

JOURNAL OF THE  
MALAYAN BRANCH  
ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

Volume XXVI, Part 4

December, 1953

The Cambridge University Expedition  
to parts of the Malay Peninsula,  
1899 - 1900.

Personal Accounts by  
the late W. W. Skeat  
&  
Dr. F. F. Laidlaw

Price to non-members \$5.00

Sold at the Society's Rooms, Raffles Museum, Singapore, 6, & by the Society's  
Agents, LUZAC & Co., 46, GREAT RUSSELL STREET, LONDON, W.C.1

## CONTENTS

Volume 26, part 4, dated December 1953

(No. 164)

The Cambridge University Expedition  
to the North-Eastern Malay States,  
and to Upper Perak,  
1899 - 1900

	Page
Introduction (C.A.G.-H.) .. .. .	5
Reminiscences of the Expedition, by the late W. W. Skeat, M.A., leader of the Expedition .. .. .	9
A Personal Narrative of the Expedition, by Dr. F. F. Laidlaw.	148
Collecting Localities (Appendix 1) .. .. .	165
The Members of the Expedition (Appendix 2) .. .. .	169
Works dealing directly with Material collected in the course of the Expedition (Appendix 3) .. .. .	171

The Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society dates from 1923. It is the direct successor, by change of title, of the Straits Branch, R. A. S., which was founded in 1878. Its objects are the increase and diffusion of knowledge concerning the territories of the Federation of Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak, North Borneo and Brunei. Membership is open to anyone interested in the Society's activities. The annual subscription is at present \$10 a year, and there is no entrance fee. Members receive free one copy of all journals published for the period for which their membership is valid. In addition they may buy single copies of back numbers at reduced rates. The latter include Sir Richard Winstedt's History of Malaya, histories of the majority of the individual states, C. C. Brown's English translation of the *Séjarah Melayu*, M. W. F. Tweedie's account of the Stone Age in Malaya, and biographies of Yap Ah Loy, Captain T. C. S. Speedy and John Clunies Ross, by different writers, in addition to other more general works. Indexes to all the publications of the old Straits Branch of the Society (1878-1922) and to the first twenty volumes of the present series (1923-47) are available to members at \$2 and \$3.50 each.

**Final Part to Volume 26 (1953)**

Issued, April 1954.



The Patani States, Kēdah and neighbouring territory, about 1900

## Introduction

The University of Cambridge Expedition to the North-Eastern Malay States and Upper Perak, 1899-1900, to give it its full title, came about largely as a consequence of the interest and enthusiasm of its leader, William Walter Skeat. It is with some justice that it is not infrequently referred to briefly as the Skeat Expedition.

Skeat, a son of the Rev. W. W. Skeat, the well-known authority on Anglo-Saxon, was born at Cambridge on 14 October, 1866. He entered the University in October, 1884, as an undergraduate at Christ's College, reading for the classical tripos. The following year he became a scholar of his College, graduating in 1888. In May 1891 he joined the Selangor Civil Service, and thereafter acted as District Officer in the Klang, Ulu Langat and Kuala Langat districts successively. In 1898 he was gazetted District Magistrate for Larut, in Perak.

While he was serving in Selangor Skeat developed a considerable interest in the Malays, and Malay customs and beliefs, especially their ideas on "magic", which at that period still held an important place in the life of the people. While in Ulu Langat he also began to study the aborigine groups inhabiting the area. His approach was scholarly and exacting, and he gathered a considerable amount of precise and detailed information, of much value. At the same time he built up a collection of over a thousand models and material objects illustrating the Malay way of life, and to a lesser extent that of the aborigines with whom he was in touch locally. This collection of ethnographic material was presented to the University of Cambridge in 1897.<sup>1</sup>

Skeat soon decided that contact with European and other outside cultures was disintegrating the social life of the aborigines in Selangor, and to a lesser extent that of the Malays, and he began to make plans for visiting a less disturbed part of the peninsula. In the autumn of 1898 he returned to Cambridge on leave. There he was able to discuss his ideas further. Among those whom he approached on the subject was Professor Haddon, who had recently returned from a long expedition to New Guinea, the islands of the Torres Strait and North Borneo, which he

1. *Fide* W. W. Skeat. A brief catalogue of the collection appears in the 14th annual report of the Antiquarian Committee (1899), wherein it is said to have been presented to the University in 1898.

had undertaken on behalf of the University. The Haddon Expedition had proved very successful and this fact, coupled with Skeat's enthusiasm, and the interest aroused by the material that he had collected in Selangor, led to the decision to despatch an expedition to the north-eastern Malay states (then under Siamese suzerainty), under Skeat's leadership.

Permission was obtained from the Colonial Office for Skeat to be granted leave of absence until the end of 1899. The cost, as in the case of the Haddon Expedition, was to a large extent met by a substantial grant from the Worts Fund. Its supporters included Professors Skeat, Alfred Newton, Sir Wm Ridgeway, Sir R. C. Jebb and Dr (afterwards Sir) Arthur Shipley. At the latter's suggestion its personnel was extended to include zoologists and botanists, in consideration of the very limited amount of information then available about this part of south-east Asia. The Expedition Staff finally consisted of,

W. W. Skeat, B.A., (Christ's College Cambridge), leader,  
 Nelson Annandale, B.A., (Balliol College, Oxford),  
 Richard Evans, B.A., (Jesus College, Oxford),  
 D. T. Gwynne-Vaughan, M.A., (Christ's College, Camb.),  
 Frank F. Laidlaw, B.A., (Trinity College, Cambridge), and  
 Robert Henry Yapp, B.A., (St. John's College, Cambridge),

the last two of whom were not, unfortunately, able to start as soon as the others, and they had to join the main party at Kuala Aring, in Kelantan, in August 1899. Gwynne-Vaughan, one of the botanists, left shortly before this point, in order to return to England to begin a course of lectures which he was giving, and Annandale, similarly committed, followed soon afterwards. All the members of the Expedition subsequently distinguished themselves. Annandale became Superintendent of the India Museum, at Calcutta, and in 1916 Director of the Zoological Survey of India; Gwynne-Vaughan and Yapp became Professors of Botany; Evans did excellent work in morphology, and later for a time was Curator of the Museum at Georgetown, British Guiana, before his health broke down; Laidlaw, though his life lay as a medical practitioner in Devon, found time to contribute much to our knowledge of the land molluscs and dragon-flies of Malaya and Borneo.

The main party of the Expedition, consisting of Skeat, Annandale, Evans and Gwynne-Vaughan, left England at the end of January, 1899, and reached Bangkok at the beginning of March. There they had a stay of a little over two weeks, while the necessary permits for further travel were obtained from the Siamese Government. The authorities proved most helpful, and on 23 March the Expedition, which by this time consisted of