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Ancient ports in Malaysia
(C. 1st Millenium B.C. – 400 A.D.)

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came to light when digging at the depth of 100 cm. from the surface. It is not surprising, The Malaysian region, due to its strategic position, extending from latitude 7 N and longitude 100 E and 119 E to the equator, in the Southeast Asia has often been labelled as the “heart of Southeast Asia”. During the Pleistocene it acted as a land bridge, linking mainland Southeast Asia with the rest of the islands of the region by land mass, the Sunda Shelf and thus facilitating interregional contacts. Certain scholars believe that both fauna migrations and the spread of culture during the prehistoric times either by migrating peoples or diffusion of ideas or both took place through the Malaysian region due to its special position.

But the rise of the sea level at the end of Pleistocene, circa 11, 000 B.P. cut off the inter-regional contact between Malay Peninsula and the rest of the islands of Southeast Asia as the result of the drowning of the Sunda Shelf. Nevertheless, by about 5, 000 B.C. the development of “effective sea-faring” helped to restore the inter-regional bonds. The inter-regional contacts were few in the beginning and became more regular especially during the second half of the first Millennium B.C. And so, Malay Peninsula lying astride the Straits of Melaka and situated midway between the Bay of Bengal to the west and South China Sea to the east, became strategically important in the international maritime trade of Asia.

It is thus not surprising to see that some of the coastal prehistoric settlements by the first millennium B.C. developed into foci of trade. They were involved in the intra-regional trade with mainland Southeast Asia. They emerged as exchange points and feeder centres.

A number of primary and secondary published sources have helped in the attempts by scholars to trace the rise of some of the prehistoric settlements into ports. Archaeological data have contributed significantly in establishing the nature of links between Malaysian Peninsula

and mainland Southeast Asia. In the past, it was quite normal for historians to view the peninsula having been involved in the intra-regional trade since prehistoric times. The peninsula can be viewed as the foci of prehistoric trade in raw materials on the evidence or archaeological data.

These data came from various prehistoric sites. Notable among these sites are Kampung Sungai Lang and Klang in Selangor, Batu Buruk in Terengganu, Muar in Johor and Jenderam Hilir in Selangor. Several prehistoric bronze drums of the Dong Son Heger I type and four clapper less bronze bells decorated with Dong Son type motifs in low relief.¹ From riverine areas in Perak, Selangor and Pahang were found prehistoric bronze bowls.² Socked bronze celts were found during tin and gold mining operations in the peninsula during the 1920s and 1940s.³

They provide evidence of the peninsula's contacts with mainland Metal Age societies. The distribution pattern of the drums and bells featuring the Dong Son decorative designs discovered in the Peninsula and on the basis of the provenance of these bronze finds led to the opinion that they represent imported items whose ultimate source was probably mainland Southeast Asia.⁴

But the discoveries of prehistoric bronze objects at first did not tell much about the chronology and the nature of the sites. They are in archaeological term, loose finds. However, excavations at Kampung Sungai Lang and Batu Buruk in 1964⁵ where the bronze drums were found in situ unearthed other archaeological materials such as glass beads, sherds of earthen ware pottery and socked iron implements. Pottery sherds from Sungai Lang were coated with resin. The bronze drums were placed on remains of a wooden boat/coffin. Radiocarbon dates obtained from samples taken from the remains of the wooden boat/coffin have given a set of dates ranging from 580 B.C. to 190 A.D.⁶ These dates nearly coincide with the radiocarbon dates from Kampung Jenderam in Sungai Langat which range from 690 B.C. to 450 B.C.⁷

¹ Leong Sau Heng, « Malaysia its Prehistory », (in preparation).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid, 56.

⁴ Ibid 56-57 B.A.V. Peacock, «A Preliminary note on the Dong Son Bronze Drums from Kampong Sungai Lang, » FMJ 8 (1964) 1-3.

⁵ B.A.V. Peacock, « The Later Prehistory of the Malay Peninsula » in R. B. Smith and W. Watson. (eds.) Early South East Asia: Essays in Archaeology, History and Historical Geography, London, 1979, 210.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Leong Sau Heng, "Malaysia its Prehistory", 57-58.

