

THE SAREBAS AND SAKARRAN PIRATES.

The depositions made in the claim by Capt. Farquhar and the force under him, for bounty for the destruction of the Sarebas piratical fleet in July last, furnish much information regarding the piratical tribes of Sarebas and Sakarran, and we have therefore made a short abstract of their contents, which we have no doubt will be acceptable to our readers.

Sir James Brooke, who accompanied the expedition, states that he is certain there were not less than 110 prahus, manned by at least 3,500 men, out on this occasion. The number of prahus taken and destroyed was above 90; one which was measured was found to be 70 feet in length, and 8 feet 6 inches in width, her complement of men being probably not under 60. These prahus of themselves proved the piratical character of the fleet, being entirely different from trading prahus, fully armed, and carrying full war crews. Several small brass guns and a quantity of other arms with which they had been furnished were also found. The nakoda of a trading prahu named Masallah gave information that his prahu had just arrived from Singapore laden with piece goods, iron, &c., and was lying inside of the Mato River when she was captured by pirates belonging to this fleet. The greater part of the cargo was saved by being taken on shore. Some of the pirates who were taken confessed that they had been present at the capture of this prahu and of another laden with sago and bound to Singapore. A large quantity of sago was found in some of the captured piratical prahus. The town of Mato was attacked by this fleet, but they were repulsed, and only captured some women.

A Sadong Malay named Siup, a resident at Paku on the Sarebas, who was out with the pirate fleet intercepted by Capt. Farquhar, and was afterwards captured in the jungle, gives much information as to the pirates and their proceedings. He was in a prahu manned by thirty men, which was run down by the steamer Nemesis, but he swam ashore and escaped into the jungle, and was taken the next day. The fleet consisted of 150 prahus. The Datu Patingi of Sarebas was the head of the balla or fleet. The Datu Bandar, Steer Wangsa, Panglima Rajah, Abang Dundang, and almost all the principal Malays of Sarebas, were out in the fleet. Thirty of the prahus were from Rembas, twenty-five from Paku, and the rest from Paddi and Siar, all in the Sarebas river. Many of the Sakarran people were in the prahus, mixed with the Sarebas men. The Orang Kaya Pamancha and most of the other Dyak chiefs, and nearly all the adult males, were also in the fleet. Very few of the prahus had less than 30 men, many carried 40, and some had crews of 70 men each. There were not more than four small brass guns in the fleet, but each prahu carried a few muskets, and great quantities of spears, swords, and shields. The fleet on leaving the Sarebas River proceeded to the entrance of the Niabur River, where it remained one night; from thence it went to the entrance of the Palo, where they stopped the second night. From Palo the fleet proceeded to the Bay of Lassa, and on its way there captured and plundered a trading prahu laden with sago. From Lassa they went to attack the town of Mato, and near that town they captured two other trading prahus, one laden with sago and the other nearly empty. These prahus were plundered and burnt. The fleet attacked Mato, but was repulsed with the loss of ten men. Half the pirate forces landed below the defences thrown across the river, and the other half engaged from their prahus. Two women and two children were captured. Within the last eight months three large fleets have sailed from Sarebas on piratical cruises. The Datu Patingi, the Datu Bandar, and the Orang Kaya Pamancha, attacked Sadong during the last rice harvest and killed many people. Sadong was attacked a second time by a fleet not so numerous, and likewise Palo near Sambah. The first fleet which attacked Sadong consisted of 140 prahus. Besides these fleets Abang Mansour with ten prahus attacked and took Simunjang, a branch of the Sadong river, and one prahu attacked the village of Sabangan. Siup further stated that if he had not gone on this piratical cruise he would have been killed by the chiefs of Sarebas.

Abong Bit, formerly a Sarebas pirate, but now resident at Sarawak, says it was the ordinary custom of the Sarebas and Sakarran people to go out on piratical expeditions, sometimes from the one place, and sometimes from the other, the party going out sending an invitation to the other tribe. The object of these expeditions was to plunder and to obtain heads. When at sea they attacked all whom they could overcome, without exception or distinction. He himself had been out at least thirty times, and he has often attacked and plundered trading prahus on these occasions. He was present at an attack on Palo, near Sambah, the inhabitants of which were Chinese. The fleet killed many Chinese and Malay fishermen, at the entrance of the Sarebas river. He was present at the attack upon Sankawan, when upwards of 100 Chinese were killed; at the capture of Sungie Takong, where 50 Chinese were killed; at the capture of Sungie Biah, where 150 Chinese were killed; and at Durie, where 100 heads were obtained. Many other places were also attacked by fleets, in which Abong Bit was out. The Malays plundered the places captured, and the Dyaks got the heads. All these places were in the Sambah and Pontianak countries (Dutch possessions); they were not attacked from motives of revenge, or in retaliation for injuries received, but for the sake of plunder and heads. The people of Sarebas do not trade, but when in want of money or slaves go pirating. Abong Bit himself has taken many slaves, and plundered with the rest. Of those taken by him, some are dead and some have been sold. He left Sarebas about six or seven years ago, but before that, lived there from his youth upwards and is now an old man.

