The Tiger

"The Tiger is sometimes believed to be a man or demon in the form of a wild beast, and to the numerous aboriginal superstitions which attach to this dreaded animal Muhammadanism has added the notion which connects the Tiger with the Khalif Ali. One of Ali's titles throughout the Moslem world is 'the Victorious Lion of the Lord,' and in Asiatic countries, where the lion is unknown, the tiger generally takes the place of the 'king of beasts.'" 1

But the anthropomorphic ideas of the Malays about the Tiger go yet farther than this. Far away in the jungle (as I have several times been told in Selangor) the tiger-folk (no less than the elephants) have a town of their own, where they live in houses, and act in every respect like human beings. In the town referred to their house-posts are made of the heart of the Tree-nettle (f'ras jēlatang), and their roofs thatched with human hair—one informant added that men's bones were their only rafters, and men's skins their house walls—and there they live quietly enough until one of their periodical attacks of fierceness (mēng-ganas) comes on and causes them to break bounds and range the forest for their chosen prey.

There are several of these tiger-villages or "enclosures" in the Peninsula, the chief of them being Gunong Ledang (the Mount Ophir of Malacca), just as Pasummah is the chief of such localities in Sumatra. 2 So too, from Perak, Sir W. E. Maxwell writes in 1881:

2 Marsden, Hist. of Sum. p. 292, ed. 1811.
"A mischievous tiger is said sometimes to have broken loose from its pen or fold (pěchah kandang). This is in allusion to an extraordinary belief that, in parts of the Peninsula, there are regular enclosures where tigers possessed by human souls live in association. During the day they roam where they please, but return to the kandang at night." ¹

Various fables ascribe to the tiger a human origin. One of these, taken down by me word for word from a Selangor Malay, is intended to account for the tiger's stripes. The gist of it ran as follows:—

"An old man picked up a boy in the jungle with a white skin, green eyes, and very long nails. Taking the boy home his rescuer named him Muhammad Yatim (i.e. 'Muhammad the fatherless'), and when he grew up sent him to school, where he behaved with great cruelty to his schoolfellows, and was therefore soundly beaten by his master ('Toh Saih Panjang Janggut, i.e. 'Toh Saih Long-beard), who used a stick made of a

¹ J.R.A.S., S.B., ¼.

"They (the Sumatran Malays) seem to think, indeed, that tigers in general are actuated with the spirits of departed men, and no consideration will prevail on a countryman to catch or to wound one, but in self-defence, or immediately after the act of destroying a friend or relation. They speak of them with a degree of awe, and hesitate to call them by their common name (rimau or ma-chang), terming them respectfully satwa (the wild animals), or even nenek (ancestors), as really believing them such, or by way of soothing or coaxing them, as our ignorant country folk call the fairies 'the good people.'" [Dato' hutan, "elder of the jungle," is the common title of the tiger in Selangor. Various nicknames, however, are given, e.g. Si Pudong, "he of the hairy face" (Cliff., In Court and Kampong, p. 201), 'Pah Randau, "father shaggy-face," etc.] "When an European procures traps to be set ... the inhabitants of the neighbourhood have been known to go at night to the place and practise some forms in order to persuade the animal, when caught, or when he shall perceive the bait, that it was not laid by them or with their consent. They talk of a place in the country where the tigers have a court, and maintain a regular form of government, in towns, the houses of which are thatched with women's hair."—Marsden, ¼. (The italics are mine.) It is curious that the Fairy Princess' hall on Gunong Ledang is similarly described in the Sejarah Malayu (Malay Annals, p. 279) as being of bone and thatched with hair.
kind of wood called *los*¹ to effect the chastisement. At the first cut the boy leapt as far as the doorway; at the second he leapt to the ground, at the third he bounded into the grass, at the fourth he uttered a growl, and at the fifth his tail fell down behind him and he went upon all fours, wherefore his master (improvising a name to curse him by), exclaimed, 'This is of a truth God's tiger! (Harimau Allah). Go you,' he added, addressing the tiger, 'to the place where you will catch your prey—the borderland between the primeval forest and the secondary forest-growth, and that between the secondary forest-growth and the plain—catch there whomsoever you will, but see that you catch only the headless. Alter no jot of what I say, or you shall be consumed by the Iron of the Regalia, and crushed by the sanctity of the thirty divisions of the Korān.' Hence the tiger is to this day compelled to "ask for" his prey, and uses divination (*bertēnung*), as all men know, for the purpose of discovering whether his petition has yet been granted.