The significance of the sites at Kampung Sungai Lang and Klang is the fact that they are located in the valley of Sungai Langat which drains an extensive area rich in alluvial tin deposits. Jenderam Hilir site is also in a tin mining area, about twenty four kilometres from Sungai Lang. Batu Buruk site is very close to the Ulu Pahang's tin and gold deposits in Sungai Tembeling, Telom and Lipis areas. Presumably, Sungai Terengganu was preferred to Sungai Pahang because of its direct river route to the coast for the Ulu Pahang's tin and gold ores.⁸

The presence of commercial items such as beads which are normally associated with ancient trades, bronze drums, bowl and socketed iron tools confirm our belief about the nature of the sites. Archaeological evidence helps to establish the pattern of contacts between the peninsulas and the Bronze Age centres in mainland Southeast Asia from about the middle of the first millennium B.C. The increasing demand for tin and to some extent gold in various more advanced centres in mainland Southeast Asia on one hand, and the abundant supply of these minerals in the peninsula, on the other hand, have led to the very early development of some forms of trading relationships between these regions.⁹

By the beginning of the Christian era at the latest, many such exchange points or feeder ports began to appear in the peninsula. One such feeder port was located in Kuala Selinsing on Pulau Kelumpang.

Recent archaeological surveys and excavation of Pulau Kelumpang have once again brought to light the sites of Pulau Kelumpang. These sites today are known to a few crab catchers, charcoal wood-cutters and fishermen who frequented Kuala Selinsing and Kuala Kelumpang areas. To them the sites are known simply as Pulau Buluh or Pulau Kulit Kerang "the island of shells" deriving their names either from the bamboo plants which are everywhere on the sites or the thousands of cockle shells which litter the surface of the sites.

They refer to the sites as islands even though in reality they are within the mangrove swamps of Pulau Kelumpang Island. The sites consist of dry and comparatively high land which appeared to be just like islands within the sea mangrove trees.

I.H.N. Evans,¹⁰ the first person to do archaeological excavations on Pulau Kelumpang in 1932 named the sites as Tanjong Rawa, Kuala Selinsing, Perak. That name is not to be

⁸ Ibid 62.

⁹ Ibid 63.

¹⁰ I.H.N Evans, »Excavation at Tanjong Rawa, Kuala Selinsing, Perak, » FMJ 15, iii (1932)

found on any map. To find the sites, we have to get help from fishermen in Kuala Selinsing to take us to the area. The landmark was a huge and tall dryland tree that stands above the mangrove trees and can be seen several kilometres from Selinsing River. The distance from Port Sepetang (Port Weld) is about 20 kms. Via Selinsing River. The shortest route to take is via Kampong Selinsing. The next best starting point is Kuala Gula. According to aerial photographs, there are two areas in Pulau Kelumpang where the archaeological sites are located. This has been confirmed by field survey in early 1988. The best known area is located about 600-700 metres from the bank of the Silinsing River near its mouth. It is set on the bank of a small creek called Sungai Buluh. Even though fishermen and crab-catchers use the creek to cross Pulau Kelumpang from Selinsing River to Kelumpang River or vice versa, only few of them were brave enough to stop at the sites and even during emergency. They are unaware that the low mounds of earth and shells were once the site of a prosperous fishing settlement and a feeder's port. Altogether there are five habituated mounds. Four are set along the bank of the creek and the fifth is set at the back of the four mounds.

The least known area is set deep inside the mangrove and is about one kilometre from the first area. But it is closer to the sea and to Kelumpang River. It is near to Tanjung Rawa, mentioned by Evans earlier. Within that area we found 3 mounds of earth and shells which have named as Kelumpang 6, 7 and 8 to arrive at the total number of 8 mounds in the two areas.

During our field survey, we tried to locate the site excavated by Evans. Fom our search, we are certain that Evans site is on Kelumpang 7 and we have even found the trenches dug by him and his team.

The settlements on Pulau Kelumpang were probably built on the soft mud flat on the fringe of the mangrove forest. Houses of wood and thatch rose on poles? The mounds of earth and shells were the result of the accumulation of kitchen midden and refuse cast out from the dwellings. The mangrove forest gradually crept seawards with the advance of the land due to the constant deposit of detritus by the Selingsing River, Kelumpang River and the mangrove forest also gradually encircled the settlements. On the mounds one will find a scrubby jungle with large ketaoang tress, rattan and bamboo groves.

The size of the mounds varies. The biggest is Kelumpang 1 and 4 while the longest is Kelumpang 6 whose length is about 280 metres. We believe that originally there were 6

settlement mounds but due to the erosional processes, Kelumpang 7 and 8 have been separated.

The earliest archaeological research in Pulau Kelumpang area began nearly sixty years ago by I.H.N. Evans. Two months of excavations conducted in 1932 was the result of several short visits Evans made to Pulau Kelumpang starting in 1927. His visits to the area was prompted by B.W.F. Barnard's report to the Federated Malay States Museums in May 1924 about the discovery of ancient objects including skulls, stone, beads and blue glass near Kuala Selinsing.¹¹

Evans suggested in his report, that the archaeological finds from Tanjung Rawa belonged to a single early Indian settlement, 6th to 9th centuries A.D. even though these finds ranged from a cornelian Pallava seal, a gold ring, Chinese or Siamese celadon. The finds came from two big trenches, a 10 x 17 m and 1x1 m trenches. It is possible that excavations were conducted by using heavy equipment such as shovels to be able to dig such extensive trenches in two months.

