

ABOUT KINTA.

BY

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PART I.

(Read at a Meeting of the Society, held on the 13th October, 1879.)

In the following paper, I propose giving a short description of this most interesting and, to the outer world, almost unknown part of the country.

The Pêrak River, the largest river on the western side of the Malay Peninsula, flows nearly the whole length of the country, taking its rise in the northern frontier and falling into the sea a few miles North of the Bernam River, the southern boundary. Nearly all its water is drawn from the tributaries on the eastern (left) bank, and it is of the country drained by those tributaries that I write.

Beginning from the North, about 12 or 15 miles above Kwala Kangsa, we have the mouth of the Plus. From native report, the valley drained by this river is known to be very extensive, the soil exceptionally good, and the mineral resources considerable; tin, which exists all over Pêrak, is worked there to a small extent by the Malays, and gold is known to exist. A jungle path, with easy gradients practicable for elephants and horned cattle, exists along the valley of the Plus, across the water shed of the peninsula into Patânî, and oxen have frequently been brought from there to Lârut

via Kwala Kangsa. A continuation of the road at present existing from Lârut to Kwala Kangsa, or, better still, I believe, a light tramway, will not only open up the extensive valley of the Plus, but will also, no doubt, in time attract a large portion of the products of Patânî, which, in consequence of the North-east monsoon, cannot find an outlet to the sea on the East coast for nearly six months of the year.

Till quite recently, this valley had never even been visited by an European; but during the present month Mr. DEANE, a gentleman from Ceylon who is in treaty with the Government of Pêrak to undertake a survey of the country, has gone there from Kinta, and I quote the following passages from a letter which I received from him from the Plus, dated 5th June, 1879:—

“From Chumor I went to Lankor, on the right bank of the river Kurubu, a tributary of the Plus, which takes its rise on the northern slopes of the Gunong Robinson range, not far from the peak itself.”

“This Kurubu is a river of considerable size, is pretty fast, and must drain a considerable area. Its course from rise is N.W.” Here I may remark that I am very much inclined to think that this river, the Kurubu, will be found to drain the eastern face of Gunong Robinson, to which I shall refer further on. Mr. DEANE continues:—

“My trip to the range adjoining the Plus drainage and forming part of it, has impressed me very favourably as regards the quality of the soil. It is out and out far superior to any I have yet seen in Pêrak, and in many parts is simply magnificent, being a fine free chocolate-coloured soil, resting on a friable clay, but the latter so free from admixture with sand, &c., as to be good for cultivation for many feet below the surface. Formation is granite as usual. On my way here I passed and secured magnificent specimens of lime, the finest I have seen, I think, anywhere. From the top of Gunong Aslet you look over the Plus valley, which is of great extent, to a height of 6,000 to 8,000 feet, and ranges away in the distance, say 40 to 70 miles, covering an arc of 265° to 50° of the circle.”

I have now, I think, transcribed enough from Mr. DEANE's letter to give an idea of the extent and facilities of the Plus valley, and will leave him to describe it in detail, as I have reason to hope he will give the public the benefit of the information he has obtained during his visit to Pêrak.

