

QUATERNARY SHORE LINES OF THE SUNDA LAND SOUTHEAST ASIA

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ABSTRACT

All frequently occurring positive shore lines and a few of the submerged strand lines of the Sunda Land, *i.e.* comprising the Sunda Shelf, Malayan Peninsula, eastern rim of Sumatra, South and West Kalimantan (Borneo), can be correlated with the classical examples of Quaternary shore lines of the Mediterranean and elsewhere. The submarine shore lines of the Sunda Land are at depths of -82-90 m, -67 m, -60 m, -50-51 m, -45 m, -36 m, -30-33 m, -28 m, -18-22 m, -13 m, -10 m, and -7 m. Elevated beaches above the present sea level are at +10-12 m, +16-18 m, +30-33 m, and +50 m. Variable sea levels of the past 6,000 years left traces at a few meters below till about 6 meter above the present sea stand.

Warping appears to be indicated along the western margin of the Sunda Land where on one side submergence amounting to 30 m and on the other side emergence of 30 m have occurred since the last glaciation.

INTRODUCTION

The Sunda Land comprises the Sunda Shelf and contiguous areas of tectonic basement — which became consolidated in pre-Jurassic or pre-Cretaceous times — in the Malayan Peninsula, eastern rim of Sumatra, and a large part of South and West Kalimantan (or Borneo; fig.1). This craton is the southeastern extension of the Asiatic continent. The Sunda Shelf itself is covered by the Java Sea and the southern parts of the South China Sea and the Gulf of Thailand (Fairbridge, 1966).

In the early twenties G.A.F. Molengraaff recog-

nized the sub-aerial character of the Sunda Shelf bathymetry. This author and later workers were able to trace two large river systems on the shelf, the North Sunda River rising in Sumatra and West Kalimantan and debouching in the South China Sea near the Natuna islands, and the East Sunda River possessing tributaries in Java and South Kalimantan while debouching into the Bali Sea at the south end of Makassar Straits. Hydrographical surveys and faunistic studies have confirmed Molengraaff's findings (van Bemmelen, 1949).

For this paper the author collected data on elevated shorelines and submerged benches in order to attempt a correlation of the Quaternary strandlines with established Quaternary sea levels elsewhere. The tectonic stability of the Sunda Land, except presumably along its boundaries, should yield information on undeformed Quaternary shorelines.

The writer is grateful to S.R.M. Harvey, formerly senior geologist of Ocean Mining, Inc., who worked in Indonesia in 1967, and who unknowingly stimulated the compilation of the present report. Thanks are also due to Moh. Oentoeng, geophysicist of the Geological Survey, Indonesia, for his cooperation in furnishing unpublished information of recent work in the waters around the Indonesian tin islands.

QUATERNARY SEA LEVELS OF THE SUNDA LAND

Evidence of former sea levels. — On land strandlines higher than the present sea level are recorded as marine abrasion or depositional terraces, elevated

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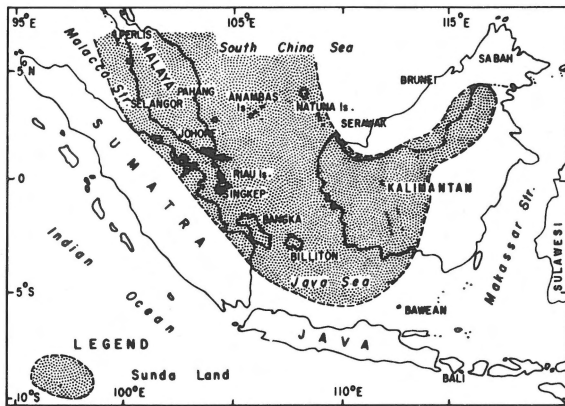


Fig. 1
Outline map of the Sunda Land area.

littoral sediments and beach ridges, and especially along limestone coasts as sea level notches. Offshore, former shorelines are indicated by submarine abrasion or depositional benches, slope breaks, and submerged littoral plus associated fluvial deposits. Data on former sea levels have been collected from the literature, unpublished drill hole records of the Indonesian tin islands, and from bathymetric contour maps constructed from a number of British and Dutch navigational charts. In the drilling records the recurrent depths of tin concentrations upon bedrock have been regarded to be associated with certain baselevels. It is logical to assume that the sea level responsible for each level of tin accumulation is higher than the elevation of the placer. Although this must be so (see e.g. information on North Kalmoa, Billiton, in Table I), yet the author believes that the differences are in the order of a few meters only. On the constructed bathymetric maps only those submarine benches which are clearly shown, have been considered to represent former baselevels.

