New value of displacement of Bok Bak fault and its implication on the Chuping limestone formation of Kedah and Perlis, Malaysia

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Abstract: A recent discovery and definition of the extension of 82 kilometres of Bok Bak fault in north Kedah and Perlis makes way for a plausible interpretation of the amount of displacement of the fault. Based on the disposition of two pairs of correlatable rock-units which exhibit similarities in orientation, lithology, and microfossil contents on opposite sides of the fault, the displacement is inferred to be about ten kilometres sinistrally. This interpretation has been carried out in an objective manner and therefore its outcome should prevail over earlier ones which are speculative in nature. Apparently the fault displaced Bukit Kepelu, Bukit Mulong and Bukit Kodiang in north Kedah from Bukit Chuping in central Perlis, and these hills are hereby thought to have been once a continuous rock unit of the Chuping limestone formation.

INTRODUCTION

Bok Bak fault was named by Burton (1965) who mapped a prominent 30½ kilometre long sinistral-slip fault in the 330° direction running across his assigned map area in Baling, south Kedah. In addition, Rozita (1992) and Teoh (1992) has observed fault markings of Bok Bak fault at the western margin of Bukit Perak granite massif, central Kedah. Their observations substantiate the generally accepted inference of the extension of Bok Bak fault for 32½ kilometres northwest of the Baling area up to the west margin of Bukit Perak (Lai, 1987; Tjia, 1989). Burton’s (1965) postulation that the fault extended more than 400 kilometres into north Kedah and Perlis, initially north-westward in an arcuate manner, then straight northwards into south Thailand, had remained unsubstantiated for three decades.

PREVIOUS INTERPRETATIONS

The amount of displacement of Bok Bak fault has been subjected to four different interpretations. Three of the interpretations made were related to areas where the exact location of the fault was still under speculation or its presence was unsubstantiated by field evidence. A fourth interpretation (see Burley and Jamaluddin, 1989) is confined over a defined and an adjacent-inferred sections of the fault in south Kedah. Burton (1965) based his interpretation on the apparent amount of displacement between the Semanggol rocks of Padang Terap area in north Kedah, and that of the Kulim-Baling area in south Kedah, and suggested a sinistral displacement of between 5½ and 58 km. Ibrahim Abdullah et al. (1989) notice a shortcoming in Burton’s interpretation as the Semanggol rocks in the two areas cannot be matched because they strike in almost orthogonal directions. To cater for the disparity in the strike directions, Ibrahim Abdullah et al. (1989) took a simplistic approach by speculating that the Semanggol Formation in the Kulim-Baling area had been rotated by granite intrusion. After undoing the rotation and matching the Semanggol rocks on the basis of lithofacies equivalence, they concluded a 25 km left-lateral displacement.

Burley and Jamaluddin (1990) notice a similarity in strike and dip (“steepness”) of the granite boundaries in south Kedah on opposing
sides of the Bok Bak fault, and based on this feature they inferred a sinistral displacement of 30 km. Raj (1982) used Landsat imageries to delineate the probable southward extension of Bok Bak fault up to southwest Kelantan; then by restoring the continuity of the Main Range granite in southwest Kelantan and the Lower Paleozoic strata in Central Perlak, he concluded a 20 km left-lateral displacement.

**AMOUNT OF DISPLACEMENT FROM THE NORTH KEDAH AND PERLIS SECTION**

Recently, an additional extension of 82 km of Bok Bak fault northwest of Bukit Perak, was substantiated when Almashoor (1995) delineated and defined a 58 km segment of the fault zone in north Kedah and Perlis. The fault runs in the 320° direction and its zone is estimated 800 metres wide. Fault markings seen near Jitra and Pokok Sena (in Kedah) imply a left-lateral movement. The location of this segment of Bok Bak fault discrepant with that speculated by Burton (1965).