Next, South of the Plus, comes the Kinta River, separated from the Pêrak River by a range of hills commonly called the Blanja range. The highest points in this range are from 3,000 to 4,000 feet in elevation. None of the coffee planters from Ceylon who have crossed this range have been much pleased with it, thinking the soil too stiff and climate too moist for coffee, whatever it might be for tea or other cultivation. Because coffee planters condemn it, however, it must not be imagined that this range is worthless; some of the richest deposits of tin in Pêrak are found along its eastern base; this deposit of tin, technically called stream tin, is found in two formations; the upper one, the natural soil of the ground, formed by the denudation of the hills, consists of a light sandy loam in which a considerable proportion of tin sand exists: working this is the mining which the Malays affect; the work is light, it consists in damming up a small stream and then conducting the water by a number of artificial channels, where the soil is washed away, the tin ore, in consequence of its greater weight, being left in the drain; when this has gone on sufficiently long, the water is turned into another channel, and the ore removed from the bed of the dry one. Below this surface soil, at various depths in different parts of the district, true ore-bearing stratum is reached, "pay dirt" as it is called in Australia; the depth at which it is found varies from one to eight or nine fathoms, and this is what the Chinese usually mine for. Notwithstanding the present depreciated price of tin, both Malay and Chinese miners are making money, which speaks for itself as to the richness of the deposits; a stream is just as necessary to the Chinese miners as it is to Malays; the latter use the water to remove the soil, and the former pump the water out of their mines with a very ingenious water-wheel; there are consequently large tracts where neither can work, and in these there exists the opening for European enterprize; a large capital is not required, but a practical knowledge of mining is absolutely necessary; with both combined large profits would be a certainty; when the present miners, with their rude appliances and wasteful methods of mining and smelting, can make a good profit, what would not more

scientific methods do?

While on the subject of mining, I may mention, that, up to this, all the work is confined to the plains. Lodes no doubt exist in the hills from which the deposits at the foot have been formed, and at some future date it may be found profitable to work them, but, till the rich deposits of stream tin are exhausted, I doubt if much will be sought in *situ*.

Close to Pengkalan Katcha, the port of embarkation for one of the most important mining settlements, called Papan, the Kinta is joined by a large tributary, in volume nearly rivalling the Kinta river itself; this stream is called the Sungei Raya, which also drains an important tin district.

In the plain between the two rivers, a curious geological formation is found. The main ranges of hills all through Pêrak are granitic, but in this valley principally, and to a small extent elsewhere, peculiar isolated limestone cliffs rise vertically out of the plains to heights varying from 500 to 2,000 feet; the greatest number of these hills, or rather I should say cliffs, are to be found between the Kinta and Sungei Raya; there are a few of them on the western side (right bank) of the Kinta river, and these are the limestones spoken of by Mr. DEANE; one—Gunong Pondok—well known as a steering point to all mariners making for the Lârut river, exists on the eastern side of the pass in the Gunong Bubo range, the road from Lârut to Kwala Kangsa passing the foot of it. A number of these cliffs also exist between the Sungei Raya and the Kangsa river, of which I will speak directly, but further to the East they are not to be found, nor, I believe, to the South, as I have never met them nor heard of them in Sêlângor, although I saw a good deal of that country while in the service of the Sêlângor Government. Like all limestone formations, these cliffs are pierced by caves in all directions, in which large colonies of bats have lived for countless ages, depositing a species of guano (*tai kalawi*) largely used as manure in the Province Wellesley, where it is brought from Kêdah, in which this limestone formation is again met. The peculiar feature of this rock is the high state of crystallisation in which it exists, no fossils of any sort have yet been found in it, that I am aware of, although I have frequently searched for them, nor can any marks of stratification be traced; the rock is generally pure white occa-

sionally with a slight shade of grey, blue, or red in it, and, when broken, exactly resembles a piece of lump sugar. The same limestone formation is, I believe, also to be found in Borneo. Some of the richest deposits of tin are found about these cliffs, and probably other minerals will be found when they are properly examined; two of the best ores of iron (brown hematite and specular iron ore) are common. Hot springs also exist. To the naturalist and botanist this district is full of interest; that magnificent butterfly—the ornithoptera Brookani—formerly supposed to be peculiar to Borneo, is found plentifully in several places. It is almost needless for me to add that the presence of limestone is a pretty certain sign of good soil. A marble saw, worked by water power, might produce marble slabs for paving the ground floors of bungalows for little more than the cost of transport, which, being by water the whole way, would be trifling; and the difference between a marble pavement and the red tiles commonly used in the Straits needs no remark. Before speaking of the hill district to the East of this, it will be well to mention the means of access to this district.