There are few absolute ages known for Quaternary deposits of the Sunda Land. A 10-foot marine terrace in Perlis, West Malaysia, was radiocarbon-dated at $5,200 \pm 200$ yrs (Alexander, 1961). Stigmara standing erect in soft bedrock below a tin placer in Billiton were beyond the measuring range of the carbon isotope method, namely more than 55,000 yrs (Krol, 1960). Billitonites (tektites) resting upon tin placers and sometimes also upon eluvial tin concentrations were shown by K-Ar dating to be 570,000 yrs (Gentner & Zähringer, 1960). Cissarz & Baum (1960) determined the age of a perched tin placer (locally called *menchang*) in a Bangka mine as $24,000 \pm 2,000$ yrs.

Outside the Sunda Land proper, adjacent Brunei and Sarawak areas have furnished absolute ages of 700,000 yrs for tektites associated with the warped Jerudong terrace (60-100 ft above sea level); 4,500-5,400 yrs for the 6-foot terrace; $2,170 \pm 150$ yrs B.P. for a probable lower strandline (3-foot) as is indicated by drowned wood (Wilford, et al. 1966; Wilford, 1967).

Uncompacted and fresh-looking deposits of clastics are usually regarded to be of Quaternary age. Horizontal to sub-horizontal attitudes of sediments constitute another criterion in relative age determination. The Billiton geologists, like Osberger (1965) believe that the tin placers have been accumulating since Early Pleistocene. These placers have been found together with the tektites already described, but may also be associated with elephant teeth estimated to be 2,000-4,000 yrs old.

Fairbridge (1961, 1966) has postulated that the Günz and Mindel glaciations did not lower the sea below the present level, because the global, Quaternary diastrophic eustasy caused by subsidence of quasi-cratonic crustal blocks — a.o. the South China Sea and the western Pacific basins — had not yet attained its maximum value. Only during the last two glaciations was the sea level sufficiently lowered by the combined effects of the tectonic and glacial eustasy to expose extensive areas of the present shelves.

Range of Quaternary sea levels. — The maximum depth of glacially depressed sea levels on the Sunda Shelf has been estimated to range between less than -100 m to -72 m (see Umbgrove, 1929). World-wide comparisons led Flint (1957) to assign a maximum value of $+50$ m for the highest interglacial sea stand above the present sea level. In the Indonesian Archipelago the post-Glacial "Daly" levels at about 5 m, 1.5-2 m, and 0.5-1 m above the present sea level have been well established. Comparisons with other areas indicate their respective ages to be 6,000 yr, 5,000 yr, and 3,500 yr B.P. Detail mapping in several areas in Java and specific observations in South Sumatra and SW-Sulawesi have led the present writer to postulate that the marine "Daly" levels have fluvial counterparts at similar levels above the current streams and can be traced till scores of kilometers inland and approaching absolute altitudes of almost 100 m (Tjia, 1968). In the next section the author states his opinion that the tin placers