In April 1955 G. de Sieveking with the help of the naval airmen of H.M.S. Simbang, Singapore conducted an excavation was carried out at the site previously excavated by Evans in 1932, and alongside Evan's cuttings.¹² According to his report, the excavation was carried out at the site previously excavated by Evans in 1932, and alongside Evan's cuttings.¹³ His aim was to determine the stratigraphy of the site and thus to establish the relationships of the artifacts found during Evan's excavations. From available photographs of the excavations, it seems that Sieveking too used shovels to dig. It is, however, not surprising because the mangrove environments which includes the ever presence of thousands of mosquitos, hundreds of horse flies, other insects and snakes tend to encourage the workers to use heavy tools to speed up the digging and to get away as fast as possible.

His excavation technique was responsible for the recovery of more than 3,000 glass and polished stone beads from an eighteen inches layer. On the evidence of the photographs the trenches he dug were quite extensive. In his opinion these beads were mixed with pottery of all periods much of which was coarse and modern undecorated red wares, presumably coming from the Malay village still in existence on this site at the time of the 1918-16 chain

¹¹ Ibid 80.

¹² G. de G. Sieveking, « Recent Archaeological Discoveries in Malaya, » JMBRAS, 1955 XXIX (1), 200-11.

¹³ Ibid 201.

survey of the islands in the Port Weld Estuary. It is very difficult to accept the idea in view of the evidence from latest archaeological survey and excavations at Kuala Selinsing.

Sieveking's observation of the stratigraphy appears to be unsatisfactory and too general. He found that between one and two feet below the surface the nature of the deposit changed from broken shells to a suspension of whole cardium shells in mangrove mud. The latest excavations do not provide enough stratigraphic evidence to warrant such an observation.

The second layer, according to Sieveking, was between two and four feet and in situ. From the archaeological finds, he made several conclusions. The decorated pottery was considered as having an Indian origin. At the depth between four and a half feet, he found several sherds which he considered as similar to the pottery found in the boat discovered in Pontian. His third layer was the layer between five and six feet below the surface and below the water level on the site and the content of the layer comprised large compact banks of cardium shells, where three dugout canoes were found with skeletal remains and burial goods such as beads and pottery.

His observation of the stratigraphy led him to suggest that three periods of occupation could be recognized. The first period was the proto-Malay or proto-Indonesian phase associated with stoneware, boat burials and opaque glass beads similar to those found in cist graves in Perak. The second period was associated with the decorated coarse stoneware which he associated with Indian wares and the Pontian type of pottery was associated with the final phase of the first period. The celadons were from the surface. Sieveking seems to believe that the artifacts from the first layer came from all periods as was stated earlier. He also believed that some of the beads were manufactured in Tanjung Rawa.¹⁴

Another scholar to comment on the finds from Kuala Selinsing was H. G. Quartitch-Wales.¹⁵ His opinion was that the site belonged to an Hinduized Indonesian settlers who lived there during the 6th to 12th centuries A.D. Alastair Lamb¹⁶ in his reconstruction of the evolution of various types of ports on the Malay Peninsula has suggested that Kuala Selinsing was a "subsidiary entrepot".

¹⁴ Ibid 205.

¹⁵ H. G. Quartitch-Wales, « Archaeological Researches on Ancient Indian Colonization in Malaya », JMBRAS, 18 (1), 1940, 54.

¹⁶ Alastair Lamb, « Early History in Malaysia, » Malaysia : A Survey. (ed.) Wang Gungwu, Kuala Lumpur, 1964, 99-112.

B.A.V. Peacock¹⁷ who has a lot to comment on the status of Kuala Selinsing believes that the chronology of the site is still obscure in view of the complication of the fluctuating water table and hoped that future interpretation must treat Sieveking's stratigraphic observation with caution.¹⁸ Both Peacock and Lamb see Kuala Selinsing as being contemporaneous with the earliest period of the establishment of the Indianised entrepots on the peninsula with which it was almost certainly linked commercially.¹⁹

