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# Birds from Sumatra given by Sir Stamford Raffles to Lord Stanley: links to names, types and drawings

by John-James Wilson

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**SUMMARY.**—After escaping from the burning East Indiaman *Fame*, but losing all of his possessions, Sir Stamford Raffles, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bencoolen, hastily re-collected as many natural history specimens and drawings as he could before leaving Sumatra in April 1824. On his return to England Raffles was elected a Fellow of the Linnean Society and, with Lord Edward Smith Stanley and others, founded the Zoological Society of London. In 1825 Raffles gave 21 Sumatran birds to Stanley. Upon his death in 1851, Stanley (then 13th Earl of Derby) bequeathed his collection to the people of Liverpool, founding what is now the World Museum, National Museums Liverpool. Here I record these birds, 11 of which are still extant in the collection, including links to: the names and types from Raffles' (1822) 'descriptive catalogue' of a zoological collection from Sumatra; Raffles' post-*Fame* zoological drawings; and Nicholas Aylward Vigors' catalogue of Raffles' specimens in the Zoological Society Museum, published in Lady Sophia Raffles' memoir in 1830.

Sir Thomas Stamford Bingley Raffles, the name and face of British colonial history in South-East Asia, has been described as an 'icon of imperial mythology' (Barnard 2019). Raffles 'founded' modern Singapore in 1819 (Huang 2018) while working as Lieutenant-Governor of Bencoolen (= Bengkulu, Sumatra, Indonesia) (1818–24) for the East India Company. This followed ten years of postings in Penang (= Pinang, Malaysia), Malacca (= Melaka, Malaysia) and Java (= Jawa, Indonesia). Like many colonial officers, Raffles was an enthusiastic collector of natural history specimens and kept menageries at his various residences. However, his life in South-East Asia was also punctuated with personal tragedy. Raffles lost his first wife, four of his children and several close friends, including his natural history collectors, to sickness. These problems culminated in the sinking of the *Fame* in 1824, the East Indiaman which was to have transported himself, Lady Sophia Raffles and his collections to England, following his resignation from the East India Company (Glendinning 2012).

As far as is known, Raffles did not collect many birds, instead he mostly commissioned drawings of the birds he encountered during his postings (Sharpe 1906). Arguably the most important zoological work attributed to Raffles was the 'Descriptive catalogue of a zoological collection made in the island of Sumatra and its vicinity', which was read in two parts under his name at the Linnean Society (Raffles 1821, 1822). However, the manuscript was almost exclusively the work of Dr William Jack (Raffles' physician and naturalist, who died in 1822), based on collections made by Pierre-Médard Diard and Alfred Duvaucel (French zoologists in the service of Raffles; Weiler 2019) and Dr Joseph Arnold (also Raffles' physician and naturalist, who had died in 1818) (Bastin 1990). The paper was hastily assembled to avoid being scooped by the French zoologists (Raffles 1821) and was further edited in London prior to publication, with names from the preceding paper on Javan birds by Horsfield (1821) and new names nominally attributed to Raffles being added. The

specimens, which included the types of the new names, and associated drawings had been sent to London in 1820 and deposited in the East India Company Museum (Noltie 2009). After dividing triplicates between them, and concealing other valuable specimens, some birds collected by Diard and Duvaucel while in Raffles' service were sent from Sumatra to the Paris museum (Weiler 2019, MNHN & Chagnoux 2020). It is unclear whether specimens retained by Diard and Duvaucel would have featured in Raffles' catalogue, but it seems likely that the manuscript would have been prepared before the collection was divided. Duvaucel, without Diard, made further collections on Sumatra after they had both left Raffles' service in 1820 (Weiler 2019, MNHN & Chagnoux 2020).

Raffles continued to assemble collections in Singapore (Noltie 2009) and Sumatra, and commissioned more than 2,000 drawings, according to a letter by Raffles quoted by Sophia Raffles (1830). These were all lost with the sinking of the *Fame* on 2 February 1824. During the two months prior to securing fresh passage on the *Mariner*, Raffles partially re-built his collection and commissioned new drawings, including 44 of birds by J. Briois, which are now held in the British Library (in the Natural History Drawings [NHD] collection; Noltie 2009). Raffles knew the social capital of exotic curiosities; his collections and account of Java (Raffles 1817) had earned him a knighthood. On his return to England, Raffles was elected a Fellow of the Linnean Society and set about lobbying for the establishment of the Zoological Society of London (ZSL).