Hence, too, he carries on his hide to this very day the mark of the stripes with which he was beaten at school.

The method of divination said to be practised by the tiger is as follows: The tiger lies down and gazes (*bertēnung*) at leaves which he takes between his paws, and whenever he sees the outline of a leaf take the

¹ Also called *tas*. The tiger is still supposed to be mortally afraid of *los* or *tas* wood. In fact, I was more than once told of a trapped tiger who on being shown a piece of *tas* wood "became quite silent," though it had previously been savagely growling, and shrank into a corner of the trap. A single inch of this wood is thought an adequate protection against any tiger. I do not know what species of tree it belongs to, but a gorse stick (which I had bought some years before in Ireland) was taken to be a piece of *los* wood, and was begged from me by a local Malay headman, who cut it up into inches for distribution among his following.
shape of one of his intended victims, without the head, he knows it to be the sign that that victim has been "granted" to him, in accordance with the very terms of his master's curse.

I once asked (at Labu) how it was known that the tiger used divination, and was told this story of a man who had seen it:—

"A certain Malay had been working, together with his newly-married wife, in the rice-fields at Labu, and on his stepping aside at noon into the cool of the forest, he saw a tiger lying down among the underwood apparently gazing at something between its paws. By creeping stealthily nearer he was able at length to discern the object at which the tiger was gazing, and it proved to be, to his intense horror, a leaf which presented the lineaments of his wife, lacking only the head. Hurrying back to the rice-field he at once warned the neighbours of what he had seen, and implored them to set his wife in their midst and escort her homeward. To this they consented, but yet, in spite of every precaution, the tiger broke through the midst of them and killed the woman before it could be driven off. The bereaved husband thereupon requested them to leave him alone with the body and depart, and when they had done so, he took the body in his arms, and so lay down embracing it, with a dagger in either hand. Before sunset the tiger returned to its kill, and leapt upon the corpse, whereupon the husband stabbed it to the heart, so that the points of the daggers met, and killed it on the spot."

The power of becoming a man- or were-tiger (as it has sometimes been called), is supposed to be confined to one tribe of Sumatrans, the Korinchi Malays, many of whom are to be met with in the Malay Native States.
This belief is very strongly held, and on one occasion, when I asked some Malays at Jugra how it could be proved that the man really became a tiger, they told me the case of a man some of whose teeth were plated with gold, and who had been accidentally killed in the tiger stage, when the same gold plating was discovered in the tiger’s mouth.¹

Of the strength of the Malay belief in were-tigers Mr. Clifford writes:

"The existence of the Malayan Loup Garou to the native mind is a fact, and not a mere belief. The Malay knows that it is true. Evidence, if it be needed, may be had in plenty; the evidence, too, of sober-minded men, whose words in a Court of Justice would bring conviction to the mind of the most obstinate jurymen, and be more than sufficient to hang the most innocent of prisoners. The Malays know well how Haji ‘Abdallah, the native of the little state of Korinchi in Sumatra, was caught naked in a tiger trap, and thereafter purchased his liberty at the price of the buffaloes he had slain while he marauded in the likeness of a beast. They know of the countless Korinchi men who have vomited feathers, after feasting upon fowls, when for the nonce they had assumed the forms of tigers; and of those other men of the same race who have left their garments and their trading packs in thickets whence presently a tiger has emerged. All these things the Malays know have happened, and are

¹ It appears that in Java there are supposed not only to be men who can themselves become tigers at will, but men who can turn other people into tigers as well. This is done by means of a species of sympathetic magic, the medicine-man drawing on a sarong (Malay skirt) of marvellous elasticity, which at first will only cover his great toes, but which he is able gradually to stretch until it covers his whole person. This sarong resembles the hide of a Bengal tiger (being yellow with black stripes), and the wearing of it in conjunction with the necessary charms will turn the required person into a tiger.
happening to-day, in the land in which they live, and with these plain evidences before their eyes, the empty assurances of the enlightened European that Were-Tigers do not, and never did exist, excite derision not unmingled with contempt."