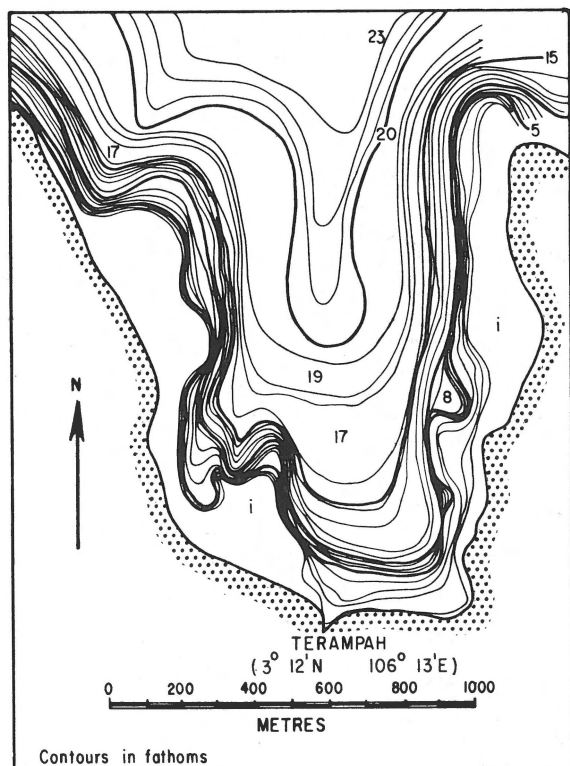


Fig. 2
Bathymetry of Terampah Bay, Siantan Island, Anambas Group. Note submerged benches at 1, 17, 20 and 23 (?) fathoms (1.8, 31, 36.5, and 42 meters).
Data from Royal Navy Admiralty Chart no. 2244, published in 1959.

below the land surface can be correlated to those which occur offshore at identical depths.

Bangka, Billiton, and Singkep. — Molen-graaff (1922) reported that offshore tin placers were known at -17 m depth below the present sea level up to a distance of 1.5 km south off Singkep Island. Off the eastern coast of South Sumatra submarine banks were mentioned by van Tuyn (1932). Van Overeem (1960) listed a series of drowned strandlines encountered during offshore tin exploration around Billiton. The evidence comprises breaks in slope at -10 m, erosion or abrasion levels at -20 m and -30 m, hardpans at -16 m, -18 m, and, between -15 to -24 m, and at last a drowned valley bottom at -45 m. At the moment marine kaksas or tin placers are being won from general depths of -20 to -25 m below sea level.

Drilling and dredging records of marine mining areas around Billiton show recurrences of kaksas at

depths of -17 to -18 m, about -22 m and -28 m (compare Table I). The logs further show benches at -8 m, -10 m, and -13 m.

Offshore Toboali, SW-Bangka, the drilling logs record tin placers at -10 m, -16 m, and -19 to 21 m depths. Onshore, Geursen (1933) showed storied tin concentrations at Air Mesu, Pangkalpinang, Bangka, where the kaksas are 7 m, 18 m, and 29 m below the surface of the coastal plain.

Above the present sea level terraces and marine deposits are known from Bangka and Billiton at $+2$ m, $+6-8$ m, and $+18$ m. The 18-meter terrace in the Ranggam Beds in Bangka has been considered to indicate warping, because elsewhere these beds occur at $+4-5$ m or even below sea level (Osberger, 1965). Furthermore, stream gradients and surface slopes in both islands show distinct breaks in slope at elevations between $+50$ m and $+65$ m.

Riau Islands. — Bothé (1928) described tin deposits in the Riau Islands from depths of 15-20 m, and 30 m below the land surface. The positions of these deposits are similar to those found for the producing tin islands farther south.

While on assignment in Bintan, the author noted that exploitable bauxite deposits most frequently occur between 25 m and 60 m above sea level. A top limit of mineable bauxite at $+60$ m is also indicated on the maps of the Central Riau Islands which were surveyed by Johnson & Marjono (1963). Since bauxitization is thought to be associated with peneplains and extended periods of tropical weathering, the $+60$ m level of bauxite deposits appears to be indicative of one erosion plane approximately at that altitude.

West Malaysia (Malayan Peninsula). — Various authors report the alluvial cover to amount to 120 m-130 m, which accumulated since the sea level was so much lower. These thicknesses have been proven to exist also upon non-calcareous bedrock (Richardson, 1947). Alluvial thickness also shows another shallower erosion level at approximately 50 m below the land surface.

Breaks in slope, ubiquitous at $+75-80$ m in the western coastal regions and marine clastics at $+75$ m in Johore seem to indicate maximum Quaternary sea levels (Walker, 1956; Burton, 1964). Fitch (1949, 1951) following J.B. Scrivenor, attributed these indications of high shorelines to epirogenic