The easiest way is by water. A coasting steamer, the *Pyah Pekhet*, calls every week at Durian Sĕbatang, a place about 40 miles up the Pĕrak river, on her way to and from Singapore and Penang. From Durian Sĕbatang to Kôta Bahru, the future seat of Government in this district, is from two to three days by native boats; the river is only practicable for a steam-launch at present for a short way, in consequence of the number of snags in the stream, but these will be removed as soon as the river is low enough to admit of the work, the money being already granted by the Government for the purpose. From Kôta Bahru the Kinta is navigable for two days more by native boats to a place called Mĕsjid Lâma and the Sungei Raya about the same distance to above Pengkalan Bahru, both places in the centre of the limestone country. When I speak of these rivers being navigable I mean for boats of over a *koyan*, say two tons, burden.

The first attempt to visit the high hills beyond these points was undertaken last August, when Messrs. CHRISTIE and HANDYSIDE, the pioneer Ceylon coffee planters, visited this district. When they told me that their object was to see the mountain country of the interior, I was at a loss which of the many routes to adopt, all being equally unexplored by any one but Malay gutta-cutters and the

aboriginal inhabitants of the hills, the *Sakeis*. The highest hill to be seen from here was said by the natives to be the one in which the Kinta took its rise, I therefore determined that the simplest way to get there was to follow the course of the river. The diary which I kept during the trip was subsequently published by the Straits Government, and from it I extract the following particulars :—

Starting from Tanjong Renkang, a place just above where the boats can come, which I mentioned just now (Měsjid Lâma), we reached a place called Kwala S'mat as our first day's march. Here we left the elephants and proceeded on foot. Here we may be said to have just got into the hill country, the elevation by the aneroid being about 700 feet where we camped with the hills on each side of us. A little more than a day's march from this we passed the mouth of the Sungei Pěnoh, a considerable tributary of the Kinta, which flows from its source about N.W. The elevation at its juncture with the Kinta is about 1,600 feet. Three days from starting we reached the foot of Gûnong Rayam, the hill for which we had been making, having followed a rather circuitous route, keeping close to the river the whole way. No where along the way were any obstacles to making a road or tramway encountered.

From this point it took us the best part of a day to reach a shoulder of the first peak, where we encamped at an elevation considerably over 4,000 feet. From here we obtained a magnificent view. It was, however, a bad camping ground, as we were a considerable distance above water and had left the forest below us; the vegetation here consisted of flowering shrubs, ferns, and mosses, and it was with difficulty that we found a tree sufficiently large to support our tent. From this point Mr. CHRISTIE and I, with three or four *Sakeis*, started for the top the next morning, expecting to get there in about an hour, but on coming to the first peak we saw several others beyond, and it was after 3 P.M. when we reached the last. As the *Sakeis* could give us no name for it, we called it Gûnong Robinson, after His Excellency the Governor, and as there was no prospect of getting a view in consequence of the mist, and being hungry and cold with no water between us and the camp, we beat a precipitous retreat to the camp. We made the height of Gûnong Robinson nearly 8,000 feet.

From the foot of Gûnong Robinson we struck more to the South-west than the South, by which we had come, crossing the Sungei Pénoh, at an elevation of about 2,500 feet, with hills on both sides of us, up to 5,000 and 6,000 feet. The Ceylon men were in raptures with the soil about here. From this we continued in a South-westerly direction till we reached the Sungei Raya and followed the course of that river to the plains. This is all that is at present known of this extensive tract of forest extending to an indefinite distance to the East at an elevation of from 2,000 or 3,000 feet up to 7,000 or 8,000 feet; that it extends a long way further was evident from the volume of the streams draining it.

