

## **Collectors, classifiers and researchers of the Malay World:**

How individuals and institutions in Britain in the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries collected, arranged and organised libraries, archives and museums and how that impacts on today's researchers

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### **Introduction**

Those UK libraries and archives holding major collections from and about the Malay world are already well-known to scholars and students working in the field and can be easily sourced from directories and catalogues such as Rickleffs, M.C. and Voorhoeve, P., *Indonesian manuscripts in Great Britain: a catalogue of manuscripts in Indonesian languages in British public collections* (Oxford, 1977).

Libraries and archives holding major collections from and about the Malay world include:

The School of Oriental & African Studies Library  
The Brynmor Jones Library, University of Hull  
The British Library, including the India Office Library & Records  
and the Asian and North African Language Collections  
The Royal Asiatic Society Library  
The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford  
Cambridge University Library  
The National Archives (the Public Record Office)  
The Wellcome Library for the History and Understanding of Medicine

This paper is not about these well-known libraries and archives but is about more specialist libraries, archives and museums, mostly scientific and technical institutions, that hold material on the Malay world. Even though such material might only form a small part of each institution's overall collection, they are important sources of, often neglected, information on the region.

Only the Wellcome Library for the History and Understanding of Medicine, because of its important Malay/Indonesia manuscript collections, is generally known to Malay scholars, although its rich holdings of more "scientific" collections are perhaps less-well used and the points raised in this paper about scientific collections applies as much to the Wellcome Library as to the many other scientific and technical institutions.

This paper will look at several issues relating to scientific and specialist collections relating to the Malay World and how this can affect accessing the collections.

Perceptions of what is meant by the term "scientific" can often turn the researcher in the arts and humanities away from rich resources because they may, mistakenly, decide that "scientific" records and documentation is either irrelevant or only understood by the person working in a particular area of science.

Earlier British connections with the Malay World were through the East India Company – this has led documentation on the Malay World in British holdings often being subsumed or merged, and in effect, often lost, in the large Indian and South Asian collections in the UK.

The paper will look at the terminology used in indexing and filing and how the researcher, whether using card or online catalogues, needs to be aware of changes in names and terminology. The paper will also note the benefits – but also the challenges – brought about by developments in information technology which have allowed catalogues to be searched remotely – both the online catalogues of individual institutions and simultaneous searching of many institutions' catalogues by online union catalogues and hubs.

Many of these issues affect all libraries, archives and museums in the UK, not just those scientific institutions to be examined in this paper. However the issue of the Malay World and its connections to the world of the East India Company, and the variations in place names may be more acute in scientific institutions where geographical provenance and historical details might be very much secondary to the scientific categorisation and classification of the collections.

### **Defining the Malay world**

Linguistically, the Malay world could be limited to where Bahasa Melayu is spoken - Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam; perhaps Patani and parts of Sumatra. Or it could be defined to cover a much wider area to include Madagascar and Formosa. SOAS Library classifies Malagasy, the language of Madagascar, as a Malay language and arranges it in the Southeast Asia section of the Library, not the African section.

Island or Maritime Southeast Asia is one definition. The term “Malay Archipelago”, or the even earlier term “Indian Archipelago”, corresponds to Maritime Southeast Asia. The term “Indian Archipelago” and “East Indies” hints at connections with India, and in the context of UK collections East India and the East India Company are very much associated with the first centuries of British contact with the Malay World. This has had repercussions on establishing the provenance, and also on indexing and cataloguing material from the Malay World – East Indian/Malay(sian) sometimes being considered a sub-category of Indian and so subsumed into Indian collections.

As this paper is looking at scientific institutions perhaps the term “Malesia” (formerly, and rather confusingly, “Malaysia”) used in botany and zoology would be appropriate. *Flora Malesiana* defines Malesia as “Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Singapore and Brunei Darussalam”<sup>1</sup> while *Fauna Malesia* defines it as “that part of Southeast Asia stretching from the Isthmus of Kra (Thailand) to the Solomon Islands”.<sup>2</sup>

These definitions correspond closely to that of the Malay Archipelago. This paper will examine material collected from or about the Malay Archipelago –whether in manuscript or printed text ; or as photographic, illustrated or artistic representation; or as an artefact or specimen – that came to be deposited and catalogued in an institution in the UK.

What in the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was referred to as the Malay Archipelago and more recently as Island or Maritime Southeast Asia is the definition that will be used when discussing the “Malay World”. It corresponds to present day Malaysia, Patani in Southern Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, the Philippines, Brunei Darussalam, Timor Leste and the island of New Guinea.

How someone views or perceives the world will also affect how they arrange and classify it. Perhaps we tend to find only what we are looking for. Different perceptions of the Malay World (and perceptions change not only between disciplines but also over time) mean that to find material that is of interest to us we might have entered the mind of a nineteenth century botanist or an eighteenth century navigator. How they classified and arranged material might not be how we would and so, unless we perceive the world as they did, information will remain hidden.

