



## The Origin of the Malay "Ronggeng"

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# The Origin of the Malay "Ronggeng"

Quaint Peacock Jamboree

## Mr. Granville O'Hara's Lecture at Hu Yew Seah

Death of Well-Known Shikari Recalled

Despite counter-attractions, a fairly large gathering was present at the Hu Yew Seah yesterday evening to hear a lecture on "Some Peculiarities of Malayan Wild Animal Life" by Mr. G. M. O'Hara, late of the Malayan Forest Service.

For over an hour and a half Mr. O'Hara kept his audience interested with innumerable little anecdotes and amusing incidents connected with jungle life.

The following are some excerpts from the lecture:—

At the risk of boring you I think in justice to you and myself, I ought to mention my qualifications for tackling a subject like this. When in my teens I worked and lived with the wonderful Shikari, the late William Douglas Hay, who took me in hand and taught me the art of the use of firearms and the method of shooting certain animals, hence to him I am grateful for the knowledge gained in this particular line.

Secondly, I am indebted to my friends the "Orang Bukits," a tribe of Hill-Sakais of Jelabu, dwelling on the range of mountains bordering Negri Sembilan and Pahang. To this band of "Orang Bukits" I am really grateful for the knowledge acquired on hunting, tracking and trapping of wild birds, reptiles and animals for the three months that I lived with them in a wild state.

Further I have to thank the Authorities of the Imperial Forest Research Club





ties of the Imperial Forest Research College, Dehra Dun, India, for the knowledge I acquired in Zoology when under training for the Malayan Forest Service. Now, with the combined knowledge acquired from the three sources mentioned, I think I may claim to some knowledge of my subject.

Now I shall give you all a brief description of my observation of the nature and peculiarities of some of the birds I reared in the Dindings during 1905-6. I shall start off with the

### **Argus Pheasant**

which I shall not try to describe for we all know what it looks like. They are easily tamed and are really loveable birds to rear. The peculiarity of this bird lies in the weakness of its head, which is extraordinarily sensitive to the slightest injury which invariably causes death. Within a week of captivity an Argus pheasant can be let loose without any fear of it flying away.

### **Malayan Peacock**

Like the Argus pheasant this bird also suffers from a sensitive head. It is also very easily tamed and makes a real good pet. The Cock-birds never fight with one another. The male is a real dandy and a wonderful dancer. During the mating season these birds hold a "jamboree," where the best dancer amongst the cocks has the first choice of a mate.


I have had the pleasure of witnessing a Peacock Jamboree when as the guest of my friends the "Orang-Bukits" of the Jelabu Ranges, and many years afterwards in the Segari Forest Reserve in the Dindings, and the similarity of the Jamboree on both these occasions was marked.

### **The Peacock Jamboree**

The Cocks collect together and after selecting a spot most suitable for their purpose they clear a circular space of about 6' in diameter of all scrub, twigs, leaves etc. The hens range themselves in a semi-circle round the arena and squat on their haunches to watch the dancing. Presently a Peacock takes the arena and does a dance. The dance is a mixture of the Fox'rot, Gaby Gide, Goose Step and the Blues. I am almost convinced that the Malays adopted the "Ronggang" from the Peacock dance!

After a while another Peacock takes the ring and starts his steps, whilst the first quietly steps out, and so continues the dance until the last cock has had a go and with him the Jamboree ends. A beak palaver is then held amongst the Cocks and among themselves they decide who is







the best dancer, whilst the hens do the cackling and waiting and speculating as to who will be the lucky one to be chosen!

At the end of the palaver the favoured one among the Cocks takes the ring and does the Foxtrot and Blues up to the hen of his choice and doing the Goose-Step Gaby-glides away with her on their honeymoon. The next best dancer then takes the ring and carries out the same procedure, followed in rotation by the other cock-birds, who wend their way in different directions.


### The Stork and the Crane



The Stork is a wading bird and is characterised by having long legs and a long beak. The Crane on the other hand has also long legs but possesses a short beak. By nature these birds are very dignified and sullen. Their likes and dislikes to any one person or animal is very marked. They make good friends but bad enemies. As watch-dogs there is nothing to surpass them.