Writing on the same theme, Sir Frank Swettenham says:—

"Another article of almost universal belief is that the people of a small State in Sumatra called Korinchi have the power of assuming at will the form of a tiger, and in that disguise they wreak vengeance on those they wish to injure. Not every Korinchi man can do this, but still the gift of this strange power of metamorphosis is pretty well confined to the people of the small Sumatran State. At night when respectable members of society should be in bed, the Korinchi man slips down from his hut, and, assuming the form of a tiger, goes about 'seeking whom he may devour.'

"I have heard of four Korinchi men arriving in a district of Perak, and that night a number of fowls were taken by a tiger. The strangers left and went farther up country, and shortly after only three of them returned and stated that a tiger had just been killed, and they begged the local headman to bury it.

"On another occasion some Korinchi men appeared and sought hospitality in a Malay house, and there also the fowls disappeared in the night, and there were unmistakable traces of the visit of a tiger, but the next day one of the visitors fell sick, and shortly after vomited chicken-feathers.

"It is only fair to say that the Korinchi people strenuously deny the tendencies and the power ascribed to them, but aver that they properly belong to the

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1 Clifford, *In Court and Kampong*, pp. 65, 66.
inhabitants of a district called Chenâku in the interior of the Korinchi country. Even there, however, it is only those who are practised in the elêmu sehir, the occult arts, who are thus capable of transforming themselves into tigers, and the Korinchi people profess themselves afraid to enter the Chenâku district."¹

There are many stories about ghost tigers (rimau kramat), which are generally supposed to have one foot a little smaller than the others (kaki tengkis). During my stay in the Langat district I was shown on more than one occasion the spoor of a ghost tiger. This happened once near Sepang village, on a wet and clayey bridle-track, where the unnatural smallness of one of the feet was very conspicuous. Such tigers are considered invulnerable, but harmless to man, and are looked upon generally as the guardian spirits of some sacred spot. One of these sacred spots was the shrine (kramat) of 'Toh Kamarong, about two miles north of Sepang village. This shrine, it was alleged, was guarded by a white ghost elephant and ghost tiger, who ranged the country round but never harmed anybody. One day, however, a Chinaman from the neighbouring pepper plantations offered at this shrine a piece of pork, which, however acceptable it might have been to a Chinese saint, so incensed the orthodox guardians of this Muhammadan shrine that one of them (the ghost tiger) fell upon the Chinaman and slew him before he could return to his house.

By far the most celebrated of these ghost tigers, however, were the guardians of the shrine at the foot of Jugra Hill, which were formerly the pets of the Princess of Malacca (Tuan Pûtri Gunong Ledang).

¹ Malay Sketches, pp. 200, 201.
Local report says that this princess left her country when it was taken by the Portuguese, and established herself on Jugra Hill, a solitary hill on the southern portion of the Selangor coast, which is marked on old charts as the “False Parcelar” hill.

The legend which connects the name of this princess with Jugra Hill was thus told by Mr. G. C. Bellamy (formerly of the Selangor Civil Service).

"Bukit Jugra (Jugra Hill) in its isolated position, and conspicuous as it is from the sea, could scarcely escape being an object of veneration to the uneducated Malay mind. The jungle which clothes its summit and sides is supposed to be full of hantus (demons or ghosts), and often when talking to Malays in my bungalow in the evening have our discussions been interrupted by the cries of the langswayer (a female birth-demon) in the neighbouring jungle, or the mutterings of the bajang (a familiar spirit) as he sat on the roof-tree. But the 'Putri' (Princess) of Gunong Ledang holds the premier position amongst the fabulous denizens of the jungle on the hill, and it is strange that places so far apart as Mount Ophir and Bukit Jugra should be associated with one another in traditionary lore. The story runs that this estimable lady, having disposed of her husband by pricking him to death with needles, decided thenceforth to live free from the restrictions of married life. She was thus able to visit distant lands, taking with her a cat of fabulous dimensions as her sole attendant. This cat appears to have been a most amiable and accommodating creature, for on arriving at Jugra he carried the Princess on

1 *Sel. Journ.* vol. i. No. 6, p. 87.  
2 Or with a needle, *vide infra.*  
3 Or two cats, *vide infra.*
his back to the top of the hill. Here the lady remained for some time, and during her stay constructed a bathing-place for herself. Even to this day she pays periodical visits to Jugra Hill, and although she herself is invisible to mortal eye, her faithful attendant, in the shape of a handsome tiger, is often to be met with as he prowls about the place at night. He has never been known to injure any one, and is reverently spoken of as a rimau kramat (ghost tiger)."