After leaving the Sungei Raya, the next navigable river met with to the East is the Kampar, flowing past the foot of Gûnong Bujang Malaka. This was the hill on which Mr. HANDYSIDE began his first clearing, attracted to the place not so much by the soil as by the facilities afforded by a navigable river to the foot of the hill. Mr. HANDYSIDE's attempt proved a miserable failure, as might easily have been foreseen; ignorant of any eastern language but Tâmil, he took a gang of twenty newly arrived Chinese coolies without an interpreter up on the mountain; with them and some assistance from the Malays and *Sakeis* he managed to fell about eight or ten acres of forest in the height of the wet season, when it was impossible to burn it; the solitude of his life and the semi-mutiny of his coolies, with whom he could not exchange a single word, was too much for him, and his health and spirits completely gave way, and when Mr. SMITH and I visited him early in January we found him in a most desponding state of mind, wishing he could find some one to buy his concession and reimburse him for his outlay; the offer was too good to be pressed, and Mr. SMITH at once closed with it. This partly led to the second expedition to the hills. Mr. SMITH, having now obtained a large grant of land, determined not to fix on a site to commence operations till he had seen more of the country. The Government was anxious to obtain more information about the unknown country to the East, so I was commissioned to organize an expedition to the eastern frontier of Pêrak, and with that object Mr. SMITH and I, with eight elephants and a string of followers, started from Kwala Kabul, a place about three miles South of Bûjong Malaka on the Kampar river, on the 25th March last. Before going any farther, I should mention that the Kampar river is a large tributary of the Kinta, joining the latter river a short way

below Kôta Bahru, of which I have already spoken. The Kampar is navigable for one-koyan boats to the foot of Bujang Malaka, and this hill, or rather I should say short range, can be reached by native boats from Durian Sēbatang in about two or three days, according to the state of the river. To the North-west of Bujang Malaka, the Kampar receives a large tributary, the Sungei Dîpong, which flows for the East, while the Kampar itself appears to take its rise near the South of Gûnong Robinson. A good view of this country is obtained from the highest peak of Bujang Malaka, about 4,200 feet; from there the Dîpong valley is seen stretching away about twenty or thirty miles to the East, while the course of the Kampar is lost in a labyrinth of high hills to the North, more than a quadrant of the circle of mountain and forest lying between them.

Here I may also mention that Gôpeng, the most important mining centre on this side of the country, employing 700 or 800 Chinese, is situated at the southern base of the range separating the Sungei Raya from the Kampar; it is about 4 miles' distance from each of them. To the North of Gôpeng the mountains begin at once; to the South, about eight miles' distance, is Kôta Bahru. The hills to the North of Gôpeng, as well as the Kampar valley, have not yet been visited by an European.

Starting, as I have already mentioned, from Kwala Kâbul on the Kampar, it took us two days in a south-easterly direction through primeval forest almost the whole of the way, to reach the Chindariong river, a navigable stream draining the eastern side of Bujang Malaka and separating Bujang Malaka from hills of about the same height to the East. These hills and those forming the valley of the Dîpong are comparatively thickly inhabited by *Sakeis*, the aboriginal hill tribes of the country. Wherever I have come across these people, and they are to be met in the valleys of all the rivers to the East and North of this, I have remarked that they are confined to a zone extending from 500 to 1,500, or perhaps 2,000 feet; the reason, I imagine, for their not going higher is that probably the crops which they cultivate, hill-padi, tapioca, and occasionally a little tobacco, will be found not to thrive above these elevations; this is only surmise, but, if it proves correct, may be a guide to future planters as to the alteration in temperature at different elevations. An account of these people has yet to be written, and, if well done, will be a most valuable work viewed from an anthropological point.