I had a Stork in my collection of birds. I tied him up for a few days and let him loose. Taking a general survey of the garden and compound he finally selected the latter and took up his future abode behind the kitchen and nothing on earth would induce him to stray away from his selected domain. He also took unto himself a pal in the shape of my terrier and they became great friends. Anyone approaching from the back-yard was promptly held up by the terrier and if an attempt was made to get past him the Stork promptly took a hand by attacking the intruder but on the other hand if the person got past the terrier without being barked at, then the Stork let him by!



The Crane I obtained a couple of months afterwards. There was a battle royal between these two on the first day they met. I remember the incident vividly for old Ma'din, my Gamekeeper, came out second best for being tactless careless in handling these birds. The fight started by Ma'din's foolishness in bringing the two together. The stork being startled and unprepared for a friendly introduction, promptly set to without any further ado, and what a fight it was!

The Crane being the larger bird of the two was getting the better of the fight until the Terrier took a hand in and even up things a bit. Ma'din stepping into the breach picked up the Crane and not being over careful in the handling of the bird got severely pecked for his pains and to add insult to injury the Stork attacked him as well. Ever since that day and



onwards, Ma'din was always molested if he got anywhere near enough to either the Crane or the Stork, who developed a dislike for him.

### **The Jungle Fowl (Ayam Utan)**

I think we have all seen a Jungle-fowl sometime or another so I won't go into details in describing it, except to say that the Cockbird is gorgeously plumaged compared with that of his domesticated cousin. Unlike his relatives the Peacock and the Argus Pheasant who are huge and timid, Nature has deemed it best to undersize the Jungle Cockbird but has instilled in him an instinct of fearlessness that surpasses anything I know of in any other bird in Ma'aya.

He is a born fighter and will take on anything in feathers and in a fight will never say die until it is dead. Nature has provided him with a pair of spurs that he uses to a deadly effect as I know it to my cost, for I have lost many a domesticated rooster at the hands of one of these gentry. I have never known a Jungle Cockbird to take up a challenge, fight and run away. When they do meet, and that's pretty often, they fight to the death.

The Jungle cockbird revels in polygamy and it is not uncommon to meet a cockbird with a brood of hens numbering from three to well over half a dozen. After a fight he always annexes his vanquished foe's harem. Sometimes the good ladies don't like the look of him so they fly away and settle in another bird's harm.

Now Ladies and Gentlemen, I shall deal with the peculiarities of some snakes and my personal experiences with them. I shall start with the

### **Cobra (Ular Tedong)**


There are various species of Cobras, some are pale mud coloured, others brown, blue-black and black. All are hooded. Some of them have the two sides of the hood marked like an interrogation mark (?), while others bear no marks at all on the hood.

### **The King Cobra**

The real King among the Cobras is the "Cobra de Capello". In colouring it has a shiny blue-black sheen. It never attains a length of over four feet and is possessed with an extraordinary large hood with white conspicuous marking. The beneath part of the body, from the base of the chin to the anus, is coloured all the way down with a creamish white

tinge, which is conspicuous by its absence in other cobras. Its bite is reputed to be the most deadliest of all snakes. It is extraordinarily fierce for its size, hence it







is known as the "King-Cobra." This species is not to be found in Malaya, but in Ceylon and India. It is a rare specie.

### **The Malayan Cobra**

Unlike its Ceylon and Indian cousins, this specie does not attain a length of more than five feet. In colouring it is all of a shiny bluish-black sheen, which throws out coloured rays of different hue when the sun plays on it. It has an extraordinary small hood and devoid of markings. A bite from this species, although poisonous, is not so deadly as compared with its Indian cousins.




The peculiarity of a cobra is that it cannot bite you unless it raises itself to do so, so one is safe to within two feet of it, of course unless you deliberately stick out our hand or feet close up against a cobra's head. A cobra, when angry, raises its head from twelve to eighteen inches, expands its hood, swings its head from side to side and then suddenly lashes out at you and bites.