To the above story Mr. C. H. A. Turney (then Senior District Officer and stationed at Jugra) added the following:

"The Princess and the stories about her and the tiger are well known, and the latter are related from mother to daughter in Langat.

"There are, however, they say, one or two omissions; instead of one tiger there were two, the real harimau kramat and an ambitious young tiger who would also follow the Princess in her round of visits. This brute came to an untimely and ignominious end (as he deserved to) at the hands of one Innes, who was disturbed whilst reading a newspaper, and this can be verified by Captain Syers.

"The other tiger jogged along gaily with his phantom mistress, and made night hideous with his howlings and prowlings all about the Jugra Hill. He was really kramat, and was said to have been shot at by several Malays, and the present Sergeant-Major Allie, now stationed at Kuala Lumpur, can vouch for this."
I myself collected at the time the following extra details:

"The local version of the legend about the kramat at the foot of Jugra Hill runs somewhat as follows:—

Once upon a time one Nakhoda Ragam was travelling with his wife (who is apparently to be identified with the Princess of Malacca, Tuan Pūtri Gunong Ledang) in a boat (sampan), when the latter pricked him to death with a needle (mati di-chuchok jarum). His blood flooded the boat (darah-nya hanyut dalam sampan), and presently the woman in the boat was hailed by a vessel sailing past her. 'What have you got in that boat?' said the master of the vessel, and the Princess replied: 'It is only spinach-juice' (kuah bayam). She was therefore allowed to proceed, and landed at the foot of Jugra Hill, where she buried all that yet remained of her husband, which consisted of only one thigh (paha). She also took ashore her two cats, which were in the boat with her, and which, turning into ghost tigers, became the guardians of this now famous shrine."

Tigers are naturally too fierce to be tracked by the Malays, and are usually caught in specially constructed traps (pēnjara rimau), or killed by a self-
acting gun or spear-trap (b’lantek s’napang, b’lantek t’erbang, b’lantek parap, etc.); but even in this case the Pawang explains to the tiger that it was not he but Muhammad who set the trap. There are, however, as might be expected, a great number of charms intended to protect the devotee in various ways from the tiger’s claws and teeth. Of these I will give one or two typical specimens.

Sometimes a charm is used to keep the tiger at a distance (pénjauh rimau):

“Ho, Běrsěnu! Ho, Běrkaih!
I know the origin from which you sprang;
(It was) Sheikh Abuniah Lahah Abu Kasap.
Your navel originated from the centre of your crown,
Your breasts are [to be seen] in [the spoor of] your fore-feet.¹
May you go wide (of me) as the Seven Tiers of Heaven,
May you go wide (of me) as the Seven Tiers of Earth;
If you do not go wide,
You shall be a rebel unto God,” etc.

Sometimes the desired effect is expected to be obtained by a charm for locking the tiger’s jaws:—

“Ho, Sir Cruncher! Ho, Sir Muncher!
Let the twig break under the weight of the wild goose.
Fast shut and locked be (your jaws), by virtue of ‘Ali Mustapah, OM. Thus I break (the tusks of) all beasts that are tusked,
By virtue of this Prayer from the Land of Siam.”²

¹ The explanation given to me of these two lines was that they were both based on a fancied resemblance between the parts referred to.

² A similar charm runs, “Madam Ugly is the name of your mother, Sir Stripes the name of your body. I fold up your tongue and muzzle your mouth;—wig-eak [stands for] let the twig break —break with the weight of this well-fed wild goose. Be (your mouth) shut fast and locked. If a bachelor loses his vocation, it does not matter.” (Here follow a few words of Arabic.) On reaching home you must never forget to unlock the tiger’s jaws, or “he will certainly bear a grudge against you!” To do this you must repeat the Arabic words with which the charm (just quoted) concluded, and then pronounce the Malay word buka, which means “open.” The Malays are fond of enigmatical expressions, in which the part of a word is made to stand for the whole. Cp. infra “Teng [stands for] the Satengteng flower.” Sometimes these expressions are propounded as riddles, e.g. “Tì tiox kaloa kaloa,” out of which the guesser was supposed to make “Banyak-banyak bösì, béliong ta’mìmbalau.”
The next specimen is described as a "charm for fascinating" (striking fear into) a "tiger and hardening one's own heart":

"O Earth-Shaker, rumble and quake!  
Let iron needles be my body-hairs,  
Let copper needles be my body-hairs!  
Let poisonous snakes be my beard,  
A crocodile my tongue,  
And a roaring tiger in the dimple of my chin.  
Be my voice the trumpet of an elephant,  
Yea, like unto the roar of the thunderbolt.  
May your lips be fast closed and your teeth clenched;  
And not till the Heavens and the Earth are moved  
May your heart be moved  
To be wroth with or to seek to destroy me.  
By the virtue of 'There is no god but God,'" etc.

