

**THE MALAYAN PENINSULA.**

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V.—Sketch of the State of Muar, Malay Peninsula, By T. J. NEWBOLD, Lieut., A. D. C. to Brigadier General WILSON, C. B.

The information contained in this paper was obtained partly from personal observation, and partly from inquiries made while on a visit to the chief of the country at Gressik, on the Muar river, in 1835.

The state of Muar lies to the south of the Malacca territory, from which it is divided, towards the coast, by the *Cossang* river, and interiorly by a suppositious line drawn between *Beakon*, *Chindug* and *Moant Ophir*. The *Serling* river separates it from *Pahang*,—*Pavit Siput* from the tract of *Dattu Kaya Palang*—and the *Marbówe Sa-ratús* from *Johóre*.

**Population.**—The interior of Muar is generally termed *Segámet*. The united population is stated not to exceed 2,000. This appears extremely scant compared with the extent of territory; and arises from the misgovernment and apathy of the feudal sovereign, the Sultan of *Johóre*—whence perpetual broils among the petty chiefs, causing insecurity of person and property, and eventually desertion of the soil by most of the cultivating and trading classes of the community. The honest peasant, in many instances, is compelled from sheer necessity to turn robber; and the coasts, instead of being crowded with fishermen, swarm with pirates. These remarks may be applied generally to the whole of the peninsula under native sway, though to Muar more particularly; the whole of which country appears to be one almost uninterrupted mass of jungle and swamp, if we can except a few straggling villages and clearings. Cultivated rice grounds have degenerated into barren marshes—an enormous forest, abounding with wild elephants, overshadows a soil naturally rich and prolific; while the giant rhinoceros and uncouth tapir stalk un molested over spots which, if truth be told, were once the sites of large and populous towns.

Such is the melancholy picture of the effects of misrule which this unhappy country presents to the eye of the traveller, who cannot avoid being sensibly touched by this forcible, though silent, appeal for melioration.

The principal villages are *Bakko*, *Langkat*, *Gressik*, *Ring*, *Segámet*, *Pagoh*, and *Pangkálung Kóta*, the residence of the chief, on the river.

**Produce and Revenue.**—The produce of the country consists of a little rice, sago, ivory, ebony, gold dust, tin, wax, aloes-wood, gum benzoin, camphor (small in quantity and of inferior quality), rattans of the kinds *Battu* and *Jagga*, *Danner Battu*, *Danner Mivak*, jagged, *Lakso* wood, and *Gullyas*, stones extracted generally from the heads of porcupines, and in much repute among Malays for medicinal purposes.

The chief has been empowered by the late Sultan of *Johóre* to levy an impost upon every *bhat* of tin exported, of..... 1½ Sp. Dtrs.  
One hundred bundles of rattans, ... 1 do. do.  
One bhar of ebony,..... 1½ do. do.  
One koyan rice imported, ... 2 do. do.  
One koyan salt do..... 1 do. do.  
One katti of opium do..... 20 do. do.

On smaller articles he levies a duty of 5 per cent. He has the power of exacting the gratuitous labour of his subjects, and derives some emolument from the fines he inflicts on them at pleasure.

**Government.**—Muar is under the sway of a chief bearing the title of *Tamungong*, who is a vassal of *Johóre*. Under the *Tamungong* are eight *Pangkálung*, four of whom are styled *Amat de Uir*—the remainder, *Amat de Ula*. The former are the *Pangkálung* of *Gressik*, *Bukit Raja*, *Lang Battu*, and *Ring*;—the latter, those entitled *Besar*, *Tanjong*, *Diggany*, and *Muncal*. There is nominally a mosque under each *Pangkálung*, but in that of *Umban* alone is the *Jama-ahud* held. This is in the jurisdiction of the *Pangkálung Besar*. The customs enjoined by the code termed *Undang Undang Malayu*; and the Mahomedan law of succession obtains, to the exclusion of the *Tómba Pusáka* prevailing in the four *Menangkábówe* states.

**History.**—Muar, like the rest of the Malay peninsula, was formerly inhabited by savage aboriginal tribes, among whom the *Jaccons* seem to claim the superiority. With regard to its origin, it is stated in the *Sjára Malayu* that *Sri Iscaander Shah*, the monarch of *Singapora*, on his city being taken by the *Bitara* of *Mijapahit*, fled to Muar. This event took place about the middle of the 13th century; and it is asserted that he left one of his *Mantris* in the interior of Muar.