Lamb who has classified Kuala Selinsing settlement as a "subsidiary entrepot" in relation to other trading centres stated that among its roles were collecting products of hinterland.²⁰ It has been said that tin ingots and resin have been found in Kuala Selinsing deposits together with beads of many types and materials. These beads have been used in the barter exchange and raw glass for making beads could have come from Bujang Valley.²¹ Peacock also stressed that the common earthenware of Kuala Selinsing have no affinities with the pottery associated with later prehistoric metal artifacts but closer to some mainland Southeast Asia traditions and opaque red beads found associated with the Kampong Sungai Lang drums are similar to those associated with the Kuala Selinsing boat burials.²²

The latest excavation in Kuala Selinsing was to try to make as many cuttings as possible on every mound found in the area within the limited time available. To ensure that small finds are not lost, every bucket of soil dug was sieved by water. The excavation team was supported by a geomorphological team from the Department of Geology Malaysia in Ipoh under the leadership of Kamaluddin Hassan. During the borings, pollen samples were collected. Both logistic and environmental considerations had to be very flexible.

The result of the excavation indicates that the stratigraphy of the sites is very complex. Our observations of the stratigraphy indicate that the site was continuously settled. The C-14 dates range from about 200 B.C. to about 10th century A.D.

It has been recognized that there are seven to eight periods of occupation of the site at Kelumpang 1, 2 and 5. But at Kelumpang 3, 4, 6 and 7, the stratigraphy suggests that there are four to five periods of occupation. The evidence from the archaeological finds within each layer, help to confirm the belief that at a certain period in the history of Kuala Selinsing

¹⁷ B.A.V. Peacock 1979, « The Later Prehistory... », 201.

¹⁸ G. de G. Sieveking 1955, "Recent Archaeological Discoveries...", 201-205.

¹⁹ B.A.V. Peacock, 1979, « The Later Prehistory... », 212.

²⁰ Alastair Lamb, 1964, « Early History ... », 108-109.

²¹ B.A.V. Peacock, 1979, « The Later Prehistory... » 211.

²² Ibid 211

settlement it had established trading contacts with the Indianised settlement in the Bujang Valley. The discovery of the glazed ware in Kelumpang 1, 4, 5 and 6 and especially the blue glazed Iran-Iraq, Middle-Eastern wares found at site 6 established the fact that the links with Bujang Valley took place between 6th/7th to the tenth centuries A.D. Therefore the link was established when the centre in the Bujang Valley was in the Kampung Mas area.²³

All the mounds of the Kuala Selinsing archaeological sites are scattered with cockle shells mainly the *Anadora granosa* specie. Amongst them are bones, broken pottery, stone artifacts, metal objects, and all kinds of beads. Excavations of the mounds unearthed more cockle shells, food remains and artifacts. Among the most numerous artifacts are the beads. On the basis of the material and shape it is possible to provide a classification of these beads. Most beads found in Kuala Selinsing were made from semi-precious gemstones. On the basis of the study made by Dr; Tan Teong Heng it is possible to establish the type of materials used to make majority of the beads found in Kuala Selinsing.²⁴ The beads which were analysed by Dr. Tan came from Kelumpang Site 1. All the thirteen pieces of beads analysed have been classified as gem artifacts which in the past have been classified as glass by certain scholars. Dr. Tan identified themas beyl, sodalite, moldavite, plasma, jasper, aventurine, quartz cats' eye and analicima.²⁵ Most of the beads found during the excavations as well as chance finds on all the "mounds" in Pulau Kelumpang can be placed into the gemstone types listed by Dr. Tan. It is, therefore, true to say that gemstone beads are the majority. The beads can be found almost anywhere on any of the mounds and at any depth, on surface right down to about 2.8 metres depth.

The beads had been cut, ground and polished and the lapidary work was rather crude and archaic showing designing flaws. The origin of these gemstone beads was not local since the rock types found in the Malay Peninsula do not contain such gems materials. Jasper is common in Malasia but jasperised plant fossils have never been found. The faceted beryl found in Pulau Kelumpang sites differ from that beryl present in pegmatites from Kedah Peak, which has greenish blue colorations. Beryl, plasma, aventurine and soda lite had been mined for centuries in India particularly Mysore, Coimbatore, Rajasthan and Kashmir-Iran and Iraq

²³ NikHassan Shuhaimi Nik Abd. Rahman and Othman Yatim, *Antiquities of Bujang Valley*, Kuala Lumpur.

²⁴ Tan Teong Hing and Abdul Rahim Hj. Shamsuddin, "Gem and Rock Artifacts at Pulau Kelumpang, Perak," *Jurnal Arkeologi Malaysia*, 3, 1990, 15-24.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

are well known for producing soda lite and aventurine. The Chinese had for ages used plasma and aventurine as jade substitute.²⁶

The excavations also unearthed other types of gemstone beads such as agate, carnelian, and crystal. Although they are not as many as other types of gemstone beads mentioned earlier, their occurrence are quite frequent during the excavations. The result of the final analysis if beads of Kuala Selinsing will definitely show both the horizontal and vertical distributions using the three dimensional measurements recorded during the excavations.