### **The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; the Natural History Museum and the National Maritime Museum**

In order to alert the researcher interested in the Malay World to the riches of UK scientific holdings – but also the particular challenges facing the arts and humanities researcher wanting to access scientific holdings - this paper looks in more detail at three UK scientific/specialist institutions: the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; the Natural History Museum and the National Maritime Museum. This is partly because I am more familiar with the holdings at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and the Natural History Museum and because the National Maritime Museum has not only made progress with its online catalogues but has also been involved in digitising its collections.

All three institutions have major holdings relating to the Malay World. The earliest contacts between Britain and the Malay World were to do with trade – and more particularly trade in plants and plant products, especially spices. Trade in plants – both cultivated and non-timber forest products – within the region and beyond occurred before European arrival in the region<sup>3</sup>, and continued throughout the colonial period. The majority of records relating to trade in the Malay Archipelago held in UK collections will relate to this British trade in the region rather than to the more localised trade.

Although the East India Office Records at the British Library are an important record of the early contact between Britain and the Malay World, the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and the Natural History Museum have a large record of documentation on plants and plant products and much else as well; and the National Maritime Museum provides a major source of documentation on how and who transported this trade from the ports throughout the Malay Archipelago, particularly the private papers and logs of seamen, as opposed to the official East India Company records.

Although the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew is associated with tropical botany and the Natural History Museum with temperate botany, the relationship is far more complex and the two institutions collections have a somewhat complicated shared history.

When undertaking research it is useful to have some background information to the institutions a researcher will be consulting. Over time institutions have changed, as do their holdings; collections have been dispersed. Institutional websites often give some background historical information and most have published histories of the institution.

### **The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew**

<http://www.rbgekew.org.uk>

The Library and Archives of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew contain 4,000 periodicals (1,650 of them current), approximately 150,000 monographs, 150,000 pamphlets, nearly 200,00 illustrations and over 250,000 letters.

The Archives is the approved Place of Deposit, under the Public Records Act, for the Royal Botanic Gardens' own files that record plant exploration, botanical research and garden development over more than 150 years. In addition there are letters of botanists such as Sir Joseph Banks, Sir William Hooker and Sir Joseph Hooker as well as those with direct Malayan connections such as H. N. Ridley, I. H. Burkill and R. E. Holttum.

The Main Library at Kew supports the work of the Herbarium where more than 7 million dried plant specimens, that document the identity of plants and fungi, are housed. The Herbarium has begun to digitise its collections to make them more widely available. [http://www.rbgekew.org.uk/data/herb\\_digitisation.html](http://www.rbgekew.org.uk/data/herb_digitisation.html) Herbarium specimens are dried and pressed plants stuck onto a sheet of cartridge or other archival quality paper with a label attached in the bottom right hand corner to indicate provenance, collector, number and identity. Additional information, such as local uses and vernacular, is also often included in the label information. So information on a herbarium specimen, perhaps seen as only the preserve of a taxonomist, can be of use to a wider audience of researchers.

The Herbarium at Kew holds plant specimens originally part of the Herbarium of the East India Company<sup>4</sup> (which includes plants collected by its officers in the Malay Archipelago), including the Wallich Herbarium that passed from the E.I.C. to the Linnean Society and was then presented to Kew in 1913/14. Although Wallich is primarily associated with Indian plants and was Superintendent of the East India Company Garden at Calcutta from 1815-1846, he visited the Straits Settlements in 1822 and collected plants.<sup>5</sup>

Nineteenth century material, both published and archival, reflects British imperial concerns so that the collections relating to Southeast Asia are particularly strong on the Malay peninsula, including Singapore, although less comprehensive on Borneo. Long-standing ties with Buitenzorg/Bogor have resulted in important holdings on the Netherlands East Indies/Indonesia. The Archives holds a large collection of miscellaneous reports for India, Malaya and Borneo. These reports are bound volumes of correspondence, newspaper and journal articles, government reports, trade statistics and other items of interest to a range of researchers.

Contact between Kew and British and other European colonies in Southeast Asia generated a large amount of administrative but also technical and scientific correspondence and reports.

Botanical illustrations, both original and published, used to help identify specimens, form the bulk of the prints and drawings collections. Illustrations in published works can be accessed through indexes such as *Index Londinensis* (Oxford, 1929-1941).

The Library at Kew has some noteworthy collections of original drawings: William Roxburgh's *Icones Roxburghianae, or drawings of Indian plants* (1790-1812?) – the 2,500 watercolours include species found in the Malay Archipelago. This brings up the point to be made that material relating to the Malay Archipelago is sometimes subsumed into Indian collections.

Other material of interest to historians include collections of guides, plant-lists and nineteenth century photographs of botanic gardens, including Singapore, Penang and Buitenzorg/Bogor.

There is a separate Economic Botany Library, holding publications on economic botany, medicinal plants and ethnobotany, which supports the research of the Economic Botany Collections at Kew. These collections “illustrate the extent of human use of plants around the world. The huge variety of objects ranges from artefacts made from plants to raw plant materials, including a large collection of wood samples. Uses range from food, medicine and utensils, to social activities and clothing, while the raw materials themselves range from seeds to dried leaves and picked fruit.”<sup>6</sup>

### **The Natural History Museum**

<http://www.nhm.ac.uk>

Many of the issues facing the researcher using the collections at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew also apply to searching, accessing and consulting the collections at the Natural History Museum. Not only the Museum's Library & Archives, but plant and animal specimens, and their accompanying documentation offers the researcher a wealth of information beyond the strictly botanical or zoological.