To which may be added—

"Kun! Payah Kun!  
Let (celestial) splendour reside in my person.  
Whosoever talks of encountering me,  
A cunning Lion shall be his opponent.  
O all ye Things that have life  
Endure not to confront my gaze!  
It is I who shall confront the gaze of you,  
By the virtue of 'There is no god but God.'"

When tigers were wounded, it was said (in Selangor) that they would doctor themselves with *ubat tasak*, which is the name generally given to a sort of poultice used by those who have just undergone circumcision. And when a tiger was killed a sort of public reception was formerly always accorded to him on his return to the village.

Though I have not seen the actual reception (generally miscalled a "wake"), I once saw near Kajang in Selangor a tiger which had been prepared for the ceremony. The animal was propped up on all fours as if alive, and his mouth kept open by propping
the roof with a stick. It was unfortunately impossible for me to wait for the ceremony, but from a description which I received afterwards, it was evidently regarded as a sort of "reception" given by the people of the village to a live and powerful war-chief or champion (hulubalang) who had come to pay them a visit, the dancing and fencing which takes place on such occasions being intended for his entertainment.

One of these ceremonies, which took place in Jugra in Selangor, was thus described:

_A Tiger's Wake_

"At 10 A.M. a great noise of rejoicing, with drums and gongs, approaching Jugra by the river, was heard, and on my questioning the people, I was told Raja Yakob had managed to shoot a tiger with a spring gun behind Jugra Hill, and was bringing it in state to the Sultan. I went over to the Sultan's at Raja Yakob's request to see the attendants on the slaughter of a tiger. The animal was supported by posts and fastened in an attitude as nearly as possible approaching the living. Its mouth was forced open, its tongue allowed to drop on one side, and a small rattan attached to its upper jaw was passed over a pole held by a man behind. This finished, two swords were produced and placed crosswise, and a couple of Panglimas\(^1\) selected for the dance; the gongs and drums were beaten at a quick time, the man holding the rattan attached to the tiger's head pulled it, moving the head up and down, and the two Panglimas, after making their obeisance to the Sultan, rushed at their swords, and holding them in their hands commenced a most wild and exciting dance.

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\(^1\) Chiefs, especially with reference to military functions.
They spun around on one leg, waving their swords, then bounded forward and made a thrust at the tiger, moving back quickly with the point of the weapon facing the animal; they crawled along the ground and sprung over it uttering defiant yells, they cut and parried at supposed attacks, finally throwing down their weapons and taunting the dead beast by dancing before it unarmed. This done, Inas told me the carcase was at my disposal.

"The death of the tiger now establishes the fact of the existence of tigers here, for asserting which I have been pretty frequently laughed at. However this is not the Jugra pest, a brute whose death would be matter for general rejoicing, the one now destroyed being a tigress 8 feet long and 2 feet 8 inches high."  

I may add that both the claws and whiskers of tigers are greatly sought after as charms, and are almost invariably stolen from a tiger when one is killed by a European. I have also seen at Klang a charm written on tiger's skin.

*The Deer*  

Anthropomorphic ideas are held by the Malays almost as strongly in the case of the Deer as of any other animal.

The Deer is, by all Malays, believed to have sprung from a man who suffered from a severe ulcer or abscess (*chabuk*) on the leg, (which is supposed to have left its

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2 ""Two large and four species of small deer are found in the Peninsula, besides the babi *russa* or hog-deer, which however is not a member of the same order. The large species are: the sambur (*Rusa Aristotelis*), a rather savage animal, larger than our own red deer; and the axis (*A. maculata*) or spotted deer. Of the small or Moschine species, the *kijang* is the largest; next to this comes the *napuk*; the third in size is the *lanak*; and the smallest is the *pelandok* or true pigmy deer."—Denys, *Deser. Dict. of Brit. Malaya*, s.v. Deer.