In addition to the type of materials used, it is also possible to generalize the common shape of the beads, the form and habit clearance, hardness (Moh's scale) specific gravity, opacity, colour, refractive index, optical character, and inclusion.²⁷ Beads of gemstone types are normally shaped according to the original crystal system shape. For beryl, they are in the hexagonal shape and the sodalite analicime and moldavite will retain the cubic shape, while plasma, jasper aventurine and quartz cat's eye will have the trigonal form. The crystal system can be observed using the hand lens. Thus beryl was shaped into hexagonal spindle and hexagonal bolt; sodalite medalite, plasm, a jasper, aventurine, quartz cat's eye and analcime can be shaped into spheroidal or cylindrical forms. Various shaes of brown, yellow, green, blue and black are the colours of the gemstone beads. The differences in colour have been attributed to the presence of trace elements or mussels.²⁸

The beads were drilled with axial string hole. Generally the string holes are coarsely drilled and large with unequal size apertures at both ends of the beads. And few of the finished beads have string holes that could not be penetrated because the holes from the two ends of the beads do not meet. This is especially true in the cases of the large gemstone beads made from beryl and agate.

Beads made from fish bones have been recovered from various layers at all the sites. The presence of hole in the fish bone is the indication that bone was used as bead. Various sizes of fish bone beads have been found.

Shell beads are quite common. These comprise various forms such as spherical, discs and lozenges. In one trench at Kelumpang 1, there was a single find of 102 shells of Cypraea moneta each with top removed for threading on a string. These could be the money cowrie

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

mentioned by Evans.²⁹ The spherical and lozenges types of shell beads were probably made from giant clams, the Tridacnidae: *Tridacna squamosa*. While the discs type could have been made from Patellidae: *Celena testudinaria*.

Among the items used for ornaments were bracelets. They were cut from the spire of *Trochus nilotifus* shells. A number of them were discovered during the process of excavations. Unfinished bracelets from shells were also found. A few of the bracelets were probably made from *Tridacna Squamosa* as mentioned by Evans.³⁰ Several spoons made from shells of the *Crassostrea gigas* were also found. They were in a rather flaky condition. The spoons were found in Kelumpang 1 and 6. It is possible that they were present at other sites too because they were basically considered as common artifacts to Kuala Selinsing.

Artifacts made from metal have been recovered from various layers of the Kuala Selinsing settlement. Among them are the ear-pendants made from tin. They can be compared to those found by Evans which he illustrates in his report.³¹ Some of them were found in association with burials. Such examples came from burials excavated at Kelumpang 1 and 5.

Tin rings were also recovered during the excavations. It is possible that some of them were made from lead as suggested by Evans in his analysis of his tin objects from Tanjong Rawa.³² Tests have to be done before it is possible to identify the material conclusively.

A few bronze objects were found. The identification of the type of the objects has not been possible because they are badly corroded. The presence of patina tells us the type of material used for making those objects. They too were recovered from various layers of the Kuala Selinsing site. One object, possibly a knife was found on the surface at Kelumpang 6. It is uncertain whether it belonged to the last period of the settlement on Kelumpang 6. But it was found in association with pottery sherds which, to my observation, belonged to the last period of the settlement. Iron slags have also been found.

Objects in horn, bone and ivory have been found also in the course of excavations. The most remarkable is an object made from a deer's horn. It appears to be a kind of handle for a knife. But it is an unfinished work. It came from Kelumpang 6. Several other objects in several shapes and forms have been found. Majority of them appear to be points and some of

²⁹ I. H. N. Evans, 1932, « Excavations at Tanjong Rawa... »

³⁰ I. H. N. Evans, « On Ancient Remains from Kuala Selinsing, Perak, » JFMSM, xii (5), 111-119.

³¹ I. H. N. Evans, 1932 « Excavations at Tanjong Rawa... », 105 OI., XXXIV.

³² Tan Teong Hing and Abdul Rahim Haji Shamsuddin, 1990, « Gem and Rock... », 19.

them could be identified as hairpins. The assumption is based on the locations of the objects when found. A few of them were found in association with burials. Normally they were found located near the head of human remains. They were in different sizes and shapes.