Plants and plant products were the main items traded between the Malay World, Britain and also with India and other parts of the British Empire, but animals and minerals were also significant. Zoologists as much as botanists would have recorded the world beyond their narrow zoological interest and the Natural History Museum has important holdings of zoologists who were involved in the Malay World, Alfred Russel Wallace being the most well known<sup>7</sup>.

Although the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew is associated with tropical botany – including the Malay Archipelago – and the Natural History Museum more with the temperate and Mediterranean botanical regions of the world, the Museum has large collections of plants, particularly from before the mid-nineteenth century, relating to the Malay World.

One of the most significant collections at the Natural History Museum is that relating to Sir Joseph Banks (1743-1820). He was benefactor, and in effect, the Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew from 1773.<sup>8</sup> Although Banks is most commonly associated with Captain James Cook's *Endeavour* voyage to the Pacific and Australia, the expedition stayed in Batavia from October to December 1770 and plants were collected, notes taken and illustrations made.<sup>9</sup> After Bank's death Kew went into decline<sup>10</sup> and parts of Kew's collections, including Banks' herbarium and library,

ended up at the British Museum, later the Natural History Museum. Any researcher interested in botany, the history of botany and ethnobotany in the Malay World in the period before the mid-nineteenth century needs to consult the collections at the Natural History Museum and not just those at Kew.

The Natural History Museum has the largest collection of natural history illustrations (of animals, plants, minerals and fossils) in the world and has started to digitise some of these nearly half a million work of art.

<http://www.nhm.ac.uk/art/>

The collections of illustrations include significant holdings relating to the Malay Archipelago including F.W. Burbidge's (1847-1905) plates and original sketches *Made in Borneo, of Orchids, Pitcher-plants, &c.*; L. A. Deschamps' (1765-1842) *Water-colour sketches of Javan scenery, plants and animals* and *Plates of Javan plants (1794-1798)*; and H.O. Forbes' ((1851-1932) *Original drawings of Sumatran and Javan plants*.<sup>11</sup>

The cases of the Wallich's and Banks' collections and documentation raises two issues for researchers. Firstly, institutions cease to exist, or go into decline, and collections (whether libraries, archives or herbaria) are dispersed to other institutions. Secondly, a collection may be primarily seen as dealing with a geographical area other than the Malay World, but will often include material relating to the Malay Archipelago – East India Company material on the Malay World deposited in the UK is often “lost” in collections that are considered “Indian”. Certain individuals are more closely associated with a certain region, such as Sir Joseph Banks is with Australia and the Pacific, and the Malaysian/Indonesian connections often ignored.

### **The National Maritime Museum**

<http://www.nmm.ac.uk>

The Caird Library at the National Maritime Museum holds public records relating to the administration of the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy, shipping company records, and personal papers comprising journals, diaries and letters, including those relating to the Malay Archipelago. Although the India Office collections at the British Library are the obvious referral point for the East India Company records and this is where the official Company logbooks are held, the National Maritime Museum's collection includes 70 logbooks that were the property of the writer, usually the mate, of East India ships. The National Maritime Museum is a major repository of topographic maps, town plans and most particularly hydrographic/naval charts relating to Southeast Asia. The Library holds a large collection of Admiralty publications, including pilots [such as *China Sea pilot: vol 1 comprising the western shore of the China Sea from Tanjong Penawar, on the eastern side of Johore, to Fokai Point, Bias Bay; the Anamba Islands and Hainan Island; also the islands and banks bordering the main route from Singapore Strait to Hong Kong* (London, 1938); *Eastern Archipelago pilot: vol 2 comprising the south-eastern end of Sumatra, Sunda Strait, Java, islands eastward of Java, southern and eastern coasts of Borneo, Macassar Strait, Celebes, and the western part of the Sula Islands* (London 1935) and *Eastern Archipelago pilot : vol 1 comprising the Philippine Islands (with the exception of the western coasts of Luzon and Palawan), Sulu Sea, Sulu Archipelago, and the north-east coast of Borneo* (London, 1935)] which give detailed descriptions of sea lanes, ports, navigation hazards, meteorological conditions, &c and provide

other information on ports and surrounding land, as well as on navigation, concerning the Malay World.

The Museum's collections include not only textual material in its library and archives, but also prints, drawings and photographs and objects related to seafaring, navigation, astronomy and measuring time.

The National Maritime Museum's prints and drawings collection comprises more than 60,000 items. Over 30,000 of these are drawings, watercolours and sketchbook sheets, ranging from works by the early Dutch marine painters in the 17th century to works by British marine painters of the 18th - 20th centuries, naval officers and the official artists of the Second World War who painted and drew all aspects of their experiences. While ships and the sea are the dominant theme in the form of ship portraits and battles, also included are beach scenes, views of foreign places encountered during travel and service, as well as pure seascapes.

The Museum's collections contain more than 100,000 sea charts and maps dating from the medieval period to the present day. They document the results of exploration and discovery and show how techniques of navigation and surveying developed. Many were owned by naval officers and politicians and were used to plan and record the events which have become maritime history.