Lord Edward Smith Stanley, who became 13th Earl of Derby in 1834, was an archetype of the imperial elite. He travelled little himself, but with access to incredible wealth as heir to the Knowsley estate in north-west England, and a network of contacts and agents worldwide, assembled a menagerie and private museum at Knowsley Hall comprising exotic animals from across the empire and beyond (see Fisher & Jackson 2002). Stanley was the Member of Parliament for Preston and Lancashire from 1796, before joining the House of Lords in 1834 (Crosby 2002), and a member of the Linnean Society's Zoological Club.

Although Raffles and Stanley do not appear to have been close—no written correspondence between them is known—Raffles considered Stanley someone of 'weight', and both were founding members (subscribers) of the ZSL (Bastin 1970). During his campaign to be the Zoological Society's founding president, Raffles gave 21 of his Sumatran birds to Stanley. Raffles was elected the first president of ZSL in February 1826, a position Stanley himself would hold from 1831 until his death.

Stanley listed the birds 'given to me by Sir Stamford Raffles' in his unpublished manuscript entitled the 'General index of the birds in my collection at Knowsley' in 1825 (Fig. 1). Raffles died on 5 July 1826 and his remaining zoological material was donated to the ZSL Museum by Sophia Raffles in April 1827 (Wheeler 1997, Noltie 2009). Sophia Raffles subsequently published a memoir (Raffles 1830) to which a catalogue of Raffles' collections was appended—specimens in the East India Company Museum listed by Thomas Horsfield, and those in the ZSL Museum by the society's secretary, Nicholas Aylward Vigors (Tweeddale 1877, Wheeler 1997). Stanley added notes, which clearly originate from his reading of this appendix, to his own manuscript catalogue (Fig. 1).

ZSL began to dispose of its collection in the early 1850s. The British Museum had its pick of specimens and, in addition to the type material, selected 383 mounted birds and 100 relaxed skins (Wheeler 1997) which became part of the national collection in 1855 (Sharpe 1906). The remaining ZSL collection, which may have included some of Raffles' birds, was dispersed across provincial museums, dealers and private collectors (Wheeler 1997). Unfortunately, due to lack of adequate documentation most of these specimens are now effectively 'lost'. Further Raffles material arrived at the British Museum following the closure of the East India Company Museum in 1880. Therefore, other than a few notable

Figure 1. An entry in Lord Stanley’s ‘General index of the birds in my collection at Knowsley’ for 1825, specimens ‘given to me by Sir Stamford Raffles’ (© National Museums Liverpool [World Museum Liverpool])

exceptions, e.g. a gibbon *Hylobates agilis* and a pangolin *Manis javanica* at University College Cork (Wheeler 1997) and Malayan Tapir *Tapirus indicus* and Dugong *Dugong dugon* skeletons at National Museums Scotland, Edinburgh (Noltie 2009), all of Raffles’ known surviving collections are now at the Natural History Museum, Tring (NHMUK). On Stanley’s death in 1851, most of his collections passed to the people of Liverpool, founding what is now the World Museum, National Museums Liverpool (NML).

The 11 extant specimens at NML (World Museum, National Museums Liverpool 2021; Fig. 2) all appear to be relaxed mounts and could have been mounted prior to being given to Stanley, perhaps even in Sumatra, although Stanley employed a taxidermist (Fisher & Jackson 2002). The gamebirds have clipped wings, so may have been transported live, similar to pheasants aboard *Fame* (Bastin 1990, quoting Raffles). There are no original labels but ‘copied from mount’ is written on some labels, and one specimen has a collection date of ‘1824’. The location given on all labels is ‘Sumatra’. It therefore appears probable that these specimens formed part of Raffles’ post-*Fame* collection, inferring that they were collected between 2 February and 10 April 1824. This would also narrow the specific localities to within the vicinities of Bengkulu and Padang.