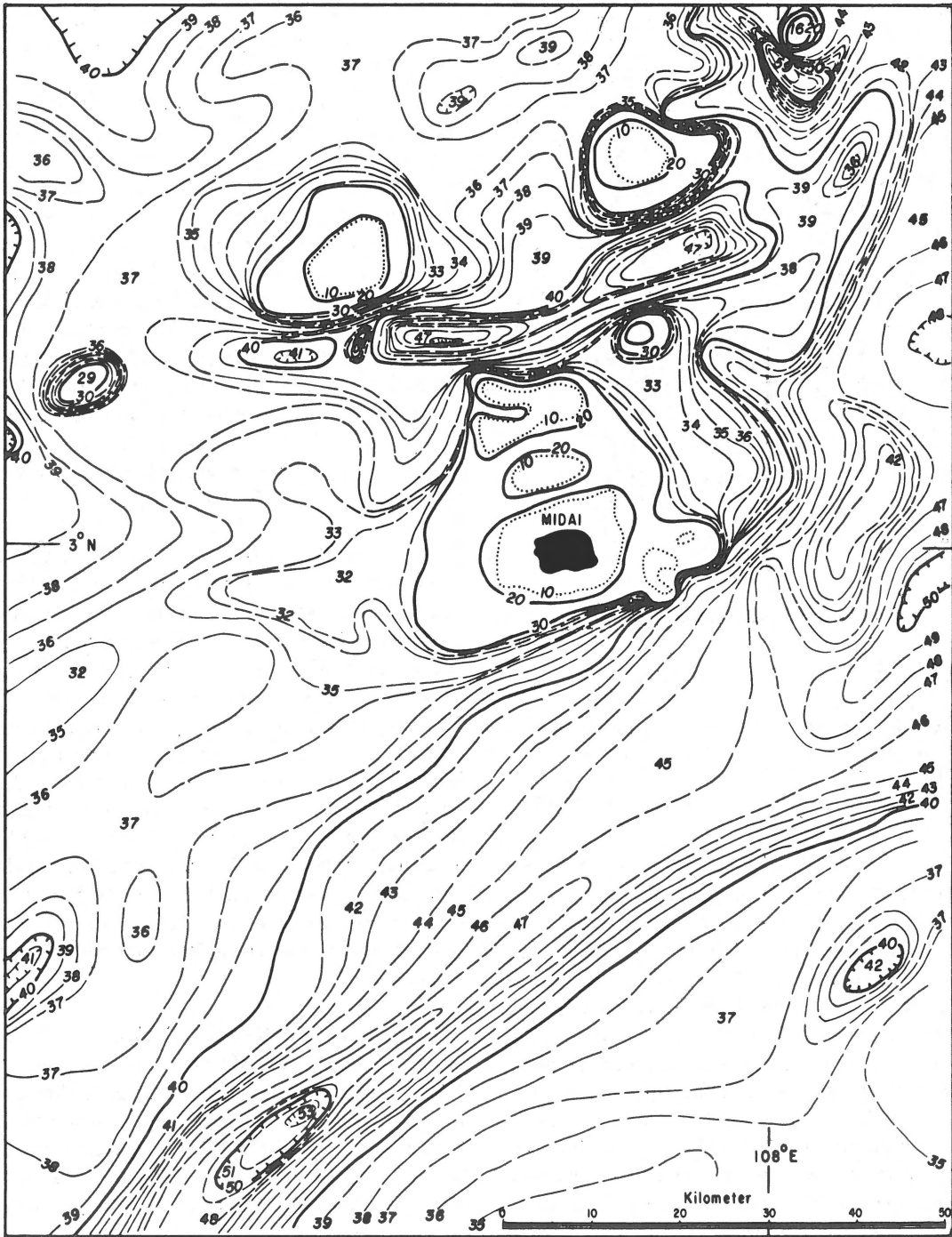


Fig. 3
Bathymetry of the Sunda Shelf in the vicinity of Midai Island, South China Sea. Note submerged benches at 32, 37, 39, and 45 fathoms (60, 67.5, 71, and 82 meters). The lower two flats may indicate drowned terraces of the North Sunda River channel, which is shown by the 40-fathom contour.
Data from Royal Navy Admiralty Chart no. 1311, published in 1955. Contours only completed for depths exceeding 30 fathoms.

TABLE I
Evidence of Quaternary Sea Levels.