<http://www.nmm.ac.uk/collections/>

When using the Museum's online catalogue for the library and manuscripts holdings it is interesting to note that the term "Indonesia" retrieves 20 records; whereas "East Indies" retrieves 434 records and "Singapore" 101 records; "Penang" brings up 20 records; "Prince of Wales Island" 4 records; "Batavia" 30 records, "Jakarta" only 1 record. This issue of search terms is discussed in more detail below.

The researcher should be aware that online records are not necessarily edited when converted from the card catalogue and archaic spellings and names are often still the only way to access holdings.

### **Science is not just for scientists**

Scientific, technical and specialist institutions hold a lot more material than just purely scientific items or material just related to their speciality. Just as the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and the Natural History Museum are not just for botanists, the Royal Geographical Society is not just for geographers and explorers and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine not just for doctors specialising in tropical medicine. Science impacts on the wider world so, for example, a botanical collection can be of interest not just to a taxonomist but also to an ethno-botanist, and also to an anthropologist and historian. The scholar in the arts and humanities – whether the history, language, linguistics, anthropology and other subjects of the Malay World - will also find much of interest beyond just the purely scientific and technical subjects in the many scientific, technical and specialist institutions in the UK

Although many scientific institutions will hold publications of a purely technical nature, they will hold items of a more cross-disciplinary nature of interest to a wider audience such as works on public health, traditional medicine, economic and ethno-botany, forestry; trade, commerce and industry. Many of the technical and scientific

institutions to be examined have rich archives – official and private letters and diaries; reports, papers, logbooks, minutes of meetings and committees; all of which have a remit beyond the purely scientific or technical. They are also important sources of maps, illustrations and photographs.

Science and those institutions defined as scientific involved a much broader concept of knowledge in the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. There was not the strict delineation between science and the arts & humanities found today. A man (and it was almost exclusively a man) of science had a broader range of interests than today's specialist, partly because the sum total of knowledge was smaller. In the relaxed pace of the past, an individual probably also had more time to note and record the wider world.

An example of the use of a supposedly technical work being of use to a wider audience is I. H. Burkill's *A dictionary of the economic products of the Malay Peninsula* (1935). This work is still consulted by those interested in botany, agriculture, forestry and economic botany of Malaysia but is often ignored by those with no interest in botany, being seen as too scientific and technical. But the work contains a much wider range of information than purely botanical. Burkill, in describing plants, refers to Malay names (so the work is of interest to the linguist); the history of plants and products and how they were traded (so of interest to the economic historian) and the social, medicinal and religious use of plants and plant products (so of interest to the anthropologist).

An example of the range of information include in Burkill's dictionary is his entry on *Dryobalaops aromatica* (Camphor/pokok kapur). As well as giving information on the tree and the collecting of the camphor resin, he also refers to the magic of camphor-collecting and the "disguising of the language by distorting it with the intention of deceiving guardian spirits", <sup>12</sup>as well as citing earlier sources of information.

The Indonesian equivalent to Burkill's work is K. Heyne's work on the useful plants of the Netherlands East Indies/Indonesia *De nuttige planten van Nederlandsch-Indië* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed, 1927) and *De nuttige planten van Indonesië* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1950)

Just as Burkill's work *A dictionary of the economic products of the Malay Peninsula* is perceived as primarily for botanists but in reality is of use to a much broader audience, the same is true for scientific and specialist archives and libraries in the UK. Many of these scientific and specialist institutions have a history of several centuries whose members recorded and collected information, whether written, artefact or specimen, from around the world.

The scientific and technical institutions in the UK hold collections relating to the Malay world that are not purely scientific, but hold a range of information of interest to linguists, historians, anthropologists and many others working in Malay and Indonesian studies.

British or British-based botanists, planters and foresters, agriculturists and horticulturists, zoologists and geologists, meteorologists, soldiers and seamen, navigators and map-makers, geographers and explorers, administrators and civil servants, business people and traders have all had differing interests in the Malay

world, whether through science, technical or administrative expertise, commerce and trade. They have left a record of the Malay world in repositories throughout Britain and elsewhere. This documentation will include much to interest those working beyond the speciality of the documents' creators.

Modern concepts, categories and classifications can hinder as much as help in investigating the sources about the Malay world held in UK institutions. Those records of the Malay World – whether a written, printed or illustrated document, or an artefact or specimen – that have ended up in a scientific or technical institution can often inform about the Malay world beyond the scientific, narrow specialism implied in the work and interests of the host institution.

For example, the information held at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew is not just on plants and botany but includes information and documentation on a range of related subjects including economic botany, medicinal botany, history, anthropology, linguistics, geography, &c. To the non-scientist, or more specifically to the non-botanist, the terms *Myristica fragrans*, *Eugenia caryophyllus*, *Aquilaria malaccensis*, *Styrax benzoin*, *Corypha umbraculifera* and *Borassus flabellifer* are perhaps meaningless and as a search term or a reference to them in a manuscript or article would appear of no consequence to the historian, anthropologist or linguist of the Malay World.

