

NOTES ON NAMES OF PLACES IN THE ISLAND OF SINGAPORE AND ITS VICINITY.



PERHAPS the following notes on some of the names of places in the island of Singapore and its immediate neighbourhood, may not be without interest to the readers of the Journal. In Singapore the population is continually changing and, as the old Malay inhabitants have for the most part died out or migrated, it is probable that, before very long, the names of places may become corrupted (as some already have been) almost beyond recognition. That this should be the case is not surprising when we consider the various nationalities that have settled down in the island for purposes of trade and commerce, and how few and scattered are the remnants of the old Malay settlers and the remnants of the aboriginal "Orang Laut." It will doubtless seem to Malay scholars to be superfluous to notice the meanings of some of the names, but my object has been to write for the information of those who, although they are not thoroughly conversant with Malay, yet are disposed to take an intelligent interest in the subject.

I have confined myself in these notes to the names of places in the Settlement of Singapore, but I may perhaps instance two cases in which the names of places in Johor territory have become curiously corrupted. There is a place on the shores of the Old Straits near Lënduyong called Janggut Ma' Dudok. This figures in the Government map of the island (1885) as "Jaman Dulu" and in the charts as "Jaman Dudu." Again, there is the point known to Malays as

Tanjong Penyusok, and to us from our school geographies as Point Roumania. In KEANE'S *Eastern Geography* it is called "Romania," in the map of the Malay Peninsula (1887) "Tanjong Ramënia," and in the charts and Sailing Directions it is written indifferently as "Ramunia" and "Rumania." There are dangerous shoals to the seaward of the point called by the same name, but the spelling varies in every instance. The fact of the matter is the name of Roumania, or whatever it is, is based on a misconception. There is an island called Pulau Rumënia about two miles West of Tanjong Penyusok and opposite to it on the mainland is a large *kampung* called Kampong Rumënia. The name applied to the point—Ramunia, Roumania or Rumania—is evidently a corruption of Rumënia, and the name has been applied to a place to which it never belonged. Rumënia is the well known fruit-bearing tree *Bonea microphylla*.

Ayer Gëmúruh—"babbling waters." Gëmúruh is from "gúroh."

Ayer Sámak. "Sámak" (or samar) is a kind of tree, the bark of which is used in dyeing and tanning.

Bajau—"a pirate." (From Battak "Bajo" an attack?)

Batu Koyok. A patch of rocks near Pulau Tëkong. "Koyok" or "kuyu" is "a pariah dog."

Bëdok or *Sa-bëdok*—"the drum of a mosque."

Berhála Képing. A curiously shaped rock at the entrance to Sëlat Singki. "Berhála"* (pronounced Berála) is "an idol," and I am informed that "Képing" is the Orang Laut pronunciation of "Këping," the numeral affix. This appendix of Képing, however, is not very satisfactory, and it has been suggested to me by Mr. D. F. A. HERVEY that it is probably "Képing," to guard, hence the name, the idol being supposed to watch the entrance to the strait.

Bëting Kúсах—"the dangerous sand-bank." "Kusah" is a variant of "Susah."

* NOTE.—"Bernáia" is invariably corrupted on the charts into "Varella," e.g., Varella Straits, to the South of Singapore, and Varella Island, off the Pahang Coast.

Blúkang—a kind of fish.

Buran Darat. The coral patch to the N.E. of Blakang Mati. "Buran" is a kind of sea-anemone of a light green colour and is eaten by the Chinese.

Bukit Gěmia. Mount Imbeah in Blakang Mati. "Gěmia" is the sago-palm, a variant of "Rěmbía."

Bukit Serápong. "Sěrápong" is possibly from "Ápong" "drift wood," but the formation is doubtful.

Gélang. This is probably the plant gélang pasir (*Portulaca oleracea*). There is another plant, gélang laut (*Sesuvium portulacastrum*).

Kálang, "a roller, skid" for launching vessels. The Bědu-anda Kálang, a tribe of the Orang Laut, took their name from the river.

Kálang Púding. "Púding" is probably the shrub with variegated leaves (*Justicia picta*).

Kampong Glam. The glam tree (*Melaleuca leucadendron*).

Kampong Kópit. The village in Blakang Mati sometimes called Sělat Singki. "Kópit"="narrow, contracted."

Kampong Pangkálan Páku. "Pangkálan" (from "Pangkal") "landing place;" "Paku"=a generic name for fern.

Kampong Pěrmátang. "Pěrmátang" is "rising ground," "a long ridge" derived from "Batang."

Kampong Rěnggam. (1)—"Rěnggam" or "Ranggam" a thorny plant growing on low land. Its fruit can be eaten, and ataps are sometimes made out of its leaves. The plant is like the Kělúbi. (2)—"Rěnggam"=an instrument for cutting padi.