They possess a language of their own, and, I imagine, are not all of the same race; although closely allied to the Malays, physical differences certainly exist between the tribes inhabiting different valleys, and the common idea that they wander at large all over the hills is certainly a mistake; each particular tribe keeps exclusively to its own valley and is frequently at feud with its neighbours on either side; their habits are migratory in their own districts, but unless when compelled by the oppression of the Malays, or other causes, they seldom leave their own valley. One curious custom they have. When one of them dies the corpse is buried in the house he died in, and the whole party forsake the spot, going off to some other place not very far off. I have been told that in this way they will occasionally abandon their standing crop, but I will not vouch for the truth of this. They live in groups of from eight or ten to as many as twenty or even thirty, but seldom more. Like all savage races they will undergo great privations, and can subsist on very little; when food is abundant they are most improvident of it, but they can never starve, as the jungle abounds in fruits and roots on which they will subsist. As regards animal food, all is grist that comes to their mill—rats, snakes, pigs, or anything they can get. Almost their only weapon consists of a blow-pipe about seven or eight feet long, from which they shoot poisoned darts with great accuracy as much as thirty or even forty paces; a single dart is sufficient to bring a bird or monkey down in a couple of minutes; they say that if they can hit an elephant or a pig in the eye a couple of darts will do the job, but they generally get pigs and deer by an ingenious spring made of the branch of a tree with a bamboo spike fixed to the end of it; the spring is held in a bent position by a bit of jungle cord, which, when touched, releases it and the spike, eight or ten inches long, is buried in the animal. The existence of these spring traps makes it advisable always to be accompanied by a *Sakei* guide when moving about in their country. Their marriage customs are very simple; the intending bridegroom presents the father of the bride with a few presents, such as a brass pot, a knife, a piece of red or white cotton cloth, some fruit or rice; and if deemed satisfactory, the bride and bridegroom separate from the remainder of their friends and spend the honeymoon by themselves away in the jungle. The ordinary attire of both sexes consists of a piece of bark cloth, in the case of the males seldom sufficient for decency; the females are a little better; some of the younger women have good figures, and in many case magnificent busts, but through frequently becoming mothers long before

they have grown to maturity all trace of beauty is lost ; like all eastern women they age very fast and become frightful old hags.

Cleanliness, as well as godliness, are both conspicuous by their absence in this race, the only ablutions they ever perform is when they are caught in the rain, which happens as seldom as they can help ; if the rain comes on they can get a shelter erected in ten minutes, and a fire in about the same time, and then they all sit huddled together as close as they can pack till the rain clears off. They have no conception of a God, nor have they a word in their language either for God or devil ; the fact, however, of their burying a cooking vessel, and a knife and other articles of the sort, with their dead, would seem to point to their having some hazy notion of a future state. It would be rash of me to make any statements of the difference of race in different parts of the country, seeing how little I know of these people ; but so far it appears to me that the prevailing type to the North, that is, the Ulu Kinta, Sungei Raya and Kampar, is rather darker than the Malay, and perhaps smaller, certainly more spare and wiry, while away to the South and East, about the Slim and Songkei, of which I will speak directly, they appear a better developed and a fairer race. The northern tribes appear to have a long, narrow cast of countenance, with straight lank hair, whereas those to the South have rounder faces, broader noses and lips, and enormous bushes of hair sticking out over their heads, sometimes as much as eighteen inches in diameter all round. Another distinctive feature of the eastern *Sakeis* is a habit they have of piercing the cartilage of the nose in the males and wearing a piece of wood about a quarter of an inch in diameter, and about six inches long, thrust through it. A few who affect to be dandies ornament their nose sticks by different devices cut on them and decorate their faces and chests with stifles of charcoal. The Slim *Sakeis* are certainly physically a remarkably fine race of people.

Wherever I have seen these people, nearly the whole of them, I should say quite ninety per cent., were suffering from an unpleasant skin disease (*Kûrap*) ; they are frequently covered with it from head to foot. Their uncleanly habits and irregular feeding are no doubt the cause of this. All races with any pretence to civilisation have stated hours for feeding, but these people eat at any time, or every time, the limit not being when they are satisfied so much as when the food procurable is finished ; in this respect

resembling the lower animals. It is a mistake, I think, to imagine that they are incapable of improvement, as I believe some people suppose. The French Missionaries in Malacca have not, I believe, been very successful with the *Jakúns*, probably a family of the same race, but this may be because they have attempted to do too much at once. About the Bidor I saw a large number of these people, who had almost entirely adopted the Malay customs and habits, and this will probably be the eventual fate of the race when their present haunts are occupied by settlers; they will become gradually blended with the natives of the country.

