

Notes from Sarawak Museum.

On a Fossil Tooth found at Bau, Upper Sarawak.

A molar tooth of the Indian elephant (*Elephas indicus*) was recently found in a small cave at Bau, Upper Sarawak, by a Chinaman, whilst washing for gold, and was handed over to me by Mr. Pawle of the Borneo Company, whose kindness in so doing, I beg to acknowledge here. The tooth is an undoubted fossil, as shown by a longitudinal section subsequently made, but since it was lying in a crevice in the limestone, not actually imbedded in rock, it is impossible to state with any degree of accuracy the exact horizon of the specimen. The limestone in this part of Sarawak is undoubtedly of comparatively recent origin, as shown by fossils collected by me; such characteristic shells as *Cerithium* and *Limopsis* being here abundant; the formation is honeycombed with caves, many of which were carefully explored in 1878-9 by the late Mr. A. H. Everett. His results were embodied in a report to the Royal Society (Proc. Roy. Soc. No. 203, 1880) and he there states it as his opinion, that it is unlikely that deposits of any great antiquity or interest will be found in this area; subsequent observations have justified and will, I think, continue to justify these words; the fossil tooth, the subject of this note, is interesting only because it proves conclusively that which formerly was argued inductively, *viz*:— that the Indian elephant was once an indigenous inhabitant of Borneo. In Mr. C. Hose's "Mammals of Borneo," *Elephas indicus* is included as an indigenous species; but there is little doubt that the few individuals now existing in North Borneo have sprung from some pairs which were introduced some years ago, certainly within the memory of living man. These pairs were presented by a Sultan of Pahang to the Sultan of Brunei or Sulu (for on this point accounts differ), and after they had been kept in semi-captivity for a year or two, were turned loose into the jungle. Considering the low rate of breeding of elephants it is not surprising that their present distribution in the island of Borneo is so extremely local. It is also worthy of note that the Kyans at the head of the Rejang and Baram rivers, areas in which the rhinoceros and wild buffalo

occur, are not only ignorant of the existence of the elephant both by personal observation or by hearsay, but have no word in their language for that animal. Fossil remains of various species of elephants have been found in the Pliocene and Pleistocene deposits of many countries, but *Elephas indicus* itself has not been shewn to have any great antiquity, nor do I attempt to shew it now from the fragment before me. Borneo was separated from the Asiatic continent in quite recent times, and it is not impossible that the elephant lingered on in the newly-formed island for some length of time. That the species was once indigenous to Borneo is proved now for the first time and beyond all manner of doubt.

R. S. Shelford.



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