

THE PINJIH RHINO

The Straits Times, 30 December 1934, Page 4

 Article also available on Microfilm Reel NL02359

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RHINO

Selangor Museum.—4

A "HOLY" TERROR

By A Special Correspondent

ONE of the most famous wild animals in Malaya which has fallen to the big game hunter's rifle is the Pinjih rhino shot by Sir (then Mr.) W. George Maxwell, in 1899. Its head occupies a prominent position in the Selangor museum, and the story of how it was killed, written by Sir George in his book, "In Malay Forests," is gripping.

Pinjih was a member of that now practically extinct Malayan animal, the one-horned rhinoceros, or *Rhinoceros sondaicus*, for which the British Museum sent out an expedition sometime in 1932, so that a specimen of this rare Malayan animal might be preserved.

Its cousin is the common and much smaller two-horned rhinoceros, which however, has not its savage tendencies.

Holy Animals.

The most famous animal in Perak for many years and a terror in the Pinjih valley (in Kinta) long before 1874 when the British came to the State, Pinjih's life was ended by a quartering shot at its heart and lungs.

Pinjih was one of the animals which was "kramat" (holy) to the Malays. Great believers in Animism, the Malays credit the larger species of wild animals with human or superhuman powers, and as Sir George explains in his book, "It often happens that an animal which attaches itself to one locality and establishes a reputation for daring or cunning, and which is fortunate enough to escape a few ill-directed bullets, comes, in a few years to be considered kramat, and is in many cases imagined to be a reincar-

nation of a deceased celebrity.

"It is generally recognised that animals under the protection of another world will treat the human inhabitants of the district honoured by their presence, with a benign consideration bordering on condescension; thus a kramat elephant will walk by the rice-fields leaving the crops untouched, and a child might drive away a kramat tiger that strayed too near the cattle-folds."

The Malay conception is that most wild animals were once human beings who committed a wrongful act and were changed into their respective shapes by the deities.

Caught By Fire.

Each tribe in Malaya possesses its own method of killing certain animals, but that employed by the Semangs for dispatching a rhinoceros is both crafty and, even more important, attended by very little danger. The tribe discards all weapons when hunting this animal.

Of solitary habits, the animal loves wallowing in muddy salt licks, and

The head of the rajih rhino, in the Selangor Museum.

during the rainy season immerses its whole body, so that only its head is visible. The mud, hardening during the dry weather, encrusts the animal so securely that it finds great difficulty in getting out.

The Semangs then appear, heap dry leaves and wood on the buried animal, set these alight, and keep a large fire going until the rhinoceros dies—incidentally, in a cooked state fit to be eaten!

The blood and the horn of the animal, believed by the natives to possess great medicinal properties, are highly prized. The blood is coagulated and sold in tablet form at a high price to sick people, while the horn is scraped or ground into powder, a supposedly effective antidote against poison and wounds of all descriptions!