Kandang Kěrbau="buffalo pen." Sometimes wrongly written "Kampong Kěrbau."

Kranji. A tree (*Dialium indicum*).

Lěbong Acheh. This is a hollow or cutting ("lěbong") in the sandy beach near Changi Point as if a large boat had been hauled up there. The story is that one of the Achinese ships that attacked Johor was beached there for repairs. Compare Mr. HERVEY'S note on "Prigi Acheh," p. 168 of Journal No. 11.

Loyang. "Brass" according to FAVRE. Perhaps the place is so called from the colour of the water.

Pasir Pělékat, i.e., Pasir Orang Pělékat. "Pělékat" = Pulicat, the place in India.

Pasir Ris. Perhaps this is a contraction for Pasir Iris ("iris" = to shred). I have heard the word pronounced as Pasiris by an old resident.

Pinang Rawang. "Rawang" is a "swamp" or "quaking bog."

Pulau Ayer Chawan. Pulau Ayer Limau. Pulau Ayer Měrbau. These three islands are close together. "Chawan" is "a cup" or "basin;" "Měrbau" is a tree (*Azelia palembanica*).

Pulau Blakang Mati = "dead-back island," so called from the sterility of the soil on the hills.

Pulau Brani. Properly = "Pulau Ayer Brani," as it is still written on the charts. The island is so called from a well at the top of the hill, the water of which was supposed to have potent qualities. There used to be a "Kolam," or tank, formed out of the natural rock on the Tanjong Pagar side of the island which received the overflow from the well and in which people used to bathe. The remains of this tank can still be seen.

Pulau Bukum. "Bukum" is said to be the same as "Hukum," and there is a tradition that the Raja used to try cases in the island, hence the name, probably through the intermediate form "berhukum."

Pulau Damar Laut. "Damar Laut" is the tree "Vatica russak." "Damar Laut," however, is the name also given to another tree (*Canarium*).

Pulau Jong. "Junk Island," a small island of a conical shape to the North of Pulau Sěking and Pulau Sěbárok. The story is that Malay pirates one night attacked a Chinese junk, which was anchored where the island now is, and just as the Malays got alongside, the Nakhodah of the junk awoke. On seeing the pirates, through terror, he uttered such a frightful yell that the sea-spirit turned the junk into an island much to the consterna-

tion of the Malays.

Pulau Khatib Bongsu. "Khatib" = "a preacher," "Bongsu" = "youngest-born," hence = the island of a person of that name. This name has been fearfully corrupted in charts and maps, figuring as "Kitch Bungsee," "Kita Bangsa," &c.

Pulau Měrambong. "Rambong" is the kind of basket used by Bugis in Singapore for carrying pine-apple in, but Mr. D. F. A. HERVEY suggests that the name is probably derived from the plant called "ambong-ambong," a seaside shrub with a white flower.

Pulau Misěmút. Derived from "Sěmút" (ants).

Pulau Miskól. "Miskól" is the larger kind of water-vessel made from the coco-nut shell, and has a narrow orifice. The "Gayong" is shallower and is the half shell. Compare Těrumbu Gayong, a shoal not far from the island. The ordinary form of the word is "Sěkol" and the "Mi" in this and the other word (Misěmut) would seem to be an affix peculiar to the *bhasa Orang Laut*.

Pulau Pések. "Pések" is a Bugis word meaning coins with holes in the middle. Compare "Pitis" and "Pichis."

Pulau Rěnget. "Rěnget" is the sand-fly (agas-agas), and signifies "mosquito" in some aboriginal dialects. It is also the name of a fresh water shell.

Pulau Să-Kíjang Bandéra, Să-Kíjang Pělěpah = St. John's Island West and St. John's Island East, respectively. St. John's, as pointed out by Mr. W. E. MAXWELL, is a corruption of "Sa-Kíjang." Să-Kíjang Bandéra is so called because there used to be a flagstaff there before it was moved to Mount Faber. In the map of the island (1885) "Bandéra" is corrupted with "Berak"! "Pělěpah" are the fronds of a palm. These islands are supposed to be two roe-deer at which the "spear-reef" (Těrumbu Sělígi) off Blakang Mati is being aimed.

Să-ranggong. "Ranggong" is a kind of bird about the size of the adjutant and its description is as follows:—
Black on back and white on breast, neck long, bill

long and sharp, crest grey. The feet are not webbed.
Pulau Sěbúrus. "Sěbúrus" is a sort of fruit-bearing tree that grows in mangrove swamp.

Pulau Sěmúlun. "Sěmúlun" is the name of a tribe of the "Orang Laut." The name is wrongly written as "Sěmbilan" on the Government Map (1885).

Pulau Súber. "Suber" is a kind of tree out of the bark of which cord is made.

