

## MISCELLANEOUS NOTICES.

### GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES—RECENT JOURNEYS IN THE PENINSULA.

Since the publication of the last Number of this Journal, some important additions have been made to our knowledge of the physical outlines of the Country in four different regions of the Peninsula; Ulu Johor, Ulu Kinta, Jelei, and Rambau.

The highest mountain range in Johor, Gunong Blûmut (3200 feet), has recently been ascended for the first time, two independent parties having reached the top within a few days of each other; and from one of the Travellers a more particular account of the journey is promised for our next Journal.

In the interior of Pêrak, the Kinta valley was explored last August to its upper watershed; and a range of high hills was ascended, some 30 miles to the east of Kinta. The highest peak was proved to be about 8,000 feet high. It was named by its discoverers, and is now familiarly known, as *Mount Robinson*, the highest point of the range called *Gunong Riam*. Additional importance was given to this journey from the part taken in it by some Ceylon planters, who had been recommended to the Government of Perak by the Colonial Authorities in England, as pioneers of Coffee-planting in the Malay highlands.

Special interest was felt in their announcement that several hundred thousand acres were to be found of land suitable for coffee over 2000 feet above the sea; the consequence being that a good many "prospectors" from Ceylon and elsewhere have since visited Perak; but hitherto they have not added much to our knowledge of the Country's physical features.

The real point of Geographical interest still remains. Is there or is there not an important stream in the very centre of the Peninsula, which after draining the eastern slopes of these high mountains joins the *Jelei*, and together with the *Bêrá* from the west forms the R. *Pahang*? A train of *a priori* reasoning, based on the difficulty of explaining this region's drainage otherwise, first suggested the thought some years ago.



It is true that no such stream was known of in Mr. Logan's time (see Indian Archipelago Journal I. page 247; but a hint of it—though given unconsciously—may perhaps be traced in Mr. Logan's reference to *S. Ginta* vol. II. p. 123). It was Mr. Daly's account of his journey (1875) from Muar to Pahang, published in 1877, that first brought evidence to support such an hypothesis; for he intimated that the northern branch, which joined Pahang at *Kwála Běrá*, was an even larger stream than the one he himself descended from the south. Unfortunately the "tracing" of his *route*, which was embodied in the Map (1876), omits to show the junction of any such northern branch; and it is only within the last year that the hypothesis has been really confirmed to some extent by the publication of Mr. Maclay's account of his journey up the *Jělei*; and the achievement of Baron Verboch last July, when he crossed from Sungei Ujong into *Jělbú*, and thence down into *Jělei*, on the eastern side of the Bernum watershed, by the *River Triang*.

The point can never be finally settled until the interior of Perak, beyond Mount Robinson, shall have been crossed in a south—easterly direction; and an expedition is in fact about to be despatched, under the auspices of Mr. Leech who ascended Mount Robinson last year, to cross the still more eastern Country, that lies between *River Plus*, a feeder of the Perak in the Northern interior of that State, and *River Slim*, the northern branch of the *River Bernam*, in the interior of Sělangor.

The continuation of the Paper on the "Geography of the Peninsula," Part I of which (confined to its Cartography) appeared in the last Journal, has under these circumstances been deferred for the present. Fresh information is fast being obtained in various quarters, and the most useful mode of dealing with it at present will be to print short detached notes of each important piece of work done in the way of exploring new country, such as the four journeys above referred to. Two of these (the ascents of *Gánong Blúmut* and *Mount Robinson*) were new ground even to the Malays themselves. The other two, (the routes through *Jělei* and *Pábei Pass* in Rambau) though well known to the Malays have not been hitherto made, or at any rate described, by Europeans. Of the journey through *Jělei*, from S. Ujong to Pahang, Baron Verboch has unfortunately left us no account; although it was undertaken expressly on behalf of our Society. The Rambau journey was described at the time before a General Meeting of the Society, as recorded in the extract from the Straits Times which is printed below.