Another peculiarity in Cobras, in fact of all snakes, is that they move about and hunt in pairs. If you kill a snake in your compound or inside your house, you can rest assured that within a few hours the mate will appear on the scene. I have killed many a pair of snakes in my compound and inside my house, in the various Districts I have been stationed at, within a few hours of one another.

### **The Hamadryad**



This is the largest of the poisonous snakes to be found in Malaya, and the fiercest. I would'nt hesitate a moment to give chase to one and attack, and by jove it can cover the ground at an amazing speed. Owing to its largeness and fierceness it is erroneously and commonly considered as the "King-cobra," which it is not? It attains a length anything up to fourteen feet and for its size and length it has an extraordinary small and elongated hood. When disturbed and in anger it issues a grunt for all the world like a bear when startled.

### **The Malayan Viper**



These snakes are sluggish and repulsive and give one the creeps to look at them. The True Viper and the Pit-Viper are both found in Malayan jungles. Being of a greenish hue, and some times of a dull muddy colour, they are very hard to recognise from their surroundings till one is almost upon them or steps on one. They are mostly to be found in Mangrove swamps, either at the foot of bakau trees or curled up on the forks or low-lying branches.

### **The Python (Ular Sawah)**



The Boa constrictor, or the python as it is called in this country, is fairly common. It attains a length some times well over twenty-four feet. It is a perfectly harmless snake to meet on the ground as long as it has not gripped a stump or sapling with the end of its tail, in which case it is positively dangerous to get within reaching distance of it. For this grip enables it to curl itself round its prey and crush life out.

### The Crocodile (Buai)

These reptiles are cold-blooded brutes by nature, looks and ways. They attain a good length and live up to a very ripe old age. In a crocodile the lower jaw is stationary and the upper jaw movable. On a sunny day the females are to be seen drowsing on the muddy banks of creeks and rivers, but never a male crocodile, for nature has built him so that he finds it an encumbrance to climb up a river bank, hence he keeps to the water close to a bank.

A crocodile is reputed to not eat a body or carcass not of his own killing. There is a great deal of truth in this, for I have seen on several occasions, the carcasses of goats, dogs, fowl etc, going down with the tide, followed by crocodiles and not touched. They kill their own prey by seizing it unexpectedly on the edge of a river and dragging it into deep water, drowns it by holding it under water, after which it is buried for a couple of days until decomposition sets in and then it is devoured.

A crocodile by nature is timid of man and on the approach of one will, if it is in the water, quietly sink out of sight, and if on a mud-bank rush into the water on sighting one. Sometimes a crocodile gets careless and goes to sleep on a mud-bank, in which case it falls an easy victim to the rifle; at other times a crocodile, with his mouth wide open, relies entirely on inside information of approaching danger from its pal the Sand-piper, who is generally found busily engaged playing at "tooth-picker" inside the mouth of the crocodile, who on the approach of man, pipes out the danger warning and flies away, whilst the crocodile on the other hand snaps his jaws together and shoots into the water.

A crocodile's tail, when wielded, is a weapon to be respected and reckoned with, for a blow from it has been known to smash up a fair size sampan and shatter the legs of a man. A female crocodile on an average lays about fifty eggs at a sitting and has been known to lay as much as seventy eggs at a time.

Now, I shall endeavour to give you



brief accounts of the peculiarities of certain animals that I have met and studied during my career as a Forest Officer and a Shikari.

### The Mousedeer (Plandok)

The Mousedeer is the smallest of Game animals in Malaya. There are three species of the family namely the Plandok the smallest, the Napok which is slightly larger and the Kenchil, the largest of the three. They are very fast sprinters having very thin and delicate shaped legs which snap quite easily.

They are, including the Napok and Kenchil, the most harmless and inoffensive animals on earth. Being so nature has provided them with a pair of incisors attached to the upper jaw with which they protect themselves from harm. As pets they are quickly tamed and are lovable little animals to rear, and can be trained to do little easy tricks.