Yet *Myristica fragrans* is the botanical name of nutmeg and *Eugenia caryophyllus* of clove - both major products in the East India trade and information on these products would be of interest to the historian. *Aquilaria malaccensis* is aloeswood, kayu garu and *Styrax benzoin* is benzoin, luban jawi, kemenyan - both sources of incense resin for ceremonial, religious and medicinal use that were, and still are, important products traded within Asia and the Middle East and so could be of interest to an anthropologist. *Corypha umbraculifera* is the Talipot palm and *Borassus flabellifer* the Palmyra or Toddy palm - both species of palm used in the production of palm-leave manuscripts, and so could be of interest to the linguist or bibliographer.

In a scientific institution such as the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew the way into the collections may only be with these scientific or technical terms.

### **The East India Company - and trade**

British contact with the Malay World, until the mid-nineteenth century, was very much connected with the East India Company. The “East Indies” or the “Indian Archipelago” are older, alternative terms to the Malay Archipelago. Material relating to the Malay World has often been subsumed into “East India” or even “India” in British collections. When looking for information on the Malay World (particularly in UK collections where “India” is often paramount), the researcher should be aware that collections and repositories identified as having Indian or South Asian collections will often have collections relating to the Malay World.

The earliest British contacts with the Malay World were through the East India Company and those contacts were primarily about trade. Records of that trade and the products traded, and the records of navigators and seamen who transported these products, are a major source of information about the East India Company's interaction with the Malay World. Records might be limited to the actual commercial

transaction – certainly of use to the economic historian – but the traders, seamen and administrators often recorded observations of the places, people and societies they came into contact with.

Such records might be filed under the name of the product – some such as pepper/lada (*Piper nigrum*), rattan/rotan (*Calamus* species) and sago/sagu (*Metroxylon sagus*) are still important products in international trade, others have a more regional market such as betel nut/pinang (*Areca catechu*) and birds nest (*Collocalia* species).

Other products, having been replaced by synthetic alternatives, are hardly known today but in the past were major items of trade and so would have generated documentation – from botanical data to customs and revenue records -that has ended up in archives, libraries and museums in the UK. This includes plant and animal products such as camphor/kapur (*Dryobalanops aromatica*) used as a medicine and as incense; aloeswood/gaharu (*Aquilaria malaccensis*) used as an incense and perfume; stick lac/malau (*Laccifer lacca*) used as a dye and in the production of shellac for sealing wax and gramophone records; and jelutong/getah jelutong (*Dyera* species) an ingredient in chewing gum and a rubber used before the introduction of commercial *Hevea brasiliensis* plantations.<sup>13</sup> The introduction of *Hevea brasiliensis* into Singapore and Malaysia has generated a vast amount of documentation, much of it housed at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

This trade and commerce in goods had to be transported by sea to ports within and beyond the Malay Archipelago – much of it sent to Britain. The records and transaction of the shipment of goods, including customs records and statistics; together with related records of charting, provisioning and repairing ships, and of navigation and astronomical observation have been deposited in archives and libraries throughout the UK.

Ships' logbooks and reports that might only be filed under the name of a ship or ship's captain often provide detailed accounts, including maps and charts; meteorological information; and general observations on the places visited. A seaman or navigator would not just record maritime information – ships could stay for lengthy periods in ports because of bad weather, or undergoing repairs or awaiting their cargo to be delivered from the hinterland. During these periods in port, seamen and passengers would record and observe the world around them.

### **When is a manuscript not a manuscript? .... When it is a plant specimen**

Another factor that restricts access to information is how an item is catalogued. The subject headings or other access terms depend on the collection and its users. An index or catalogue will identify something by terms or concepts appropriate to the primary users of that institution's archives or museum. This may result in other users, with different interests, not being able to access the resource. An extreme example of this is when a manuscript written on palm leaf is catalogued not as a manuscript but as a botanical specimen.

*Corypha umbraculifera* and *Borassus flabellifer* are both species of palm. A botanist may only be interested in the botany or taxonomy of these plants, and their many uses might only be of passing interest. However, the leaves of these palms were used a

writing material material. The leaves of *Corypha umbraculifera* are characteristic of Buddhist texts and Buddhist countries, especially in north India, Sri Lanka and Burma while the leaves of *Borassus flabellifer* are more associated with Hindu religion and culture in south India and Java and Bali, and also with Islamic text in Javanese text from East Java, Madura and Lombok.<sup>14</sup> To the linguist or historian the content of the palm leaf is what interests them, but for the botanist the species of palm is of more interest than the actual content. In a botanical collection that palm leaf manuscript could be indexed only under the botanical name of the palm, and so its literary or linguistic content could be lost.

At the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew the Economic Botany collection holds specimens of plants and plant products and information on their uses, although the information is primarily about identifying the plant.

Item 35155 in the Economic Botany collection is a sample of *Borassus flabellifer*, one of 59 specimens of this plant in the collection. The botanical name of the plant is the search term it is indexed under. The annotation to this particular specimen states “Hindoo book made from leaves. Origin: India; Donor: India Museum ; Use: Leaves used for materials.”<sup>15</sup> The item would have to be examined to see what the manuscript contains. The cataloguer of the item , being a botanist, would be primarily interested in the plant *Borassus flabellifer*, and probably had no knowledge of the language of the manuscript. Although unlikely, it is possible the plant could be from the Malay Archipelago, and the script Javanese, particularly as “India” can sometimes cover the “East Indies” including the Malay Archipelago.