In view of the approaching 200th anniversaries of the sinking of *Fame*, the founding of the Zoological Society of London, and Raffles’ death, there is likely to be renewed interest in Raffles’ extant collections. Below I record the birds given by Raffles to Stanley, annotated with links to: the names and types from the ‘descriptive catalogue’ of a zoological collection from Sumatra (Raffles 1822); Raffles’ post-*Fame* zoological drawings; and Vigors’ catalogue of Raffles’ specimens in the ZSL Museum (Raffles 1830).

The specimens are listed and numbered in the same order they appear in Stanley’s ‘General index’ of 1825, followed by their number in square brackets (if applicable) in the stock books of Thomas Moore, who completed an unpublished register of Stanley’s collections that were bequeathed to Liverpool in 1851, building on the work of Stanley’s previous curator, Louis Fraser, in 1848–50 (Largen 1987).



Figure 2. Specimens from Sumatra given by Sir Stamford Raffles to Lord Stanley in 1825 and extant in the collection of World Museum, National Museums Liverpool. From left: Thick-billed Green Pigeon *Treron curvirostra curvirostra* (NML D3636); Pink-necked Green Pigeon *Treron vernans* (NML D3641a); Crested Partridge *Rollulus rouloul* (NML D512g); Long-billed Partridge *Rhizothera longirostris* (female NML D2212b, male NML D2212); Crestless Fireback *Lophura erythrophthalma* (NML D1583); Lesser Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna javanica* (NML D843b); Ferruginous Partridge *Caloperdix ocellatus* (male NML D2179a, female NML D2179); Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum* (NML D3192b); Buff-rumped Woodpecker *Meiglyptes tristis grammithorax* (NML D3791) (© National Museums Liverpool [World Museum Liverpool])

#### 2140. Red-crowned Barbet *Psilopogon rafflesii* (Lesson, 1839)

Listed as *Bucco versicolor* by Raffles (1822), a name also used for an unsexed specimen by Stanley in 1825. However, this name was already in use for a South American species, Versicoloured Barbet (now *Eubucco versicolor* Statius Muller, 1776). Stanley later annotated his manuscript with '*Barbu bigarré* Pl. Col. 309', referring to Vigors' catalogue (Raffles 1830). Subsequently, while cataloguing the collection of Abeillé, Lesson (1839) named the Sumatran species eponymously as '*Bucco Rafflesii*'. Lack of a traceable specimen in NML, or a number in Moore's stock books, suggests it was not part of the 1851 bequest.

#### 2141. Scarlet Minivet *Pericrocotus flammeus xanthogaster* (Raffles, 1822)

The species was listed twice by Raffles (1822), the male as '*Turdus flammeus* - *Muscicapa flammea*, Gmel. [sic]' and the female (described as a male) under a new name, *Lanius xanthogaster*. In 1825, Stanley used *Muscicapa flammea*, as in Vigors' catalogue (Raffles 1830), and 'Flammeous flycatcher' to list a male specimen. A male depicted among the post-Fame drawings (NHD 47.31; Noltie 2009; Fig. 3) could therefore represent Stanley's specimen. The population on Sumatra is recognised subspecifically under Raffles' name '*xanthogaster*'. Lack of a traceable specimen in NML, or a number in Moore's stock books, suggests it was not part of the 1851 bequest.

#### 2142. White-rumped Shama *Kittacincla malabaricus tricolor* (Vieillot, 1818)

The species was listed as '*Lanius macrourus* - *Turdus macrourus*, Gmel. [sic]' by Raffles (1822). In 1825, Stanley listed a male specimen as '*Turdus macrourus*' and 'Longtailed thrush', although '*Lanius macrourus*' was used in Vigors' catalogue (Raffles 1830). A male depicted among the post-Fame drawings (NHD 47.22; Noltie 2009; Fig. 4) could represent Stanley's



Figure 3. Scarlet Minivet *Pericrocotus flammeus xanthogaster* (Raffles, 1822) by J. Briois in Bengkulu, 1824 (© The British Library Board; NHD 47.31)



Figure 4. White-rumped Shama *Kittacincla malabaricus tricolor* (Vieillot, 1818) by J. Briois in Bengkulu, 1824 (© The British Library Board; NHD 47.22)

specimen. Lack of a traceable specimen in NML, or a number in Moore’s stock books, suggests it was not part of the 1851 bequest.