I always wondered what earthly use these pair of curved incisors were to a little animal of its size until one day I saw them brought into use and I was put wise. Out on a deer hunt on Pangkor Island. Dindings, one day, I was standing a few yards away on a deer track waiting for the quarry to come along. The dogs gave tongue and I was prepared for eventualities when a little mouse-deer appeared on the scene and stepped within a few yards of me.

He evidently did not see me standing behind a bush. He looked around and listened to the tonguing of the dogs growing closer, then suddenly looking up he backed on his haunches and shot into the air. To my utter surprise I saw this little mouse-deer hanging to an overhanging branch with his two curved incisors. With the jerk of his neck he steadied himself and drawing his four limbs in kept perfectly quiet. I was very interested watching him.

A couple of minutes afterwards the tonguing dogs rushed past along the path. This little plandok, finding the course clear, released himself by jerking his head back and landed on his feet and doubled back on his tracks and disappeared.

### The Barking Deer (Kijang)

These deer—known locally as the Kijang—are fairly common in Malaya. In size a Kijang resembles an Indian goat on a large scale. Its peculiarity lies in the bark which is a very loud sharp and abrupt yap, which startles one out of his wits when heard within close proximity to one of these animals in the jungle. The other peculiarity lies in its horns set on long bony stalks, whose tips are curved inwards and towards one



another. If they were curved inwards and outwards they can be very nasty when in use.

I remember an amusing incident one day at Lumut when my pet Kijang got on the war-path. A certain high Government Official paid a visit to Lumut, Dindings. He was walking along the six-foot path to the Office with the District Officer, with the Staff from the Office watching them (including myself), when suddenly we noticed my Kijang galloping up the path making for the Office and for me.

The District Officer had just time to step aside but not so this other Officer. Old "Kijo" did not wait for a formal introduction, but lowering his head on the run, introduced his horns to this high Official's trouser-seat and transferred him into the slushy drain alongside, which he found himself seated in a most undignified position minus his hat. The Kijang in the meantime made straight for the Office and butting his way through to me and laying himself at the feet of my chair looked about, perfectly unconcerned that by his little act of discourtesy, he had landed me into an awful mess.

This Official and the District Officer retraced their steps to the D.O's Quarters. Seeing this I quickly made tracks for my Quarters followed by the docile "Kijo." Getting home I locked him up in my bedroom, entirely forgetting that my young tiger-cub "Riman" was asleep under my bed. I went back to the Office expecting a dressing down, but to my surprise "Kijo's" little escape was treated as a joke by both this high Official and the District Officer.

Getting home I heard a devil of a commotion being waged in my bedroom. Unlocking the door I rushed in to find "Kijo" on my bed facing the Toilet table. He stood on his hind legs and cocking his head to a side charged the already damaged mirror and table. The recoil threw him backwards to the floor, where gathering himself together quickly charged "Riman," who evidently having been charged several times before my arrival, rather resented further familiarities from "Kijo" and snarling slapped him on the face.

I tied them both up. "Riman" remembered the incident and sulked for days but not so "Kijo" he forgot his difference with "Riman" but remembered the mirror, for whenever he got into my bedroom he jumped on the bed to face the mirror and, like the Irishman, wanted to try conclusions with his own reflection for something better to fight with.

### The Wild Boar (Babi Utan)

... and Gentlemen, I come to



Now Laues and ...  
an animal that all true sportsmen respect  
and love to hunt. He is the terror of the  
jungle and even a tiger respects him, un-

less of course the former can get him un-  
awares from behind.

I could give you several interesting  
instances of the boar's bravery but as time  
is pressing I shall confine myself to one  
or two. Even at this distant date I realize  
how close to death I was when I shot my  
first boar. Along with Mat Lias, a Malay  
Settlement Officer who always accompani-  
ed us on these hunts, we arrived at the  
edge of the bukar area.

Two dogs off the lash entering the area  
promptly put up a boar and the tonguing  
of these two dogs excited the eleven held  
by me on lashes and chains. The strain  
was too severe and as I was unable to un-  
lash them I let go, with the result they  
all rushed in after the boar with their  
lashes and chains on. Mat Lias swearing  
that it was a "Babi Krama," promptly  
climbed up a tree and stayed there.