### **Archaic and anachronistic words and terms**

Names change and geographical boundaries alter. There are obvious name changes from “Malaya” to “Malaysia” and “Netherlands” East Indies to “Indonesia”; “Batavia” to “Jakarta”; “Borneo” to “Kalimantan”; “Celebes” to “Sulawesi”; and more recently “Timor Timur” to “Timor Leste” and “Irian Jaya” to “Papua Barat”.

Some geographical terms and boundaries have become redundant but in their day were important and would be used in catalogues and indexes – terms such as “Straits Settlements”. Other place names that have disappeared from current usage, such as “Province Wellesley” and “Dindings”, are of less importance as a search term.

Another point to note on place names is the variations in spelling. Names change over time: crude English or Dutch spellings of vernacular names become standardised and are in turn replaced by standard Bahasa Melayu spellings. The researcher should note the variation in spelling of place names such as “Malacca” and “Melaka”; “Singapura” and “Singapore”; “Johor” and “Johore”; “Penang” and “Pinang”; “Quedah” and “Kedah”; “Purlis” and “Perlis”; “Rhio”, “Riouw” and “Riau”; “Sumatra” and “Sumatera”; “Djakarta” and “Jakarta”. Older card catalogues, and online catalogues that use unedited records, may use older spellings of place-names rather than current spellings. Catalogues often do not provide information connecting different spellings or new names.

Some places are no longer major centres of trade, culture or administration but were in the past. Names such as Bencoolen (or Bengkulu and its many variations); Padang,

Ambon (or Amboyna), Madura, and Banda were major centres during different periods and these names would have occurred far more in publications and in catalogues and indexes in the seventeenth, eighteenth or nineteenth centuries than they do today.

To find place names and spellings check contemporary journals and accounts of travel; encyclopaedias and dictionaries; gazetteers; Admiralty pilots and charts; maps and town plans. Some of the more useful encyclopaedic and other works that give details of contemporary names include:

Anderson, J. *Political and commercial considerations relative to the Malayan peninsula and the British settlement in the Straits of Malacca* (Prince of Wales' Island, 1824)

Crawfurd, J. *History of the Indian Archipelago* (Edinburgh, 1820)

Crawfurd, J. *A descriptive dictionary of the Indian islands and adjacent countries* (London, 1856)

Logan, J. R. *The Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* (Singapore, 1847-1863)

Newbold, I. S. *Political and statistical account of the British settlements in the Straits of Malacca* (London, 1839)

Raffles, T. S. *History of Java* (London, 1817)

Raffles, T. S. *Memoir of the life and public services of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, particularly in the government of Java, 1811-16, and of Bencoolen and its dependencies, with details of the commerce and resources of the eastern archipelago...* (London, 1830)

Indexes and catalogues may use common names of plants and plant products (both in English and Malay) but scientific institutions are more likely to use standard botanical and zoological Latin names. However, even botanical and zoological names are subject to change and a botanical name in use one hundred years ago might have been revised or renamed, following rules governing botanical nomenclature.

The researcher needs to be aware of these variations and name changes, as using a name inappropriate or obsolete to a certain period will make retrieving information difficult, if not impossible.

### **Online catalogues, union catalogues, hubs and portals to libraries and archives in the UK**

Electronic union catalogues, hubs and gateways as well as the online catalogues of individual institutions have speeded access to a wealth of material. Electronic union catalogues allow the simultaneous searching of records of groups of libraries and archives.

Those smaller, specialist, obscure, or apparently irrelevant libraries and archives that a Malay specialist may never have thought to consult can now be searched for material on the Malay world.

Libraries and archives in the UK have been undertaking retrospective conversion of their card catalogues to online catalogues for many years, and the job will continue for many more years to come. This easier and speedier access allows the researcher with an interest in the Malay world to search libraries and archives that have only small holding on the Malay world, or are specialised on a scientific subject that would initially appear to have no relevance to a non-scientist.

Very few libraries and archives have completely converted their card catalogues to online catalogues. It is often older material that is not yet online. The researcher will still need to check card and print catalogues and handbooks to collections. For example the library catalogue of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew is available online but its Archives holdings are not yet available online

Websites of institutions will set out to what extent records of holdings, both manuscript and published, are available on line. It may still be necessary to visit libraries and archives to physically check the card catalogue. Alternatively there are published, printed versions of card catalogues of some libraries.

For archives there are also subject specialist finding aids such as Bridson, G.D.R. *Natural history manuscript resources in the British Isles* (London : Mansell, 1980)

Many of these new online catalogues have transferred the data from the old card catalogues. When searching online catalogues or the old card catalogues do not assume that current names and descriptors are the best way to search, as records may still be indexed under older names or variant spellings of names.