An earlier report by Abdul Majid Sahat (1987) had placed an additional extension of 70 km to the southeast of the Baling area. Therefore, from the Sungai Siput area to the Perlis/Thailand boundary the confirmed length of Bok Bak fault now stands at 215 km, and is thus established as a major fault in Peninsular Malaysia (Almashoor, 1995).

The segment of Bok Bak fault defined by Almashoor (1995) enables one to make a reliable and perhaps accurate interpretation on the amount of displacement of Bok Bak fault. The interpretation is made from the presence of two pairs of correlatable rock-units on opposite sides of the fault. One pair of matchable unit are Bukit Rawa and Bukit Tunjang (Fig. 1). These hills are sandstone beds of the argillo-arenaceous Upper Devonian-Permian Kubang Pasu Formation (Jones, 1978). These two hills are located adjacent to the Bok Bak fault zone 10 km apart from each other. Their topography, particularly that closest to the fault zone, shows the drag effect caused by the left-lateral movements of the fault. The similarities in lithology, (strike-)ridge orientation and size/thickness of Bukit Rawa and Bukit Tunjang suggest that they could possibly have, at one time, been a continuous sandstone bed/hill, but are now separated from each other by about 10 kilometres by the Bok Bak fault.

The second pair of correlatable rock units are between the group of Chuping limestone hills in Perlis and the group limestone hills near Kodiang in Kedah. Both groups of hills (or mogotes) are aligned in nearly N-S directed zones that are located ten kilometres apart on opposite sides of Bok Bak fault. It thus appears that the two groups of mogotes could have been the same unit once, but had been offset by the fault over a similar distance of about ten kilometres.

Agewise, the two groups of hills are quite similar, and therefore may be grouped into the Chuping limestone (see also Kamal Roslan, 1989). The Chuping limestone mogotes of central Perlis were thought to be of Permian age (Jones 1978, pp. 104 and 106) but are now extended into upper Middle Triassic or lower Upper Triassic (Ladinian or Carnian) based on the discovery of Triassic microfossils in Bukit Chuping (Fontaine et al., 1988). Bukit Chuping is, incidentally, located adjacent to the Bok Bak fault.

The limestone mogotes near Kodiang range in age from Late Permian (Metcalfe, 1981) to early Late Triassic (Koike, 1973, 1982). Bukit Kepelu, which is located closest to the fault, contains upper Carnian-lower Norian (Upper Triassic) conodonts, whilst Bukit Mulong, the next mogote closest to the fault, possesses a lower Norian conodont element (Yii, 1979). The next hill in the sequence, Bukit Kodiang, contains late Anisian to early Carnian conodonts (Koike, 1982). Apparently, Bukit Kepelu, Bukit Mulong, Bukit Kodiang and Bukit Chuping were probably once a continuous sequence but have been offset by the Bok Bak fault by ten kilometres. Such a close linkage between the hills invalidates the formational status of Kodiang limestone as put forward by de Coo and Smit (1975).

**CONCLUSIONS**

A detailed lithostratigraphic and biostratigraphic study on Bukit Kepelu-Bukit Mulong and Bukit Chuping to establish their kinship would help to confirm the amount of displacement of Bok Bak fault. However, at this moment, the lithologic and topographic correlations that are presented in this paper strongly suggest that there had been a net left-lateral displacement of 10 kilometres along the Bok Bak fault. As the amount of displacement is estimated from two pairs of what appear to be lithologically and chronologically correlatable rock-units that are located on opposite sides of the fault, the estimation should be a reliable quantification compared to previous estimates which are mainly speculative in nature.

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Figure 1. The location of Bok Bak fault in North Kedah and Perlis, Malaysia. Note the ten-kilometre displacement between Bukit Chuping and Bukit Kepelu (of Chuping limestone formation) and between Bukit Rawa and Bukit Tunjang (of Kubang Pasu Formation), which are used in the interpretation of the amount of displacement of Bok Bak fault. Note also that Bukit Chuping and Bukit Ngulang are on opposite sides of the fault, and that the latter belongs to the Setul formation (Almashoor, 1995). Modified from map by Jones (1978).
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