I went in after the boar who was held  
at bay about a hundred feet inside. Get-  
ting within thirty feet of it I  
pulled off a ball cartridge at his  
stomach, which I thought was the safest  
spot to shoot at. In a twinkling that  
boar charged and missed me by inches,  
for on the charge I got behind a stump  
of a tree just in time to see the enraged  
animal go past me like a streak of light-  
ning.

He had already killed two dogs  
when brought to bay before I had a  
shot at him. When he missed me he was  
brought to bay again by the dogs about  
thirty feet away. Not knowing what to  
do I stood where I was for about ten  
minutes listening to the awful din and  
to the yelping of the dogs as they got  
severely hurt or killed outright, so re-  
loading my fowling-piece I rushed in  
and getting within fifteen feet of it, I  
manoeuvred round cautiously and took up  
a position facing the boar.

Owing to the shrub being in my  
way I plumped myself down on my  
haunches, raised my gun to fire when one  
of the dogs got in the way. Shouting to  
him I was just about to fire when that  
boar charged straight at me. He hit the  
barrels full with his forehead, which  
caused my gun to go off with a terrible  
explosion. The next thing I knew was  
I found myself double somersaulting  
backwards and becoming unconscious.

I don't know how long I was in that  
state, but when I came to everything was  
quiet on the western front, but on trying  
to use my arms to get up, the terrific  
pain on my left shoulder showed that my  
collar bone was fractured. Sitting up  
I looked straight ahead and there, not



three spaces from me, was lying the "Babi Kramat" with half his head literally blown off, and the dog I had shouted to lying on the side behind him dead, having been ripped clean open on the right side.

### The Tiger (Rimau)

Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, I shall talk on an animal that I am most familiar with in more ways than one. By nature the tiger is timid of man and always get out of the way of mankind, except when it is harassed, hurt or cornered and then it will attack you. From a cub up to a certain age it is very playful and behaves like a young cat. They can be easily tamed whether young or old and trained to do tricks. A female is much more difficult to handle or train.

They love lying on their backs and having their necks and the back of their ears tickled. You shouldn't allow a tiger, young or old, to lick your hand or any part of your body for the tongue is so rough and serrated that it is nothing else but a thin flexible file with a very rough surface, when applied it takes the skin off in one hard lick. When in captivity as a cub, feed it with yams, potatoes, herbs, rice and a hard well cleaned bone to play about with.

As it grows older throw in smallunks of meat that have been thoroughly soaked so that the blood is all washed off. Tie the animal up first before you give it a feed and don't go anywhere near it, for this is the time they get savage and will not hesitate to attack one. Taste of blood for the first time in captivity throws a tiger back into savagery and then it is time you either shoot it or caged it up.

A tiger's sense of sight and hearing is pretty keen, but not so of smell. A tiger's head, when the animal is on the move in the jungle, is constantly in a swinging motion from left to right and the slightest movement within range of his vision is sighted at once. A blow from a tiger's paw will break the neck or back of an ordinary animal and bash in the skull of a human being. The claws will tear the toughest of flesh, muscles or tendons, to ribbons, and the jaws are so powerful that they will crack or crush a thigh-bone as you would a pea-nut.

### Becoming a Man-Eater

There are two reasons how a tiger comes to be a man-eater. The first is through old age and inability to hunt its usual prey where speed and activity plays a prominent part. The second is losing respect for mankind by being constantly in proximity to them when working on Estates fringing a jungle, or P.W.D.



Coolies on a lonely road running through thick jungle or Forest Reserves, or again Timber-cutters working on their lonely camps in thick jungle.

An experienced Shaikari can tell whether it is an "Old Timer" or a "Young Un" at the game that has killed a human

being by examining the body. An "Old-Timer" generally eats up the fleshy parts of its victim and usually tears open the throat and drinks up the blood, whilst a "Young-Un" leaves the throat and fleshy parts alone and confines itself to the brain, hands and feet of the victim.