## **Conclusion**

The UK has a range of private and state scientific and technical institutions. Their collections are far broader than the term “scientific” implies and they often have sizeable holdings on the Malay World. These collections are not always straight-forward to access. The researcher may have to use scientific terms or jargon; or use dated or archaic place names and terminology. Collections are often dispersed and reappear as a sub-collection in a larger library or archive: this is particularly the case for East India Company era documentation on the Malay Archipelago, which often gets merged with Indian/South Asian collections.

In the field of botany there are immense collections, not just of herbaria of dried plants but of plant products, note-books, diaries, reports and botanical illustrations. Botanists recorded far more than the plants they collected – they recorded plant uses, including folklore and traditional medicine; they investigated the potential of plants for industry, medicine and commerce; they developed botanic gardens and encouraged the spread of economically useful plants across the world; they recorded vernacular names; they made observations not only on the plants, climate and the physical environment, but also on the peoples, society and customs they encountered

in their work. This mass of information generated a vast quantity of records, both manuscript and published, that is deposited in UK institutions.

For the Malay scholar, who is not a botanist, and wants some insight into the richness of these holdings I suggest consulting Van Steenis-Kruseman, M. J. *Malaysian plant collectors and collections : being a cyclopaedia of botanical exploration in Malaysia* (Flora Malesiana, Series 1, Volume 1) (Djakarta, 1950) for some background information on botany, botanical collections and botanists of Malesia. To find out about the major manuscript holdings on natural history, including botany, consult Bridson, G.D.R. *Natural history manuscript resources in the British Isles* (London : Mansell, 1980) and institutional websites. This information will make accessible rich, and often neglected, resources on the Malay World.

## **INFORMATION ON UK SCIENTIFIC AND SPECIALIST LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES**

(Most of the information about these websites has been copied from the institutions' own websites)

### **Portals and Union Catalogues**

#### **Inform25**

Inform25 enables simultaneous access to over 140 college and university library catalogues of institutions in London and the surrounding area bounded by the M25 London orbital motorway

The M25 Consortium is aimed at facilitating co-operation amongst its London-based, higher education member libraries in order to improve services to users.

<http://www.m25lib.ac.uk/Link/>

#### **AIM25**

<http://www.aim25.ac.uk/>

AIM25 is a project funded by the [Research Support Libraries Programme](#) (RSLP) to provide a web-accessible database of descriptions of the archives and manuscript collections of the principal colleges and schools of the University of London, of other universities and colleges in London and the surrounding area bounded by the M25 London orbital motorway, and of some of the royal colleges and societies of medicine and science based in London.

#### **Archives Hub**

<http://www.archiveshub.ac.uk/>

The Archives Hub provides a single point of access to descriptions of archives held in UK universities and colleges. At present these are primarily at collection-level, although where possible they are linked to complete catalogue descriptions.

#### **A2A : Access to Archives**

<http://www.a2a.org.uk/>

The A2A database contains catalogues describing archives held throughout England, including London, and dating from 900s to the present day.

### **Websites of individual institutions**

#### **Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew**

<http://www.rbgekew.org.uk/collections/index.html>

RBG, Kew EPIC Electronic Plant Information Centre

<http://www.rbgekew.org.uk/epic/index.htm>

#### **Natural History Museum**

<http://www.nhm.ac.uk/science/collections.html>

#### **National Maritime Museum**

<http://www.nmm.ac.uk/>

Zoological Society of London

<http://www.zsl.org/core/library.html>

Founded in 1826, it is one of the major zoological libraries in the world, containing a wide range of books and journals on all types of animals and their conservation. It has: more than 200,000 volumes; 5,000 journal titles, 1,300 of which are current.

Royal Geographical Society

<http://www.rgs.org>

The Royal Geographical Society (with The Institute of British Geographers) is the Learned Society representing Geography and geographers. It was founded in 1830 for the advancement of geographical science and has been among the most active of the learned societies ever since. The largest geographical society in Europe, and one of the largest in the world, the RGS-IBG operates at a regional, national and international scale. The Society's Archive collections consist of material arising out of the conduct of its business and manuscripts relating to persons or subjects of special interest. Individual collections may not be fully comprehensive but do complement those in other establishments. The document collection includes a few papers from before the Society's foundation in 1830. The collection is particularly useful to biographers of nineteenth and early twentieth century travellers and geographers, or for research into the development of geographical knowledge and the historical development of geography.

Wellcome Library for the History and Understanding of Medicine

<http://library.wellcome.ac.uk/>

The Wellcome Library preserves the record of medicine past and present to foster understanding of medicine, its history and its impact in society. Its collections of oriental manuscripts include significant holdings on the Malay World. Perhaps less well-known to the scholar of the Malay World is its Library on the history of medicine, that covers medicine in its broadest sense and its impact on society.

The Royal Society

<http://www.royalsoc.ac.uk/Library/>

The Royal Society is the world's oldest scientific academy in continuous existence, and has been at the forefront of enquiry and discovery since its foundation in 1660. The backbone of the Society is its Fellowship of the most eminent scientists of the day, elected by peer review for life and entitled to use FRS after their name. There are currently more than 65 Nobel Laureates amongst the Society's approximately 1300 Fellows and Foreign Members. Throughout its history, the Society has promoted excellence in science through its Fellowship, which has included Isaac Newton, Thomas Stamford Raffles and Joseph D Hooker,

The British Museum, Department of Ethnography, Anthropology Library

<http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/ethno/ethservlib.html>

The Anthropology Library is one of the world's major specialist anthropological collections with its origins in the nineteenth century; its holdings were greatly enhanced by the gift of the Royal Anthropological Institute Library to the Ethnography Department Library on 1976.