Various shapes and sizes of rocks have also been found. They must be classified as artifacts in view of the fact that they were specially brought to the settlement. Rocks are not natural to the composition of the soil from the site. According to a preliminary analysis,³³ most of them have characteristics of sedimentary rocks and on the basis of the mineralogy and texture they resemble the sedimentary rocks of the Semanggol Formation in Perak which consists of a sequence of fan-channel conglomerate, thick turbidite sandstone, thin turbidite sandstone inter-bedded with mudstone, thick black mudstone, red cherty mudstone, argillaceous chert and chert.³⁴ These outcrops are in great abundance in an area north of Taiping which is to the east of Pulau Kelumpang. Another provenance of the rock artifacts could be the Bujang Valley.

The most common artifacts of stone are the slab stone bearing on one side numerous deep and grounded grooves running more or less parallel. The function of the stone has been suggested by Evans as grinding stone for shell bracelets. Large number of sharpening stones of various artifacts is also common.

It is quite common to find stone artifacts with burials. They are usually unshaped. The real function of these stone may be attributed to the burial custom. Normally, the stones were found in the first and second level of burial and they have been laid beside human remains or over the middle part of the remains.

Several types of earthen pottery sherds have been recovered from all the mounds of Pulau Kelumpang. It is impossible to discuss in detail statistically and stratigraphically their distributions and types in this paper. Detailed analysis is still in progress. Altogether four whole pots were recovered during the excavations. Two came from Kelumpang I; one each came from Kelumpang 2, 3 and 5. Quite a number of the broken pots can be reconstructed. Attempts to reconstruct them will be made. The two pots from Kelumpang I, and one each from Kelumpang 3 and 5 were obtained from burials.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ I. H. N. Evans, 1932, « Excavation at Tanjong Rawa... », 99-102.

At the moment, my general comment about the earth wares from Kuala Selinsing is that the types of pottery sherds described by Evans³⁵ have been found in the excavations. A few pieces with decorations different from those mentioned by Evans have also been found.

The patterns on the various earthen wares are in many forms. Among the prominent patterns is the chevron wave and scrolled wave designs. There are those with bound-paddle decorations in the form of cord-mark, net-pattern, met-mark, basket-mark and shell-mark. Carved-paddle decorations are in the form of rib-mark, basket-mark, crisscross, mat-mark, linear-lines with geometric design, concentric circles, and wavy lines with linear lines. Grooves were found on the upper parts of the wares, particularly on the necks or rims. Incised markings were quite common too. The incised lines are of linear lines, parallel lines and so on. The incisions are in the form of dots, points, series of lines, geometric designs such as circles and chevrons.

It is uncertain whether the wares were wheel-made. But the majority of the sherds are undecorated types. The complete pots appear to be very coarse. The colour range from buff to orange in various shades of brown. Various forms of lids, spouts, necks and bases found in Kuala Selinsing site will help in determination the types and forms of the pottery from Kuala Selinsing. Majority of the wares are of the heavy types indicating that they were made for water storage. Once the analysis of the earthenware of Kuala Selinsing is completed, it is possible to see the relationships between Kuala Selinsing and the Bujang Valley in the north.

Imported glazed wares are very rare indeed at the Kuala Selinsing site. The few pieces of sherds found in the excavations indicate that they belonged to periods not later than the tenth century A.D. This assumption is based specifically on the dark green glazed sherds found at Kelumpang 6. Presumably, this type originated from the Middle East, Persia or Iraq.³⁶ The sherds have a very fine white paste. A very thick blue shining glaze covers both the inner and outer parts. Similar type of sherds has been found in Sungai Mas (Bujang Valley and Takuapa, Ko Kho Island). Other pieces of sherds have grey glaze which appear to be of the Yueh type of stonewares. Perhaps this observation would become clearer if it is possible to compare the type of bases for this type of ceramic wares. None of the celadon type of ceramics mentioned by Evans³⁷ have been found in our excavations.

³⁵ Nik Hassan Shuhaimi Nik Abd Rahman and Othman Yatim, 1990, *Antiquities of Bujang Valley*.

³⁶ I. H. N. Evans, 1932, « Excavation at Tanjong Rawa... », 102-103.

³⁷ G. W. H. Davidson, « Shell Remains from Protohistoric Settlement at Pulau Kelumpang, Perak », *Jurnal Arkeologi Malaysia*, 3, 1990, 25-39.