**2143 [3791]. Buff-rumped Woodpecker *Meiglyptes tristis grammithorax* (Malherbe, 1862)**  
Listed by Raffles (1822) as *Picus tristis*, a name first used by Horsfield in 1821, and Stanley treated a male specimen under this name in 1825. Stanley annotated the entry with the synonyms '*P. strickup* (*P. poecilophos* = *pæcilophos*) Pl. Col 197' from Vigors' catalogue (Raffles 1830). The vernacular name used by Stanley is illegible (but is perhaps 'Striated crowned woodpecker'). The subspecies occurring on Sumatra is *grammithorax*, which was not described until 1862. The skin of the relaxed mount is at NML (accession number D3791).

**2144 [512g]. Crested Partridge *Rollulus rouloul* (Scopoli, 1786)**

Listed by Raffles (1822) as '*Tetrao viridis*, Gmel. [sic]'. The species was evidently a major source of taxonomic confusion (see Vigors 1829), with the male described as *Columba cristata* Pallas, 1764, and the female as *Perdix coronata* Latham, 1790. In 1825, Stanley matched the female specimen given to him by Raffles with a male he had obtained earlier from Melaka (no. 1693 in the 'General index') and listed the specimen under Temminck's (1815) genus as *Crytonyx coronatus* and the vernacular name 'Green Partridge'. The male specimen is still at NML (accession number D512c). The species is listed as *Crytonyx cristatus* Vigors in Vigors' catalogue (Raffles 1830). The skin of Raffles' relaxed mount is at NML (accession number D512g).

**2145 [1583]. Crestless Fireback *Lophura erythrophthalma* (Raffles, 1822)**

Described by Raffles (1822) under a new name, *Phasianus erythrophthalmus*, and Stanley listed a male specimen under this name in 1825. Vigors (Raffles 1830) transferred the species to *Gallus*. The skin of the relaxed mount is at NML (accession number D1583) and had been labelled with red tags as 'one of the types of the species'. However, the probable collection date of this specimen (1824) would make this impossible. There are two syntypes from the East India Company Museum at NHMUK, both also former mounts. Interestingly they both had been labelled (as *Acanus erythrophthalmus*) with the same accession number ([18]80.1.1.1810). Warren (1966) listed one adult male and one female syntype at NHMUK. However, the specimens are both male, one adult and one juvenile.

**2146 [1582]. Malaysian Fireback *Lophura rufa* (Raffles, 1822)**

Listed twice by Raffles (1822), the male as *Phasianus ignitus* Latham, the name Stanley used for a male specimen in 1825, and the female (described as a male) under a new name, *Phasianus rufus*. The taxon was listed solely as *Gallus ignitus* (presumably *sensu lato*) by Vigors (Raffles 1830). The population on Sumatra is recognised as a species by some taxonomies (del Hoyo & Collar 2014) under Raffles' name '*rufa*', distinct from *Lophura ignita* (*sensu stricto*). There are two depictions of the male among the post-Fame drawings (NHD 47.43 and NHD 47.44; Noltie 2009; Figs. 5–6), one, or both (if highly stylised), of which could represent Stanley's specimen. The existence of a number in Moore's stock books suggests the specimen was part of the bequest but has been lost post-1851.

**2147. Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa* Linnaeus, 1758**

The only *Gracula* listed by Raffles (1822) and by Vigors (Raffles 1830) was *G. religiosa* Linnaeus. In 1825, Stanley listed the unsexed specimen given to him by Raffles as 'Greater Mias *Gracula*' without a species epithet. Lack of a traceable specimen in NML, or a number in Moore's stock books, suggests it was not part of the 1851 bequest.

**2148. Greater Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus paradiseus* (Linnaeus, 1766)**

Listed as *Lanius malabaricus* Latham with no notes by Raffles (1822) and Stanley used the same name for an unsexed specimen in 1825. Stanley later annotated his catalogue entry with '*Edolius retifer* of Temminck', following the synonyms listed in Vigors' catalogue



Figure 5. Malaysian Fireback *Lophura rufa* (Raffles, 1822) by J. Briois in Bengkulu, 1824 (© The British Library Board; NHD 47.43)



Figure 6. Malaysian Fireback *Lophura rufa* (Raffles, 1822) by J. Briois in Bengkulu, 1824 (© The British Library Board; NHD 47.44)

(Raffles 1830). Lack of a traceable specimen in NML, or a number in Moore's stock books, suggests it was not part of the 1851 bequest.