I remember an incident where that wonderful Shikari William Hay shot a tiger and tigress within half a minute of one another. We sat up over a kill all night, the night being a bright moonlit one, evidently the tiger or tigers were aware of our presence, for nothing happened nor was the kill visited. Early next morning we came down the machan and went to the Kampong to refresh ourselves and returned within the hour to find that the kill had been removed.

The examination of the ground proved that two tigers had removed the kill which was a bullock. Hay changed guns and armed with a 12-bore followed the track and came upon them sitting over the kill, which they had dragged in a semi circle to within twenty yards of the original spot under the machan. Without further aid, Hay bowled over the tiger with his left barrel over the kill and with his right barrel brought down the tigress that sprang at him, the two shots fired being within a fraction of a minute. The tigress hardly had a skull left.


#### (1)—The Malayān Bison (Seladang)

A Seladang is a beautifully built animal and at a glance one can see nobleness and strength written all over him. His head and pair of horns are a trophy that a big-game hunter will risk his life to possess. For its size it can be classified amongst the fleetest animals in the world. A Seladang's sense of smell, sight and hearing is really wonderful. They know no fear and will charge one on the slightest provocation and have been known to break a man in two with its horns and tear one to pieces with the hoofs of the fore-feet.


Their very fiercelessness is their safeguard from attacks by other animals. A tiger or panther has never been known to attack a Seladang. The Cows are not so dangerous but they can be just as dangerous when protecting their young. Some thirty years back Captain Sayers, the late Commissioner of Police, Selangor, and the greatest Shikari Malaya has ever seen, was killed by a Seladang in the wilds of Pahang.

There are various versions as to how







Sayers came to meet his death at the hands of a Seladang, but I shall tell you what I heard from an old Malay Shikari at Kuala Krai Pahang, who accompanied Captain Sayers on his last and fateful shoot. I was always keen on visiting the spot where he was killed, so when stationed in the Temerloh District in Central Pahang, I looked up this old Malay at Kuala Krai and accompanied by him and a couple of my Forest Guards visited the area where poor old Sayers was killed.



According to this old Malay, Sayers arrived at Kuala Krai with another friend—a Scotsman named MacKenzie. The next morning, accompanied by this old Malay Ma'ali and two other Malay trackers, they poled up the Sungai Krai from off the Pahang river and that afternoon camped on the bank. Early the next morning, having located a herd the previous afternoon it is alleged that Sayers, MacKenzie, Ma'ali and the two Malay gun-bearers went in quest of this herd, old Ma'ali leading the way.



Well in the forenoon they came up with the herd and as this was MacKenzie's first expedition and being keen to bag his first Seladang, the order of approaching this herd was reversed by MacKenzie taking Sayer's place behind Ma'ali. About half an hour afterwards Ma'ali spied a bull partly hidden behind a bracken clump a little distance off and drew Sayer's attention to it, who in turn tried to draw MacKenzie's attention to the animal.



The latter not being an experienced hunter was not able to locate it, and it is alleged that in his excitement he made more noise than was necessary, with the result that the seladang was on the charge before they knew what was happening. MacKenzie fired and missed and tried to get out of the way, but being lame in one leg he tripped over a creeper and went sprawling out of the way of the charging seladang, and this unfortunate mishap sounded the death-knell of poor old Sayers.

Sayers who was deliberately behind MacKenzie before the mishap, now found himself standing directly in the way of the charging brute, who was almost on him, so he fired point blank and mortally wounded the brute. This checked the charge but not before the seladang got Sayers in the ribs and bored a hole clean through him. It is alleged that the brute then shook Sayers off his horns and threw him twenty feet up in the air and on the descent did the same thing once again and then toppling over on its side, went to sleep for good.

Sayers' body, which was literally parted in two, was taken down the Pahang river and into Kuala Lumpur and



buried in the cemetery there. The trophy was brought down and after the head had been stuffed was placed in the Museum for some years from where it was later removed and placed in the bar-room of the old "Spotted-Dog" (the Selangor Club), and a few years back it was removed by Capt. Sayers' widow to England.

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