

# PAGAN RACES

OF THE

# MALAY PENINSULA

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they usually do at a slow pace, plucking the branches as they move along), while the hind legs are lifted up, the Semang cautiously approach them from behind, and drive, by main force, a sharp-pointed and fire-hardened splinter of bamboo or palm-wood ("nibong"), which has been touched with poison, into the sole of their victim's foot.<sup>1</sup> In this way they effectually lame him, and not unfrequently bring him down, when the whole party rush upon him with spears and sharp-pointed sticks and soon despatch him. The rhinoceros they obtain with yet greater ease. This animal, which is of solitary habits, is frequently found wallowing in marshy places, with its whole body immersed in the mud and only part of its head visible. The Malays call such an animal "badak tapa," or the "recluse" rhinoceros. Especially towards the close of the rainy season they are said to seek places in which to bury themselves in this manner, and upon the dry weather setting in, through the powerful effect of the vertical sun, the mud which surrounds them forms a hard thick crust, in which the rhinoceros is imbedded, and from which it cannot effect its escape without some difficulty and exertion. The Semang thereupon collect large quantities of combustible materials which they convey to the spot, and quietly approaching, quickly build up over the animal an immense fire, which, being well fed with fresh fuel, soon completes his destruction, and renders him in a fit state to make a meal of. The projecting horn on the snout is carefully preserved, as it is supposed

<sup>1</sup> *J. I. A.* vol. iv. p. 426; *cf. infra*, p. 207, n. 1. And *cf.* also Kidley, *Mammals of the Malay Peninsula*, p. 163: "The Aborigines known as Sakai sometimes hunt it. There was recently living a

man who . . . would drive a large-bladed spear between the hind legs [of the elephant] into the abdomen, which wound was soon after fatal, and tracking the animal he would secure the ivory."

to be possessed of medicinal properties, and is highly prized by the Malays, to whom the Semang generally barter it for tobacco and similar commodities.<sup>1</sup>

**Kedah Semang.**—I had, unfortunately, while in the Semang country no opportunity of testing in the capacity of an eye-witness the remarkable account of their methods of big-game hunting as related above by Marsden. The weighty authority of the latter, however, should strongly support his account, even if we did not know that in other parts of the world, and even of the Malay Peninsula itself, methods quite as ingenious have been recorded.<sup>2</sup> The Semang of Kedah, in addition to the bow, spear, and blowpipe, make use of all sorts of ingenious traps, pitfalls, and snares to secure their quarry. Birds are caught by means of a species of bird-lime manufactured from the viscid sap of some of the numerous "fig" or "gutta" trees that abound in the forest, and even rats are caught by means of a peculiar snare which resembles, however, in principle, a rat-trap commonly used by the Malays. For hunting purposes a kind of semi-wild reddish-coloured dog is used, but it does not appear to have much pace.

I may add that the Semang do not appear as a rule to keep the domestic cat, but they not unfrequently make pets of young monkeys (*e.g.* the "lotong"), which, it is alleged, are sometimes brought up by hand.

**Perak Semang.**—Mr. L. Wray writes me (in a letter dated November 12, 1903) that the Semang of Upper Perak kill big game by means of their bows and arrows, the latter being poisoned, and having barbed heads and detachable fore-shafts.

<sup>1</sup> *J. I. A.* vol. iv. pp. 426, 427.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Wray informs me that he does not credit this account, which is supported by Logan and others.