Sujung, a Malay, formerly of Sakarran, but now residing at Sarawak stated that he lived for twenty-five years at Sakarran, and that he frequently went out on piratical excursions with the people of that place. On one occasion they attacked and took Sungie Purun and plundered it, killing 15 Chinese. On another occasion they captured three Chinese. On one expedition they destroyed the town at Sungie Pinju and killed three Malays.—They then attacked Sungie Dari but were beaten off, having only eight prahus. On another occasion with eight prahus he attacked Sungie Riah and captured it, the inhabitants taking to flight; the town was plundered. On one excursion he attacked the Sow Dyaks with ninety prahus and defeated them, about 200 of the men were killed, and nearly 200 hundred women and children taken captive. The village was plundered and destroyed. The Sarebas and Sakarran people do not make these attacks on account of injury done previously by the parties attacked:—they kill, plunder and destroy all persons and vessels they meet at sea.

Abong Buyong stated he had frequently been pirating from Sarebas, his object being plunder; the Dyaks taking heads. They never made any distinction of nation, had no friends when at sea, and captured all they could conquer. He has been present at the capture of many trading prahus, some were Brune vessels, some Sambah, and some from the islands. He has been present at the attack of many Chinese and other settlements. He was also present at the mouth of the Sarebas when the piratical fleet was destroyed by Capt. Farquhar. That fleet was from Sarebas.

Abang Hussan, a Sadong Malay, states that about ten years ago he resided at Sakarran. During the time he resided there, the Sakarran people often went out pirating to different parts of the coast, and he had seen the prahus return bringing back plunder, prisoners, and heads of upward 100 Chinese and others taken by them about Sambah. He himself had been out with one hundred and thirty prahus and attacked Pous, a town in the Pontianak territory. The place was taken, plundered, and burnt. On another occasion he was present at an attack on the town of Sassang by one hundred and twenty prahus; it was taken, 25 of the inhabitants killed and 30 women and children captured. At that time several other Malays under Serib Saib, residing at Sadong, also joined the fleet which attacked Sassang. Serib Saib compelled them to go. These attacks were not made in retaliation for injuries received, but from a love of plunder and heads. At sea they make no distinction whatever; the Sadong people, although on terms of friendship with them, they nevertheless kill if met with at sea. His father, a Sadong man, was killed by them at the mouth of the Sadong river. On one occasion he was on the coast with Serib Saib when they were attacked by two Sakarran prahus, although they knew Serib Saib and the prahu he was in. They were beaten off. Serib Saib was their great friend and abettor, and Abang Hussan, having boarded the Sakarran prahu, asked them why they attacked their friends, to which they replied—"at home we make a distinction between friends and enemies, but at sea, everybody we kill and plunder."

Burut, a Bornean, was at Mato when it was lately attacked by the pirates. He was one of the crew of a large trading prahu, about 65 feet long and 17 feet beam, built at Siriki, belonging to Nakodah Masallah, and had just arrived from Singapore with a cargo of piece goods, the greater part of which was immediately landed. The prahu, together with another large prahu laden with sago, and bound to Singapore, was anchored outside the booms placed across the river below the town. The pirates captured, plundered, and burnt both these prahus, but failed in their attempt on the town, owing to its being protected by the booms. There were upwards of 100 prahus, which he is certain were either Sarebas or Sakarran vessels.

Several fishermen and others gave evidence that the village and boats at the entrance of the Moratabas river were attacked by six prahus, one very large, and five of a smaller size. They burnt two houses, captured three small trading prahus, and killed four of the crew of one of them, including a Kling. Six men altogether were killed, four wounded, and one woman carried away. The pirates went in the direction of Sakarran, and all the witnesses say they are certain they were either Sarebas or Sakarran pirates. [It has since been ascertained that they were from Sakarran, under a well known Dyak chief.]

Sital, residing at Sarawak, about nine years ago when on a voyage from Sarawak to Pontianak in a trading prahu, was attacked by three Sarebas prahus, containing about 40 men each. They captured his boat and sunk it, after having plundered it of everything it contained. Six of the crew were killed, Sital, the only survivor, being wounded. He was taken to Sarebas, and after being kept there about ten days, was sold as a slave to a Malay residing at Seriki, and was afterwards ransomed by his relations at Sarawak. At the time he was attacked his boat was at sea under sail near Tanjong Datu. The Sarebas pirates were armed with muskets, spears, and swords, all of which they used during the attack.

Assing, a Chinaman residing at Sarawak, states that while fishing a few years ago near the mouth of the Sambah river in company with another boat, they were attacked by upwards of thirty Sarebas prahus. Assing himself escaped with difficulty, the other boat was taken and three of the crew in her murdered. He had a small house on shore which they plundered and burnt. The Sarebas pirates have very frequently been at the mouth of the Sambah river, and on this occasion they passed along the coast and took the Chinese town of Sankawan.

The above is the substance of some of the depositions taken at Sarawak. Had time allowed, we believe hundreds might have been obtained to the same effect.—*Ibid.*