The Library contains around 120,000 books and pamphlets and 4,000 journal titles (of which about 1,500 are current), in addition to microfiches, microfilms, maps, newsletters, sound recordings and congress reports. There is also an important collection of photographs and other pictorial material. The literature held covers every aspect of anthropology: cultural and social anthropology with a strong emphasis on material culture and art, archaeology, some biological and medical anthropology and linguistics, together with such related fields as history, sociology and description and travel. Geographically, its scope is worldwide; it is particularly strong in the areas of the Commonwealth, Eastern Europe and the Americas, notably Mesoamerica.

#### London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

<http://www.lshtm.ac.uk/library/>

The Library exists primarily to support both the research and teaching activities in the School. However, it welcomes all visitors who wish to refer to its specialized holdings. The Library has a comprehensive collection of books, journals and reports in the field of international public health and tropical medicine, and holds some 80,000 books and pamphlets and over 4000 journal titles, of which nearly 900 are current. It receives publications from the World Health Organization and other international bodies. In addition to print resources, the Library has a number of networked databases, catalogues and electronic journals available across the School and via terminals within the Library. The Library also has a number of archive collections relating to the history of public health and tropical medicine, including some administrative records of the School, the papers of Sir Ronald Ross (awarded the Nobel Prize in 1902 for his proof of the mosquito transmission of malaria) and an extensive photographic archive.

The archives of the School date from the mid-nineteenth century and consist of correspondence and personal papers of scientific, medical and public health professionals involved in the search for preventative measures and cures to diseases including malaria, filariasis, cholera and leprosy. These include the papers of Sir Patrick Manson (tropical medicine specialist), Major General Sir Leonard Rogers (tropical public health physician) and Sir Ronald Ross (malariologist). There are also administrative papers of the School, an extensive photographic collection, and scientific and medical artefacts. These resources relate to the United Kingdom and countries in Asia and Africa.

#### Royal Commonwealth Society Library

[http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/rcs\\_photo\\_project/links2.html](http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/rcs_photo_project/links2.html)

From its foundation in 1868, the organisation known successively as the Colonial Society, Royal Colonial Institute, Royal Empire Society and finally the Royal Commonwealth Society, amassed a library on the British Empire, the Commonwealth and member countries - an astonishing range of books, pamphlets, periodicals, official publications, manuscripts and photographs. The collection now consists of approximately 300,000 printed items and over 70,000 photographs.

At the beginning of the 1990's, it appeared that the Society would be forced to break up and sell the collection. A £3 million appeal launched in 1992, with the Prince of Wales as Patron, saved the Library for the nation and enabled it to be moved to Cambridge, where it remains on permanent deposit.

The Royal Commonwealth Society Photograph Collection contains over 70,000 images from all over the world. Dating from the mid-1850s to the mid-1980s the

photographs provide insight into the history of the Commonwealth, documenting developments in a wide variety of fields including medicine, education and industry.

The Pitt Rivers Museum and Balfour Library

<http://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/collections.html>

The Museum displays archaeological and ethnographic objects from all parts of the world. It was founded in 1884 when General Pitt Rivers, an influential figure in the development of archaeology and evolutionary anthropology, gave his collection to the University. The General's founding gift contained more than 18,000 objects but there are now over half a million. Many were donated by early anthropologists and explorers. The collection includes extensive photographic and sound archives which contain early records of great importance.

The Balfour Library was founded in its present form in 1939 when Henry Balfour, first Curator of the Pitt Rivers Museum, gave his fine library to the Museum. To this was added volumes which the Museum had collected as a working library since its foundation in 1884. The Library has a dual function, as the teaching and research library of the School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography and as the research library of the Pitt Rivers Museum.

The objects and photographs held in the museum can be searched by a number of categories including country and region of origin

<http://pittweb2.prm.ox.ac.uk:591/>

Horniman Museum

<http://www.horniman.ac.uk/collections/index.cfm>

The Museum holds in total some 350,000 objects and related items. The Horniman has three main collections, World Cultures (Ethnography) comprising 80,000 objects, Natural History with 250,000 specimens, and Music with over 7,000 instruments plus 1,000 archive documents. The Library of the Horniman Museum is based upon the personal library of F. J. Horniman, the founder of the Museum. The areas that interested F. J. Horniman are represented in material that dates from before 1851, books on the history of Africa, on entomology, on botany, and books of interest in their own right as objects. The collection has been built up continuously over the past 100 years, reflecting the subject areas of the Museum: natural history, musical instruments, and ethnography. The acquisitions policy has always been to add popular works of scientific exposition, and to balance these with the basic specialist texts of the three disciplines, concentrating wherever possible on those works of outstanding influence, and those that might not easily be available elsewhere. There are over 20,000 monographic works, and more than 100 currently taken journal titles and 150 non-current journal titles.

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