There is yet a great deal more to be learnt about the interior of the Peninsula. How ignorant we all are at present of its Physical Geography, viewed as a whole, may be judged from the correspondence in the local papers last September, after the ascent of Mount Robinson, regarding the "true backbone" of the Peninsula; witness the following letter, challenging certain foregone conclusions on this subject which are undoubtedly premature at present :—

*Singapore, October 1st, 1878.*

"You will perhaps allow me to correct an error in the Overland Summary of last Saturday, in which you state that Mr. Christie's party found that from "Mount Robinson" the Straits of Malacca were visible on the West, and the China Sea on the East."

"The only full account of the journey yet published is to be found in Mr. Leech's Diary; and if you refer to your issue of the 21st ultimo, you will read," we were disappointed in getting a view to the East, which was our principal inducement "to come here, as we were surrounded by a sea of mist, which "however lay a long way below us. Through it we could see "the tops of numerous Peaks, sticking up like islands"

"A Ceylon paper, from which you made some extracts on the 26th ultimo, reports Mr. Christie to have said, "a third range marked on the map was non-existent." But to judge from Mr. Leech's account there is scarcely enough evidence to pronounce an opinion, even on this point. However that may be, it is certain these places lie in the latitude of the Peninsula's greatest width, where, if we may trust the Admiralty charts, it is three degrees of longitude, or upwards of 200 miles, from sea to sea.

"In short the interior of *Pèrak* is not the interior of the *Peninsula*; while as yet we have learnt but little even of *Pèrak*, beyond its coasts and rivers; and it may safely be stated that neither from *Pèrak* nor any other of the States between *Kedah* and *Johor*, has any person yet penetrated so far into the mountain-ranges of the Peninsula, as to obtain a view of the China Sea. It will be a feat of no great difficulty to achieve, and it will no doubt be accomplished before long; but in the meantime I should be sorry to see you under-rate the amount of country still lying *terra incognita*, or the necessity for some further exploration into the interior."

This necessity is well understood by the present energetic administration of *Pèrak*, for as has already been mentioned an ex-



ploring party is about to start from Kwala Kangsa to clear up some of the very questions here referred to; of which it is hoped our Society will receive an account when the expedition returns.

A. M. S.

#### ASCENT OF BUJANG MALACCA.

Connected with the geography of Pêrak the following account of the important mountain in the Kampar district called *Bujang Malacca*, and its surroundings, may be usefully recorded. This is not one of the very numerous "untrodden summits" of Pêrak; for its western side has been selected for the first experiment in Pêrak coffee-planting by Europeans. On this very account special interest will be attached to the following particulars, and also because of its central and commanding situation as a place of observation.

It is to the Diary of Mr. Leech, the District officer, we are again indebted for this interesting and precise information; as well as to the Resident, Mr. Low, for bearing our Society in mind when transmitting it.

17th January, 1879.

"A stiff climb brought us to some caves within about 100 feet of the summit, and here we pitched our camp. The barometer showed the height of this place to be 4200 feet above the Kampar River. At an elevation of about 3500 feet, the vegetation began to change rather markedly, and in a swampy piece of ground we came on a large number of *conifers*, some as much as 50 feet high and 18 inches in diameter. There were two distinct species, one not unlike a Scotch fir; the leaf of the other was more like that of an acacia.

"On the extreme summit above the cave in which we spent the night, there was a most marked change in the appearance of the vegetation, the ferns and mosses as well as the bushy scrub of rhododendron and other similar plants, not omitting the dwarf bamboo, reminded me very much of the vegetation on the top of Mount Robinson; many of the plants I recognised at once as the same, but as was natural to expect, considering the difference in height,—the one hill little over 400 the other about 800 feet high,—many of the Mount Robinson plants were absent, especially the long-stalked braken with crescent-shaped tops and long sprays, of which we made our beds on Mount Robinson and with which it was covered.

18th January, 1879.

"We were up before the sun this morning, not having had very agreeable night, as it rained continuously and a good de





Skinner, A. M. 1878. "Geographical Notes—Recent Journeys in the Peninsula." *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 2, 222–225.

**View This Item Online:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/131536>

**Permalink:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/375548>

**Holding Institution**

Smithsonian Libraries and Archives

**Sponsored by**

Biodiversity Heritage Library

**Copyright & Reuse**

Copyright Status: Not in copyright. The BHL knows of no copyright restrictions on this item.

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.