Some of the shells obtained during the 1988 and 1989 excavations have been examined by Dr. G.W.H. Davison from the Department of Zoology, University Kebangsaan Malaysia and also Mrs. Solene Morris from the British Museum.³⁸ There are altogether 25 identifiable species. The commonest is the cockle *Anadora granosa*. The bivalves *Anadora granosa* is the commonest food species. Other species such as *Placuna placenta*, *Meretrix*, *Venus* and *Geloina* were eaten also but less often. A few more bivalves and gastropods were presumably eaten from time to time. These molluscs were obtained from the mangrove, muddy shores and some from the deeper, clearer water. The thick-shelled gastropods used in the making of ornaments were probably gathered from far places such as Pangkor and Sembilan Island, 65-90 kilometres distant which have clean water with rocky substratum.³⁹

The few small gastropods which were found occasionally were picked for their pretty appearance and later discarded. Species such as *Ellobium*, *Cassidule* and *Nassarius* may have made their way to the habitation sites. The small incised shells are of the mangrove inhabiting species while the food species came from the open mud flats and shallow water. It has been suggested by Davison⁴⁰ that the mangrove species contributed little to the people's diet. This is because they were not found in the excavations. They are the *Telescopium telescopium*, *Nerita* species and mangrove encrusting oysters and too are the *Cerethid* and *Terebralin* species which are eaten by the coastal people today.⁴¹

Three of the species, *Tridara squamose*, *Conus* species and *Nautilus pompilius*, mentioned by Evans⁴² were yet to be found in the excavations. This has been attributed to the fact that they were picked only for making ornaments. Even Evans managed to find only a few, in spite of his large excavation trenches.

Perhaps the most interesting find recovered from the excavations came from the lowest level. These earliest levels contained archaeological record which had been dropped from the pile welling into the tidal shallows of the swamps and which is now lying below the existing water level. The thick waterlogged layers of mud had helped towards the preservation of the archaeological records. These layers had cut off the available oxygen supply and thereby preventing the growth of destructive micro-organisms which would have destructed the record. Shells, bones, wood and other organic materials have been well preserved.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ I.H.N. Evans, 1932, « Excavation at Tanjong Rawa... ».

⁴² Ibid., 48

Excavations of these waterlogged layers in trenches at Kelumpang 1, 2 and 5 unearthed coconut shells, bottle gourd, segments of split, and sticks of the burnt cut ends of kindling used to feed cooking fire. Also recovered was the areca nut. The meat of this areca nut, when mixed with betel leaf and lime is known to have produced a mild narcotic. It is not surprising to find the teeth of two adults buried in Kelumpang stained by chewing "betel". This habit has been common among the indigenous peoples throughout Southeast Asia.

Working in these waterlogged layers, the excavators also unearthed sections of adze sewn planks, the stumps of house posts and fragments from what appears to have been the hull of a dog out canoe. Another interesting find was a perfectly preserved mat presumably made from bamboo. Pieces of matting from Pandanus leaf have also been found. Some of them were found impressed on woods. The finds came from Kelumpang 2, 5 and 6. Presumably similar finds could have been found if the excavation of other mounds has reached similar levels.

Thick lenses of brownish peat have been found sandwiched between layers of waterlogged mud. Within this compacted organic material were bones of various types of animals and hundreds of rice husks. If botanical analysis confirms this preliminary observation, then these peaty layers may prove to contain the earliest physical evidence of rice so far found in the Malay Peninsula for the later prehistoric period. On Kelumpang 6, the evidence of rice husks therefore, that at Kelumpang 5, the excavators' unearthed a very exciting artifact, a wood rice mortar for pounding rice. The outer part of the mortar is still in very good condition. It was hollowed out section of a tree trunk.

The excavations have also unearthed eleven burials. But none so far have been found in canoes. The burials came from three levels. The youngest burials came from depth of about 40 to 50 cms. From the surface; the second level burial was at the depth of 80 cm and the third level burial came from the depth of about 160 cms. Five of these burials were found in Kelumpang 1, four came from Kelumpang 5 and one each from Kelumpang 3 and 4. Those from Kelumpang 3 and 4 were underwater.

Skeletons from the top level burials were much damaged in contrast to those in the lower levels. All the skeletons appear to be lying on their backs, the heads facing upwards; and seemingly lying in straight position. All the remains from Kelumpang 1 were buried in the north-east orientation, but the remains from other mounds were not buried in that orientation. Remains from burials in Kelumpang 3 and 4 were in the West-East orientation

while those in Kelumpang 2 were in the East-West and North-earth orientations. Normally, human remains were buried with burial goods comprising beads, pottery, stone ornaments and food. The number of artifacts associated with the burials vary from one burial to another. The child burial in Kelumpang 1 had two pots placed at the head. One of them appears to be food container and the other was a water jug. The size of the pots also varies from one burial to another. Normally the pots were placed at the head. But sometimes broken pottery were scattered over the body. Beads were found scattered over the body. Stone artifacts were placed at the side or on top. The remains were buried in shallow graves.

