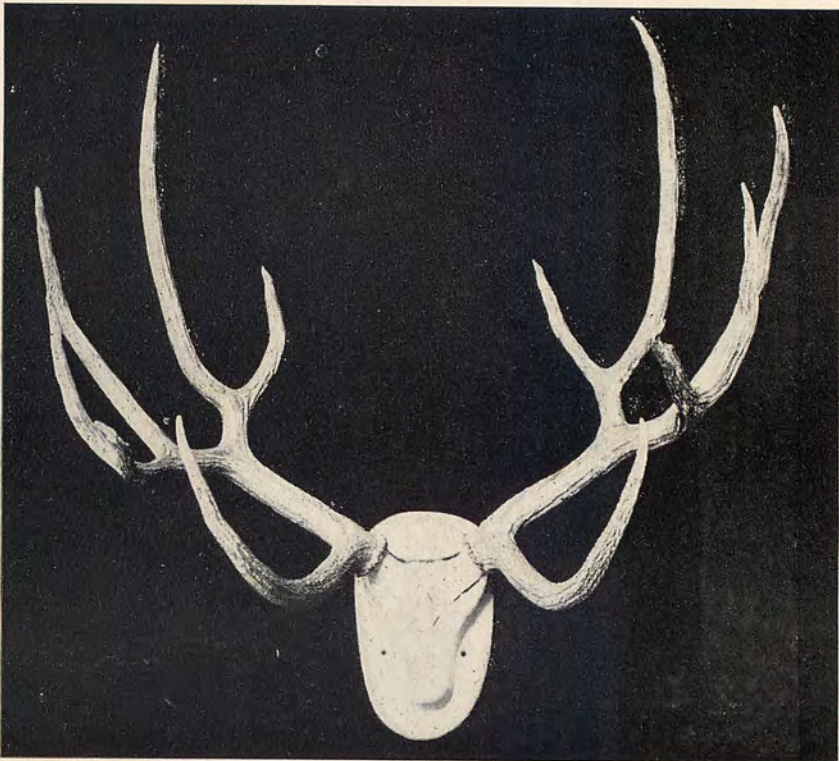




Antler found about 1920 in jungle in Supan district, Central Siam.



Antlers of a deer killed about 1892 in the Rangsit section, near Chulalongkorn
Lock, Central Siam.

HORNS SUPPOSED TO BELONG TO THE SCHOMBURGK DEER.

NOTES ON THE SCHOMBURGK DEER.¹

By PHYA JOLAMARK BHICHARANA.

(With Plate 26)

It seems to me that I am rather bold to have agreed to give notes on the subject of the Schomburgk deer, and to be standing in this society's room dealing with a deer which is somewhat ethereal. That is to say, nobody seems to have seen this animal, all we appear to know of it is the existence of its antlers, with the exception of course of the specimens in museums abroad. To-night I need not describe the characteristics of the Schomburgk deer, as this subject has been dealt with in a paper by Mr. P. R. Kemp in the Journal of the Natural History Society of Siam, Volume III, No. 1.

The point at issue is whether the Schomburgk deer is still in existence or not. I am led to understand that several natural history museums would willingly spend large sums of money to organise an expedition to obtain a complete specimen of the Schomburgk deer dead or alive if the animal still exists.

Being a member of this society and interested in this subject myself, I was asked by Dr. Hugh M. Smith to give some notes on the Schomburgk deer. I have only meager information, but I felt that however meager it may be, it would be useful, so I present these notes for what they are worth.

Since 1914 I have been actively on the lookout for the Schomburgk deer. To begin with I had to find out what the Siamese call this animal. At first there was great uncertainty as to the authentic name by which this animal was known. Various people said that it was called la-mang, la-ong la-awng, and sa-man, but by personal observations made while out shooting in the jungle I became satisfied that la-mang was the name applied to the hind of the Eld deer (*Cervus eldi*), la-ong being given to the male of the same species. So sa-man was the only name left, and I take sa-man as the proper Siamese name for the Schomburgk deer.