**2149 [3192b]. Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum* Forster, 1795**

In 1825, Stanley listed an unsexed specimen as '*Glareola Orientalis*' and 'Oriental Pratincola [sic]', but the species does not appear in Raffles' (1822) catalogue or seem to be in Vigors' catalogue (Raffles 1830). *Glareola orientalis* Leach was described and figured (Leach 1821) in the same volume of the Linnean Society transactions as Raffles' catalogue, based on a specimen in Paris brought from Java by M. Leschenault (Horsfield 1821). Stanley's *G. maldivarum* specimen is at NML (accession number D3192b). Oriental Pratincole is principally an uncommon migrant and winter visitor to Sumatra (van Marle & Voous 1988), but has bred in the north of the island (Eaton *et al.* 2016).

**2150. Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis bubutus* Horsfield, 1821**

In 1825, Stanley listed an unsexed specimen simply as '*Polophilus*'. *Cuculus bubutus* (asterisked as *Centropus Bubutus* Horsfield) was listed by Raffles (1822), a name subsequently synonymised under '*Centropus Philippensis* Cuvier' by Horsfield and Vigors (Raffles 1830). This taxon seems to be the most likely to correspond with '*Polophilus*'. Lack of a traceable specimen in NML, or a number in Moore's stock books, suggests it was not part of the 1851 bequest, thereby precluding further determination.

**2151. Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus* (Scopoli, 1786)**

In 1825, Stanley listed an unsexed specimen as 'Panyan Tern' and '*Sterna Panay* [sic]'. Listed as '*Sterna panayensis?* Gmel. [sic]' by Raffles (1822), but the description clearly involves Bridled Tern (= *Onychoprion anaethetus*) which is resident in western Sumatra (van Marle & Voous 1988). The species was listed as '*Sterna Panayensis* Gmel. [sic]' by Vigors (Raffles 1830). Lack of a traceable specimen in NML, or a number in Moore's stock books, suggests it was not part of the 1851 bequest.

**2152 [3641a]. Pink-necked Green Pigeon *Treron vernans* (Linnaeus, 1771)**

In 1825, Stanley listed a male specimen as *Columba vernans* and 'Parrot Pigeon'. Treated as *Columba vernans* Linnaeus by Raffles (1822) and as *Vinago vernans* by Vigors (Raffles 1830). The skin of the relaxed mount is at NML (accession number D3641a).

**2153 [3636]. Thick-billed Green Pigeon *Treron curvirostra curvirostra* (J. F. Gmelin, 1789)**

In 1825, Stanley listed an unsexed specimen as *Columba curvirostra*. The species was listed as '*Columba curvirostra*, Gmel. [sic]' by Raffles (1822) and under *Vinago* by Vigors (Raffles 1830). Curiously, the extant skin of the relaxed mount accessioned in NML as D3636 had been incorrectly labelled with a red tag as 'Type of *Columba curvirostra* Raffles'. However, the name '*curvirostra*' was used by Raffles (1822) for a supposedly new species of partridge (see below).

**2154 [2179a] and 2155 [2179]. Ferruginous Partridge *Caloperdix ocellus ocellatus* (Raffles, 1822)**

In 1825, Stanley listed single male (2154) and female (2155) specimens as 'Malacca Partridge' and '*Perdix Malaccensis*'. However, the species had appeared under a new name, *Tetrao ocellatus*, in Raffles' (1822) catalogue and later as *Crytonyx ocellatus* Raffles in Vigors' catalogue (Raffles 1830). The skins of the relaxed mounts are at NML, accession numbers D2179a (the male) and D2179 (female). The male had been labelled with a red tag as 'type of *Tetrao ocellatus* Raffles'. However, the probable collection date of these specimens (1824) makes this impossible. The two syntypes at NHMUK, 1880.1.1.4543 and 1880.1.1.4510,

have '*PERDIX OCULEA* Temm. Horsfield' written on Horsfield's labels. 'BM(NH)' labels had been added to the syntypes with the annotation '*Caloperdix sumatrana* Loc. Java Pres. by India Museum', which matches the NHMUK register entry for 1880.1.1.4543, showing the locality as Java (the other syntype lacks a locality in the register). However, according to Warren (1966), the types 'must have come from Sumatra as according to *MSS List of Birds received at India House* no examples of this bird were secured from Java whereas three *Perdix* came from Sumatra in the Raffles collection'. Likewise, the species is only listed from Sumatra (and not Java) in Sophia Raffles' (1830) appendix. To add further confusion, the Sumatran population was formerly known as '*sumatranus*' (Ogilvie-Grant 1893), with the type also held at NHMUK, but Raffles' name '*ocellatus*' has priority.

