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Editor

Journal, South-East Asian History.

Dear Sir,

Dr. H. G. Quaritch Wales has been a true pioneer of the archaeology of early Indianised settlement in the Malay Peninsula, and for this reason I was flattered to find my report on the excavation of *Chandi Bukit Batu Pahat* reviewed by him in the October 1961 issue of your Journal. I was not surprised to discover, however, that Dr. Wales could not bring himself to accept some of the conclusions which I drew from my investigation of this monument which he himself had first explored in 1936, since Dr. Wales and I seem to be in some disagreement as to the cultural origins of those settlements of which we can still find traces in the region of the Merbok Estuary in Kedah. My only regret in the case of Dr. Wales' review is not that he should disagree with me, but that he should attribute to me ideas which I would be the first to reject; and for this reason I venture to write some reply.

Dr. Wales takes me to task for the use of the word *chandi*, a word to him fraught with implications of royal burial. In my report the word has been used in the sense in which it is generally used in Indonesia today to mean "any pre-Muslim monument erected in stone" – I quote, of course, from J. Gonda, *Sanskrit in Indonesia*, Nagpur 1952, p. 198.

Dr. Wales accuses me of trying to deny the presence of Indian influence in early Kedah. Such a denial would, of course, be the height of folly; and in the few tentative observations which I make in my report I have gone no further than to say that we do not as yet know enough about the archaeology of Kedah to make any very definite statements as to the nature and origins of that Indian influence. Where I differ from Dr. Wales is in the interpretation of the evidence which he found in Kedah, and which is published in the *JMBRAS* 1940 and 1947 in two reports. These reports, whatever second thoughts Dr. Wales may have since had, remain the corpus of archaeological information upon which we must rely. I do not believe that the kind of information which is contained in these reports is capable of providing a basis for the historical theories of Dr. Wales in any of their various forms.

Dr. Wales was obliged to admit that he did not learn very much from the architecture of his Kedah sites. He based his interpre-

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tation of them almost entirely on what he termed "associated finds". Some of these finds, like the miniature bronze shrine roof from the bed of the Sungei Bujang, were not, strictly speaking, associated with any structure at all. Others, like the fragmentary "Indian" earthenware jar from his site 15 and the "Indian" dagger hilt from his site 12, are objects of categories about which we know far too little at present to attempt to give them any date. The study of medieval Indian pottery and weapons is still in its infancy. The point which seems to have escaped Dr. Wales is that nearly all the small finds from his Kedah sites represented imported articles. Imports do not of necessity indicate colonies, and no one would argue that the use of Renault or Volkswagen motor cars in Malaya today indicates the presence of French or German colonists. But it is just this kind of argument which Dr. Wales advances on pp. 73-74 of *JMBRAS* 1940 Pt. 1.

My basic disagreement with Dr. Wales lies in the fact that I cannot bring myself to believe that, in the present state of our knowledge, any very useful deductions can be made from the small finds from his Kedah sites beyond the conclusion that Kedah was in commercial contact with other regions. Before we can start to interpret the evidence of trade goods, which is what Dr. Wales has been trying to do, we must make some effort to establish their typology and chronology. This is a task which has only just begun. Even Chinese export wares are far from adequately understood, and in the case of Middle Eastern glass, Indian beads, earthenware and metalwares, not to mention the more humble products of Southeast Asia, we know depressingly little for the period of the millenium before the founding of the Malacca Sultanate.

I feel that archaeologists of Indianised Southeast Asia should not forget the humble potsherd which has elsewhere opened up such vistas of ancient history. We should cease, for a while, to speculate on whether Kedah was colonised by the Pallavas or the Palas and we should try to ascertain what the many small finds made in Kedah actually are. Kedah, whatever its cultural origins, possessed an economy which depended greatly on international trade; and in the understanding of the objects which made up that trade lies our best hope for working out the history of Kedah. The entrepot trade of the Malay Peninsula has passed through many phases in the last 2,000 years; but each phase has left some trace. The great accumulations of potsherds and other debris like beads and glass fragments, which can be seen at Johore Lama, Makam Sultan, Malacca, Kuala Selinsing, Pengkalan Bujang, Takuapa, Chaiya, Patani and many other sites, are the priceless raw materials for research into the early economic history of the Peninsula. They offer us a prospect of working out the typology and chronology of

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the products which were to make up that history, and thus provide us with the means, the considerations of stratigraphy permitting, for assigning dates of some validity to structures otherwise mysterious. With known dates we can speculate with some profit about cultural origins; without them we can only, like Dr. Wales, guess. Some of Dr. Wales' guesses were good ones, I am sure, but they were still guesses and as such were no real basis for the early history of a nation.

The problems involved in this line of research would require far more space than is available here for their adequate discussion. Some of these problems I have touched upon in the 1961 issue of the *Federation Museums Journal*, to which I venture to refer any reader interested enough to pursue this topic further.

I remain,
Sir,
Your obedient servant,
Alastair Lamb

Nineteenth Century Malaya, The Origins of British Political Control:

by C. D. Cowan. The review of the above book which appeared in Vol. II No. 3 (pp. 115-120) of the *Journal* omitted to mention that it was published by The Oxford University Press.