No more mention is made of this state until near the middle of the 14th century, when the kingdom of the Sultan of Malacca, *Mazaffer Shah*, was invaded by the Siamese under *Thawi Chabri*. The Sultan on this occasion directed a levy of the population of Muar to be made, and the inhabitants to be assembled at Malacca. According to the Malay annals, the war between *Siam* and *Malacca* continued for a long time, and great numbers of the Siamese perished; but Malacca was not reduced. At last the whole Siamese army retreated, and as they took their departure they threw down large quantities of their baggage *Atans* in the district of Muar, where they all took root; and that is the origin of the name *Rota Siam*. Their stocks, which were formed of fig-tree wood, likewise took root in a place in the vicinity of Muar, where it still exists. The rests for the Siamese cooking places also took root and grew up, and are to be seen at this day at the place named *Tamang Siam*. I was unable to find out the locality of the places here mentioned by the author of the *Sjára Malayu* though every inquiry was made near the spots where these scenes are said to have occurred. The tradition, however, of the defeat of the Siamese was universally current. In 1511, *Ahmed*, Sultan of Malacca, on his city being taken by the Portuguese, retreated up the Muar river to a place called *Pagoh*, about 15 or 16 miles from *Gressik*, now under the *Pangkálung Besar*, *Inchi Muir*. Sultan *Mahmu'd* remained at *Battu Hampar*, and founded a fort at *Bentayan*. According to the *Sjára Malayu*, the Portuguese pursued *Ahmed* up the river, attacked and took *Pagoh*. *Ahmed* fled further up to *Panarigan*

near *Jompóle*, and thence, accompanied by *Mahmu'd*, repaired to *Pahang*. The latter subsequently established himself at *Johóre*. Many of their adherents remained in Muar and *Segámet*, and in course of time erected a primitive form of government, directed by four elders, styled *Tuak Camponys*, who ruled under the Sultans of *Johóre* until 1119 A. H. The four *camponys* were those of *Pagoh*, *Sungie Ring*, *Sungie Terap*, and *Gressik*.

A. H. 1,119 a *Mantri* of high birth in *Johóre*, named *SAMADE RAJA*, obtained a grant of the territory of Muar from the then Sultan of *Johóre*, *ABDAL JALIL SHAH III*. He settled at a place called *Pantei Layang* on the banks of the river, and ruled till 1145 A. H., when he died succeeded by his son *PADU'KA TUAN*; who, on his proceeding to the court of *Johóre*, on the occasion of his father's demise, was invested by the Sultan *ABDAL JALIL* with the title of *Tumungong Paduka Tuan*. He died A. H. 1175, succeeded by his son *BURUK* or *AHOK*, who was confirmed by Sultan *ABDAL JALIL SHAH IV.*, then resident at *Rhio*, whither he had removed from *Johóre*. *BURUK* died at *Bunga Tanjung* on the Muar river in 1214 A. H. leaving two sons, *KONIK* and *IBRAHIM*. The former went to *Lingga* to present himself to Sultan *MAHMU'D III.* by whom he was acknowledged as third *Tumungong* of Muar.

*KONIK* died in 1246, A. H. leaving a son named *SYED*, the present chief, who succeeded him: he also left a daughter. *SYED* proceeded to *Singapore*, where he was confirmed by the late Sultan, *HUSSAIN SHAH I.*, whom the English had recently placed on the throne of his ancestors. From him he obtained the title *Tumungong Dattu Syed*.

It would appear from what has been advanced above, and by the subsequent boundary treaties, that Muar has always been feudal to the Sultan of *Johóre* since the time of their ancestors, the ancient sovereigns of *Singapore* and *Malacca*, appear to have claimed Muar, as in the map of *VALATYN* the boundary line of the Dutch territory is made to extend so far beyond the Muar river as the *Rio Formoso*.

The *Tumungong's* sway is confined to the villages immediately on the banks of the Muar river and on those of the stream of *Segámet*, which empties itself into the Muar about 12 miles above *Pangkálung Kóta*. He appears to be popular from his easy temper, and the inhabitants feel alarmed at the idea of any change being made in the government by the Sultan of *Johóre*. We had an interview with this Malay chief at a village, about 18 miles up the river, called *Gressik*. He acknowledges himself a vassal of *Johóre*, and sends annually to the Sultan the amount of a duty levied on the houses of the settlers at *Padang* (one dollar per house) and 200 *gumpits* of rice.

**Malayan Albino.**—On landing at *Gressik* I was struck by the singular appearance of a Malay lad, an *Albino*, standing under the shade of a tree on the river bank. His skin was of a reddish white, with blotches here and there, and thinly covered with short white hairs. The eyes were small and contracted; the iris of a very light vascular blue; the lids red, and fringed with short white lashes; the eyebrows scant and of the same colour; the pupil much contracted from the light. On calling him to come near he appeared to be ashamed.

He evinced an extreme sensibility to the stimulus of light, from which he almost constantly kept his eyes guarded by shading them with his hands. He told me he could see better than his neighbours in imperfect darkness, and best by moonlight, like the "moon-eyed" *Albino*s of the *Istamus of Darien*.