**2156 [2212] and 2157 [2212b]. Long-billed Partridge *Rhizothera longirostris* (Temminck, 1815)**

In 1825, Stanley listed a male (2156) and female (2157) of 'Curve-billed partridge' under the combination of the new epithet introduced by Raffles (1822)—*Tetrao curvirostris*—with the genus *Perdix* (i.e. *Perdix curvirostra*), as in Vigers' catalogue (Raffles 1830). The skins of the relaxed mounts are at NML, accession numbers D2212 (the male) and D2212b (female), and had been labelled with red tags as 'type of *Tetrao curvirostra* Raffles'. However, the probable collection date of these specimens (1824) would make this impossible. The two syntypes at NHMUK (female no. 1880.1.1.4552, male no. 1880.1.1.4557) are both labelled as 'co-types' on Horsfield's labels, which read '*Perdix curvirostris* Raffles, Raffles, Sumatra', and recorded in the register as 'Loc. Sumatra, Pres. by India Museum (Raffles)'. Besides the '*curvirostris*' types there appear to be no other specimens of this species collected for Raffles in NHMUK. An image of a female among the post-*Fame* drawings (NHD 47.40; Noltie 2009; Fig. 7) could represent Stanley's specimen.



Figure 7. Long-billed Partridge *Rhizothera longirostris* (Temminck, 1815) by J. Brion in Bengkulu, 1824 (© The British Library Board; NHD 47.40)

**2158 [843b] and 2159. Lesser Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna javanica* (Horsfield, 1821)**

In 1825, Stanley listed two unsexed specimens simply as *Anas*, which matches Raffles (1822). The only species of *Anas* listed by Vigors (Raffles 1830) was *Anas arcuata*, a Horsfield name from 1824. However, one skin of a relaxed mount (2158) is at NML, accession number D843b, and is a *D. javanica*. Lack of a second traceable specimen at NML, or a number in Moore's stock books, suggests it may not have been part of the 1851 bequest.

**2160. Great Argus *Argusianus argus* (Linnaeus, 1766)**

In 1825, Stanley listed a specimen as 'Argus pheasant' without a species epithet. Catalogued by Raffles (1822) as *Phasianus argus* Linnaeus, but as *Argus giganteus* Temminck by Vigors (Raffles 1830). Lack of a traceable specimen in NML, or a number in Moore's stock books, suggests it was not part of the 1851 bequest.

## Concluding remarks

Since Raffles left Sumatra almost 200 years ago, the island has suffered rampant deforestation, which has intensified to unprecedented levels in the last 30 years with the expansion of oil palm *Elaeis guineensis* plantations (Margono *et al.* 2012). In addition to the profound impacts of habitat loss, the island's wild birds are vulnerable to trappers supplying the lucrative pet trade (Harris *et al.* 2016). Raffles' 'descriptive catalogue' (Raffles 1821, 1822) was recognised as the first systematic account of the avifauna of Sumatra (Tweeddale 1877) and provides the earliest records of birds on the island in the European literature. The contribution of local people, and their indigenous knowledge, to Raffles' catalogue, collections and drawings is uncredited and largely overlooked, but must have been vital. Raffles and Jack had organised a congress of local nobles to share their knowledge of, and names for, the native fauna (Noltie 2009). Consequently, Malay and Sumatran species names feature prominently both in the 'descriptive catalogue' (including in Jawi script) and the ZSL Museum catalogue, drawing additional attention to this critical contribution. Further linking the written accounts in the catalogues of Raffles' collections with extant specimens and drawings would be a highly worthwhile project, especially in light of the approaching anniversaries associated with South-East Asia's most prominent colonialist.

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