Locality	Reference to present s.l. in meter	Type	Source
<i>Bangka</i>			
1. Toboali, offshore	- 10.5 - 15-16.5 - 19-21	Tin placer Tin placer Tin placer	Drill logs Drill logs Drill logs
2. Air Mesu, onshore	- 7* - 15* - 18* - 29*	Tin placer Tin placer Tin placer Tin placer	Geursen, 1933 Geursen, 1933 Geursen, 1933 Geursen, 1933
3. Tempilang, onshore	- 18*	Tin placer	Geursen, 1933
4. Coasts of Bangka	+ 2 + 8	Corals Terraces	Verbeek, 1897 Osberger, 1962
5. Ranggalam	+ 18	Terrace	Osberger, 1962
6. Bangka, onshore	+ 50-65	Break in slope	Top. maps
<i>Billiton</i>			
1. Manggar, onshore	- 7* - 16-18*	Tin placer Tin placer	Adam, 1933 Adam, 1933
2. Sungai Padang, offshore	- 10 - 4-5	Break in slope Valley bottom	van Overeem, 1960 van Overeem, 1960
3. Teluk Pring, offshore	- 20-25	Tin placer	van Overeem, 1960
4. Off North coast	- 15-24	Hard pans	van Overeem, 1960
5. Off West coast	- 16	Hard pans	van Overeem, 1960
6. Off East coast	- 18	Hard pans	van Overeem, 1960
7. Off Billiton coasts	- 20 - 30	Erosion or abrasion levels	van Overeem, 1960 van Overeem, 1960
8. Tandjung Pandan, offshore	- 13 - 20-22 - 25-26 - 31	Bench in sediment Bench in sediment and tin placer Tin placer Bench in bedrock	Drill logs Drill logs Drill logs Drill logs
9. North Kalmoa, offshore	- 13 - 17 - 17-19 - 25-27.5	Bench in sediment Bench in bedrock Tin placer Bench in bedrock	Drill logs Drill logs Drill logs Drill logs
10. Tandjung Kubu, offshore	- 13 - 17 - 22.5 - 24 - 28	Bench in sediment Bench in bedrock Tin placer Tin placer Tin placer	Drill logs Drill logs Drill logs Drill logs Drill logs
11. Sungai Padang, offshore	- 5-7 - 8 - 10 - 10-12 - 15 - 20	Bench in sediment Bench in sediment Bench in sediment Bench in bedrock Bench in bedrock Bench in bedrock	Drill logs Drill logs Drill logs Drill logs Drill logs Drill logs

Locality	Reference to present s.l. in meter	Type	Source
12. Tandjung Siantu, offshore	- 8 - 10 - 20	Bench in sediment Bench in sediment Bench in bedrock	Drill logs Drill logs Drill logs
13. Billiton, East coast	+ 6 + 18	Terrace Terrace	van Overeem, 1960 van Overeem, 1960
14. Billiton, S.E.	+ 25	Terrace	van Overeem, 1960
15. Billiton Island	+ 2 + 6-8 + 50	Corals Marine shells Break in slope	Verbeek, 1897 Osberger, 1962 Top. maps.
<i>Singkep</i>			
1. Dabo valley, offshore	- 17	Tin placer	Molengraaff, 1922
2. Off South coast	- 17	Tin placer	Molengraaff, 1922
<i>Riau - group</i>			
1. Riau Islands	- 15-20* - 21-25* - 30*	Tin accumulation Tin accumulation Tin accumulation	Bothé, 1925 Bothé, 1925 Bothé, 1925
2. Bintan Island	+ 60	Top limit of exploitation of bauxite	Field observation
<i>West Malaysia (Malaya)</i>			
1. Sungei Soi, Kuantan, Pahang	+ 16 (50 ft)	Alluvial flat	Fitch, 1949
2. Chukai, Trengganu	+ 5 (15 ft) + 12 (35 ft)	Beach ridge Beach ridge	Fitch, 1949 Fitch, 1949
3. Kuantan, Pahang	- 52* (160 ft) + 5 (15 ft) + 12 (36 ft)	Alluvium Beach ridge Beach ridge	Fitch, 1951 Fitch, 1951 Fitch, 1951
4. Northeast Johore	+ 6	Beach ridge	Nossin, 1962
5. Johore	- 49* (150 ft) + 75 (230 ft)	Marine clastics Marine clastics	Burton, 1964 Burton, 1964
6. East coast: Kuala Trengganu-K. Pahang	+ 10 (30 ft)	Beach ridge	Nossin, 1965
7. Selangor	> - 33* (100 ft)	Alluvium	Roe, 1949
8. Lapan Utara, Selangor	- 75* (220 ft)	Shells and unconsolidated sed.	Roe, 1951
9. West Coast	- 130* (400 ft) + 82 (250 ft) + 30-36 (90-110 ft) + 3-5 (10-15 ft)	Bedrock under alluvium Ubiquitous break in slope Coastal bench Raised shore line	Walker, 1956 Walker, 1956 Walker, 1956 Walker, 1956
10. Sitiawan, Perak	- 120* (-365 ft)	Alluvium upon phyllite	Willbourn, 1941
11. Dinding, Perak	+ 3 + 6	Beach ridge Beach ridge	Koopmans, 1964 Koopmans, 1964
12. Perlis	+ 3 (10 ft)	Terrace	Alexander, 1961
13. Langkawi islands	> + 65 (200 ft)	Elevated shore lines	Scrivenor & Willbourn, 1923
14. Malayan Peninsula	+ 16 (50 ft)	Alluvium and terraces	Walker, 1956
<i>Singapore</i>			
1. Singapore Island	+ 16-33 (50-100 ft)	Alluvium	Scrivenor, 1924

