorm came on, and very thankful were we to be under a good roof again. The day after, the three men that I had sent for provisions came back to the village with a long tale of woe. They had arrived there four or five days before us, having taken fourteen days to reach it, whereas it took us only seven days. They had then bought some provisions and started on their return journey to the mountain. When two days out, their Sakai coolies ran away and left them; and instead of pushing on by themselves as they ought to have done, they returned to the village to obtain other coolies. So it was well for us that we did not stop at the foot of the mountain and wait for them to come back.

After the men had rested for four or five days, I sent them back to the mountain, together with a number of Malays from the village, to fetch the orchids and my other things that we had left behind. The coolies were to bring these back to Buntie, whereas my own men would go from the mountain back to Pulai, where they would fetch those of my things that I had left there; and then going down by the Galas river, join me at Kota Bahru. It was impossible for me to return to the mountain myself, having no shoes, with my feet in a terrible state, swollen and torn, so that I was scarcely able to walk for days after. Had it been otherwise I should certainly have gone back and stayed up on the mountain for another month. Shortly after the men had left I got a bad attack of fever, which luckily did not last very long but left me very weak. I got a tiger while waiting for the return of the men, there seeming to be

plenty of them in that part of the country, as a report came to hand that two men had been eaten by them at Quala Aring just before. Going down stream we passed eight of them,—two old and a young one,—that were disporting themselves in the jungle close to the bank; but we were then just passing over a rapid, and travelling at a great speed, so that it was impossible to get a shot at them. After waiting ten days the coolies returned, and I started on the return journey to Kota Bahru, the trip down stream taking only eight days, as all the rivers were in flood. The men that I had left on my first trip upon the mountain I picked up on the way down, and they stated that they had succeeded in scaling one of the peaks of the Tahan, to the south of where I got up, and they brought a fairly good collection of skins back with them.

I had to wait about a week in Kota Bahru for my men from the Galas river, and then went back to Singapore, the whole trip taking seven months instead of three as I had reckoned on.



Waterstradt, John. 1902. "Kelantan and my trip to Gunong Tahan." *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 37, 1–27.

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