He is morbidly sensitive to heat: for this reason and on account of the superstitious respect with which the Malays regard him, he is seldom employed by his friends in outdoor work, altho' by no means deficient in physical strength. The credulous Malays imagine that the *Genii* have some furtive share in the production of such curiosities, though this they tell as a great secret. To this day the tomb of his grandfather, who was also an *Albino*, is held sacred by the natives and vows (*niyats*) are made at it. Both his parents were of the usual colour. His sister is an *Albino* like himself.

*Albinos*, I believe, are not common on the peninsula, nor are there any tribes of them as, according to *VOLTAIRE*, exist in the midst of Africa. In the only two instances I recollect observing, the eyes were, in both, of a very light blue; the cuticle roughish and of a rosy blush, very different from that of the two African *Albinos* seen and described by *VOLTAIRE*, and quoted by *LAWRENCE*; "Leur blancheur n'est pas la nôtre; rien d'incarnat, nul mélange de blanc et de brun, c'est une couleur de linge, ou plutôt de cire blanche; leurs cheveux, leurs sourcils sont de la plus belle et de la plus douce soie; leurs yeux ne ressemblent en rien à ceux des autres hommes, mais ils approchent beaucoup des yeux de perdrice." *Essai sur les Mœurs*.

*WHITELOW AINSLIE*, in his description of the *Albinos* of continental India, ascribes to them the same delicacy of constitution and shyness observable in the Malayan *Albino*, and that they are seldom known to live to an advanced age. The females, he remarks, rarely bear children; but when they do, their offspring is of the natural colour of the cast to which they belong.

**Observations on the Muar river.**—The Muar river at the mouth has an apparent width of about 600 yards, and at *Gressik* 18 miles up the stream is about 100 yards broad and 7 fathoms deep. The soundings at the bar varied from ¼ to 1 fathoms low water. The current ran at the rate of 2½ miles an hour. It has its rise, according to the natives, among the mountains of *Jellaboo*, and falls into the sea about 39 miles south-east of *Malacca*. From these mountains the *Serling* river, which disembogues itself into the China sea at *Pahang*, and the *Calang* river, which flows into the Straits of *Malacca* near *Salengore*, have also their rise. The general direction of the Muar river from the mouth to *Gressik* we found to be N. E.—its course tortuous, the banks for the most part low, muddy, and covered, with the exception of the vicinity of villages and a few *Ladang* clearings, with dense jungle. Among the trees near the river's margin we observed the mangrove, the *Nipah* palm, (the *Nypa fruticans* of *THUNBERG*), the *Nibong*, (the *Areca palm* of *DR. LACEPÈDE*), the *Ati*, (the *Ati* of *DR. LACEPÈDE*), the *Buta*.

The water of the river was more turbid than that of the *Lingie*, which might be owing to the freshes from the hills. The paucity of cultivation, thinness of population, and the almost total absence of trading boats and even fishing canoes on the river, could not fail to strike the most careless observer. By this river there is a communication, almost all the way by water, with the eastern coast of the peninsula, frequently adopted by the *Pahang* traders. The navigation was formerly under the control of a *Bugis* chief named *UNKU' KLA'NA*, who settled at the mouth of the river; and, after him, under his son *Raja ISSA*: but on the return of the latter to *Rhio* in 1826, it reverted to the *Tumungong*.

In former days the mouth of the river was a noted place of rendezvous for the fleets of the Siamese, and in latter times of the Malay princes, in their attacks on *Malacca* during the Portuguese and Dutch administrations. The last instance occurred in 1781, when *Raja HADJI*, the *Muda* of *Rhio*, anchored there with a fleet of 173 prows on his way to invade *Malacca*; an enterprise in which he lost his life.

**Gold Mines of Bukit Raja.**—Gold dust is found a short distance from the left bank of the river at *Bukit Raja*, a low hill covered with forest, which was pointed out to us by the guides. There were, we were told, formerly gold mines on and at the foot of this hill worked by Malays, who were compelled to quit them through the exactions by the petty chiefs. The *Tumungong* had brought down with him in his own boat to *Gressik*, two Chinese miners, with the view of ascertaining whether any mining speculations there would be likely to turn out profitably or otherwise. I have not heard the result. Tin is also found near *Bukit Raja*.

From *Gressik* we saw a range of hills at a great distance running down the peninsula in a south-easterly direction, one of the highest of which is called *Siang-battu*, the *Cave of the Rock*. From this mountain, the natives affirm, flow the rivers of *Battu Pahat*, (the *Rio Formoso* of the Portuguese), *Pontian*, *Undowe*, *Rooppin*, *Bannoan*, and *Johore*: the last of which streams empties itself into the sea at the extremity of the peninsula: on its left bank stood the capital of the Malay empire of *Johore*. This range of mountains seems to be a continuation, if I may so term it, of the broken chain running down the peninsula through the States of *Quedah*, *Perak*, *Selangore*, *Sungei-ujong*, *Rumboue*, *Jellaboo*, and *Sri-menanti*, terminating near *Poñat Romania*, and probably having their origin in the lofty ranges which overlook the vast steppes of Northern Asia.