Locality	Reference to present s.l. in meter	Type	Source
<i>Thailand</i>			
Thailand	< + 50	Terraces	S e t h a p u t, 1956
Peninsular Thailand, West Coast	+ 3-12	Terraces	S e t h a p u t, 1956
Peninsular Thailand, East Coast	- 30*	Alluvium	S e t h a p u t, 1956
Bangkok	- 300*	Alluvium	S e t h a p u t, 1956
<i>Vietnam</i>			
Vietnam	- 40	Würm beach sed.	S a u r i n, 1956
	+ 2	Holocene terrace	S a u r i n, 1956
	+ 4	Holocene terrace	S a u r i n, 1956
<i>Lunda Shelf</i>			
Tambelan and Badas islands	- 31-32 - 36.5 - 49.5-51 - 60.5	Submarine bench Submarine bench Submarine bench Drowned fluvial terrace	British Admiralty Chart no. 1312
Midai Islands	- 60.5 - 67.5 - 71 - 82	Submarine bench Submarine bench Submarine bench Drowned fluvial terrace	British Admiralty Chart no. 1311
Area east of Great Natuna Island	- 82-88 - 90 - 95-97	Submarine bench Drowned fluvial terrace Submarine bench	British Admiralty Chart no. 1311
South Natuna Is.	- 18-22 - 31-32 - 36.5 - 44-45.5 - 51-55 - 60.5	Submarine bench Submarine bench Submarine bench Submarine bench Submarine bench Submarine bench	British Admiralty Chart no. 2104
Area south of NE group Anambas Is.	- 50 - 54 - 60.5	Submarine bench Submarine bench Submarine bench	British Admiralty Chart no. 2244
Terampah Bay, Siantan Island, Anambas group	- 1.8 - 31 - 36.5 - 42 (?)	Submarine bench Submarine bench Submarine bench Submarine bench	British Admiralty Chart no. 2244 1 : 15,000
<i>East Malaysia</i>			
East Malaysia	+ 5 + 50	Coral reefs Coral reefs and terraces	F i t c h, 1954 F i t c h, 1954
Kuching Airfield Sarawak	+ 30	Terrace	H a i l e, 1949
Brooketon to Tutong, Brunei	+ 16-20	Terrace	F i t c h, 1954
Miri, Sarawak	+ 40 + 12-13	Terrace Terrace	W i l f o r d, 1951 W i l f o r d, 1954

Land surface is datum plane.

majority of Quaternary geologists accepted to indicate the last glaciation.

As Table II shows, the positive shorelines of the Sunda area are in the range of those determined in the Mediterranean region. Of the submarine shorelines of the Sunda Shelf only a few can be correlated with reasonable accuracy with those in other localities. This fact only shows the imperfect knowledge of submerged sea levels of the Quaternary.

One should also bear in mind that correlation of former sea levels by their respective elevations alone should only be regarded as a tentative attempt. Shepard (1963) has shown that elevated shorelines of the Hawaiian Islands with identical altitudes as the "Daly" levels indicate radiometric ages of 20,000 yr and 31,000 yr. This shows, that tectonic disturbances modified the elevations or that sea levels of various ages may have had duplicate altitudes.

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