Pulau Súdong. A beautiful little island surrounded by a coral reef. "Súdong" is said to be the same as "Tudong" (a cover), so called from the shape of the island with the reef round it.

Pulau Těkong. "Těkong" = "an obstacle" so called because the island blocks the mouth of the Johor River.

Pulau Ubin. "Ubin" according to FAVRE is Javanese, and means "squared stone." The island is so called from the granite quarries.

Sarang Rimau = "The tiger's den." This is the western end of Blakang Mati, apparently the place where Fort Siloso now is. "Salúsuh" is a kind of herb used as a remedy in childbirth, but I have no idea how the fort came to be so called, as the Orang Laut of Kampong Kopit only know the place by the name of Sarang Rimau.

Sělat Singki. The narrow strait between Pulau Brani and Blakang Mati. The charts wrongly give the name to the Sělat Pandan. "Singki" probably = "Sěngkil" or "Singkir" = sharp-edged. At Penang the word means "set on edge" (of the teeth), hence perhaps it is metaphorically applied to the difficulties of the passage.

"Sěngkil" is also the name of a plant.

Sělat Těbrau. "Těbrau" is a kind of large fish. The word also signifies a large kind of grass like prairie-grass.

Sungei Běrih. "Běrih" is the variety of the red fish with the black head.

Sungei Běrónok. "A kind of sea-worm" (FAVRE).

Sungei Jělútong. "Jělútong" is a gutta-bearing tree (*Dyera costulata*).

- Sungei Pěrópok.* "Pěrópok" = "brambles," "thorns."
- Sungei Ponggol.* "Ponggol" = "a stump of a tree" especially "a high stump." Compare "Púnggor." It has been suggested to me that the word is Tamil (Ponkal, "the feast of the boiling rice," celebrated when the sun enters the sign of Capricorn), but the word is clearly Malay and not Tamil.
- Sungei Sa-rimbun.* "Rimbun" is "luxuriant," "in great quantity," "thick."
- Sungei Sělétar.* A tribe of the Orang Laut (Orang Sělétar), who formerly lived there, took its name from the river. See Journal Indian Archipelago, Vol. I, p. 302.
- Sungei Tampines.* "Tampines" is the well-known timber tree (*Sloctia sideroxylon*).
- Sungei Téban.* "Téban" = "to bet," "to stake an equal amount."
- Sungei Těmbuan.* "Těmbuan" or "Těbuan" = "a hornet."
- Sungei Těngék.* "Těngék" = "the rank smell of things cooked in oil and kept a long time."
- Sungei Tuas.* "Tuas" = "to chop in two pieces," also "to raise by leverage," "to support."
- Tanjong Awar or Aur.* "Awar" (Aur) is the large kind of bamboo (*Dendrocalamus*). This is the point known as St. James' in the New Harbour.
- Tanjong Malang, or "Malay Spit."* "Malang" in navigation means "a black rock," and the name is given to the patch of rocks running out to seaward from Fort Palmer. This is the place where Sir STAMFORD RAFFLES hung in chains the body of Syed YASIN, the man who stabbed Colonel FARQUHAR, the story of which is told by ABDULLAH in his "Hikaiat."
- Tanjong Měngkúang.* "Měngkúang" is the well-known thorny plant out of which kajangs and mats are made.
- Tanjong Měrawang.* "Měrawang" means "ragged," "full of holes" and the point is so called from its appearance. The word is derived from "Rawang," "a bog." This point is wrongly marked both in the charts and the Government Map (1885). In the charts Tanjong

Měrawang is called Tanjong Kampong, evidently from a confusion with Tanjong Karang the next point.

The point marked as Tanjong Měrawang in the charts is really Tanjong Tuas.

Tanjong Pagar. I presume this name was given on account of the Wharf. The old name of the place is Sělentar.

Tanjong Ru. "Ru" is the *Casuarina littoria*.

Tanjong Sělinsing. "Sělinsing" is a kind of fish about six inches long. It is also a jungle variety of the Pandanus.

Tanjong Teregeh. "Teregeh" I imagine to be a corruption of the native name of the place Těrita. "Těrita" is the small kind of cuttle fish. "Teregeh" is neither English nor Malay, as far as I know.

Tělok Baru. "Baru" is a species of Hibiscus, and the word is, I think, correctly written "baru" and not "bharu" (new).

Tělok Saga. "Saga" a kind of bean, *Abrus peccatorius* or *Adenanthus pavonina*.

CHINESE NAMES.

Ang Mo Kio, lit., "The red-haired (*i.e.*, European) bridge."

Toa Payoh. "Toa" is "big" and "Payoh" is the Chinese form of "Paya" the Malay word meaning a "swamp."

Chan Chu Kang, &c. Chan Chu Kang, Choa Chu Kang, &c., apparently mean the river (Kang) of the Chan Chu, the Choa Chu tribe, &c.

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