The result of the archaeological research in Kuala Selinsing when final analysis is completed will be able to furnish more concrete data for the study of the later prehistoric settlements and ports. These data will be able to trace both the internal and external development of the society using the comparative approach. On the basis of the preliminary observations it appears that the maritime people of Kuala Selinsing were not Hindu as had been suggested by Evans.⁴³ The evidence for the Hinduised society were the Pallava seal and the gold ring with Vishnu on Garuda. But these were not strong enough to suggest that the people were the followers of Hindu religion. All other evidence, especially the burial practice point to animism as the main belief. Presumably the Pallava seal and the ring denote the manifestation of chieftainship. Even though the settlement was in contact with the Indianised people in the Bujang Valley in the 6th century, the people of Kuala Selinsing were still in the pre-Indianised stage.

It is also apparent that the settlement did not come to violent end. This assumption is based on the fact that the dead were properly buried even during the latest phase. Economic and geographical factors must have influenced the people to move to another area.

From the C-14 dates available so far from Kelumpang I it is possible to suggest that the settlement was settled between 20 B.C. to the 10th centuries A.D. The people were seafarers on the evidence of the food remains comprising several types of deep sea fish and also the maritime shells. Contact with the inland, rice-growing people also took place. Trade and fishing were two dominant economic activities. The final observation is about the cultural continuity. The first settlers on the Kelumpang Island were metal using people and must have been in the same stage of the cultural development as the makers of the cist graves in Changkat Menteri and other areas in Perak and most probably they were in contact with each

⁴³ See Paul Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese*, Kuala Lumpur, 1961.

other. The presence of more than 50 prehistoric archaeological sites in Perak covering the periods from the Upper Palaeolithic to the later prehistoric stage definitely have something to show about the process of evolution, and development of society and culture in Perak which can be considered as being continuously changing as the result of external forces.

The studies of foreign literary sources, Greek (Ptolemy) Indian, Chinese and Persian-Arab have provided names of several ancient trading ports and polities in Malaysia.⁴⁴ However, information they have provided are sketchy and contain vague allusions. It is possible, though to extract information on the types of trade commodities and also the traders involved in maritime trade; the way of life of the people and the administrative hierarchy.

From the mid-second century work of Ptolemy, the *Geographike Hysteresis*, appears names of settlements and trading centres in the golden Khersonese (the Malay Peninsula) such as Tokala, Kole and Sabara (Sabana).⁴⁵ Indian literary sources, comprising Hindu and Buddhist literature; initially did not record with factual exactitude about the lands the Indian traders visited beyond the Bay of Bengal. Nevertheless, by the time of the Jatakas, *Brhatkatha*, *Arthashastra* and *Milinda-panha*, Indian conceptions of the geography of Southeast Asia begun to crystallize.⁴⁶ The incidental allusions provided by these sources indicate that Indian sailors visited the shores of Malaysia and that merchants of Malaysia also visited India. One of the Jataka texts relates that the voyage from Bharukaccha to Suvarnabhumi was undertaken in response to visits from the merchants of the latter country.

Scholars do not agree on the exact locations of Suvarnabhumi or other fabulous places such as Suvarnadvipa (the island of Gold), Karparadvipa (the camphor Island), Narikaladvipa (the coconut Island), and Takola (the Cardamon Land), which Indian sailors visited. We can assume though that both Suvarnabhumi and Suvarnadvipa incorporate Malaysia. This assumption is based on the fact that Kataha, which scholars regard as the name of an ancient Malay kingdom and port in Kedah was mentioned in *Kathasaritsagara* as a place in or near Suvarnadvipa.⁴⁷

Our belief in the antiquity of the commercial initiative of these people has been highlighted by Miller⁴⁸ in his reconstruction of their trading voyages across the Indian Ocean

⁴⁴ Ibid, 144-147 ; 151-153.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 184

⁴⁶ Ibid., 184

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Paul Wheatley, « The Golden Khersonese... » 129.

to East Africa. This is based on a passage in Pliny's book, *Natural History*.⁴⁹ These traders bartered their products, resin, cowrie shells, camphor and mollusks of several species. Chien Han Shu claims that the strange products of Southeast Asia were exchanged for Chinese gold and silk.

Impetus for the establishment of trading polities was not necessarily provided by foreign merchants and foreign colonists. The archaeological excavation at Pulau Kelumpang helps to locate cultural strata of human occupation from 2nd century B.C. to 10th century A.D. without any evidence of Indianisation process. It seems that the emergence of trading polities was a natural course of development as a result of long experience in intra-regional trade during prehistoric times.

⁴⁹ Leong Sau Heng, « Collecting Centres, Feeder Points and Entrepots in the Malay Peninsula C 1000 B.C. – A.D. 1400, in the *Southeast Asian Port and Polity*, (eds.) J. Kathirithamby Wells and John Villiers, Singapore, 1990, 17-39.