¹ Remarks made before a meeting of the Natural History Section of the Siam Society on June 24, 1931.

I used to question some of my old surveyors as to whether they had ever seen animals called sa-man while doing their work up-country twenty-five or more years ago. They told me there were plenty of such deer. When I asked them to describe the shape of the antlers, their description coincided with those of the Schomburgk deer. The particular area which these surveyors reported as being frequented by this deer was between the Suphan and Menam Noi Rivers. About 1926 I sent men to make inquiry as to whether this deer was still to be found there, but it was reported that all had disappeared, as the people had opened up the bamboo jungle which once existed and converted it into rice fields.

In 1928 when going up Klong Makam Dhao I made inquiry and learned that there was still one Schomburgk deer which the people saw roaming about. I was very keen to get the animal, but being on official duty I was unable to do anything at the time, and in 1930 I was told that this deer had disappeared.

I had given to me one deformed antler picked up in a jungle at Suphan, but I could not learn the exact locality. I have seen Schomburgk deer antlers in the houses of people living along the Suphan River, and I sent a man to get one pair for me and he did so but no information was available as to where the deer was obtained.

About 1926, when I was out on an inspection trip between the Suphan and Menam Duan, I was told that there used to be plenty of game there before the country was opened up for rice growing. When I was at Chorake Samphan I inquired of the nai amphur as to whether the local people had seen or known of an animal called sa-man, and when he said "yes" I asked him to show me antlers if he had any, and he brought one pair which were those of an undoubted Schomburgk, but this animal was shot three years before.

From the information thus gathered, I have formed the opinion that the Schomburgk deer still exists, and lives between the Menam Suphan and the Menam Meklong and their tributaries.

A few years ago a friend of mine, who was very keen in hunting and wished to possess a specimen of this deer, organised a special party to go after it. He brought elephants from Prachin and took them over to the west side of the Suphan River where he remained for some time but the expedition was fruitless.

I have been up the Prasak River and in jungle of Korat, but my hunters and trackers did not come upon the Schomburgk deer, and I saw no people there in possession of its antlers.

There is in my possession a pair of antlers which I have always considered to be those of the swamp deer but never having heard mention of such a deer as being existent in Siam I did not dare to broach such a subject as it would not come in the discussion of the Schomburgk deer. If, however, it is not a swamp deer it might be a Schomburgk, but this will be left for experts to decide. I have brought this pair of antlers with me to-night. I may mention that this animal was shot in the Rangsit district about 40 years ago, in front of the Royal Irrigation Department dry dock close to the Chulalongkorn Lock. This kind of deer, I am told, was once plentiful in that region. My father, Dr. Yai Sanitwongse, said that people used to hunt it in the high water season in "rua muang", a special kind of dug-out. The animals took refuge on high ground, the hunters surrounded them in their boats and speared them. These deer then ranged to the Bang Plakod District and Thung Dong Lakon in Nakorn Nayok. The Bang Plakod people used to chase these deer in boats, as at the high water season the animals remained on floating grass islands and could be secured by spearing.

At Dong Lakon an old man told me that in his younger days he used to hunt these animals by going in parties on buffalo back and surrounding them. Some people used to file the antlers of this deer very thin, in order to make them light so that the antlers could be put on their heads when stalking, and the wild animals, thinking the antlers belonged to their own kind, did not take flight and were killed by the hunters at close range. These animals are no longer to be seen, but it was suggested that they may still exist on the Aranya Pradesa side. From what this old man told me, it appears that in the young deer the number of tines is fewer than in the older ones.

In conclusion, I will state that I have brought with me to-night actual antlers, not only of the Schomburgk deer, but of the Eld deer and sambhar as well, so that members and visitors may see the differences in the types of antlers of the different deer in Siam.