I think I have now said enough to satisfy any one taking an interest in these primitive races that they could not find many better places to study them than here, and if so I shall have fully effected my object.

From Chindariong it took us one day to reach the Batang Padang river, a large and swift stream. We came on it at a place called Pûlau Tiga and followed its course up stream to a large village called Tâpa, where we spent a day. While at Tâpa we visited the place where the headman (Pëngûlu) lived, called Kwala Brûmun, and between the two places came upon mica schist rocks in several places. I have found pebbles of this rock in nearly all the other streams, but this was the first time I have seen it *in situ* in Pêrak. The vegetation undergoes a change here; along the banks of the stream and for a short distance in on either side, a large species of bamboo grows to the exclusion of everything else. I have seen similar growths of these bamboos in other places, but not to the same extent. The land here appears to be exceptionally rich, the largest sugar canes I have ever seen were here.

The hills begin just above Kwala Brûmun, and this would be a very good starting point for any one wishing to explore them, as there are lots of *Sakeis* about here who could be got to act as either guides or coolies; in the latter capacity they are infinitely preferable to any other race, they will carry heavier loads faster than either Klings or Malays.

Tâpa is the place of embarkation (*Pengkâlan*) for a number of extensive tin mines almost entirely worked by Chinese. The tin ore

is first separated from the pig dirt and is then subjected to a second washing, when a quantity of gold dust is obtained. The amount is variable in different mines, and it is impossible to get trustworthy statements on the subject from the Chinese; there is no doubt, however, that the quantity is considerable, the quality is inferior; I imagine it is alloyed with the tin with which it is found, being of a very pale colour; extracted simply by washing, no doubt a good deal is lost; were mercury used no doubt more would be obtained.

Leaving Tâpa, travelling in a south-easterly direction through the gold fields, we reached the Bidor in a day. This is another navigable stream which joins the Batang Padang a short way before they fall into the Pêrak river at Durian Sêbatang.

There is not much tin worked on the Bidor, and it is not more than half of the volume of the Batang Padang, and dividing into two streams of about equal size just above where we crossed it. I do not imagine that it can drain nearly so extensive a tract of country.

On both these rivers (the Batang Padang and the Bidor), but more especially on the latter, we saw large numbers of the *Sakeis* living in comparatively speaking permanent houses, and to a great extent conforming to the customs and habits of the Malays.

From Bidor it took us two days to reach the Songkei, the last important tributary of the Pêrak river in this direction.

The output of tin from here is not large, as compared with the rivers further West, but the quantity of gutta is proportionally greater; the supply, however, in the more accessible districts is beginning to fail. It is a matter worthy of careful consideration whether cultivating the better class of gutta-producing trees would not be a profitable undertaking, the first cost of planting would be the only outlay, as once started the trees would be able to take care of themselves.

The Songkei district is noted for the quantities of fruit grown there, the groves of durians were the most extensive I have ever seen. It is but thinly inhabited at present, but appears at one time to have been a populous place.

Having crossed the Songkei, our route still lay in a southeasterly direction, and it took us two days to reach the river Slim; our rate of travelling was very slow, as elephants are not used in this part of the country, and, although the path was sufficiently good, there was not sufficient headway, and the *mahouts* had to stop every few paces to cut away the branches of the trees.

The first day after leaving the Songkei we were much impressed by the luxuriance of the Bertam palms. The climate is evidently exceptionally moist about here, to judge by the quantity of moss and ferns we saw. About the middle of the first day from the Songkei we reached the Sungei Trôla, a tributary of the Slim. We had now, therefore, left the watershed of the Pêrak river. This will therefore, I think, be a good point to make a break in this Paper, which is extending itself beyond the limits I at first intended.

If this account proves sufficiently interesting to the members of the Society for them to care for any more of it, I will continue the account of our trip to the Slim and back to the Batang Padang through the hills.



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