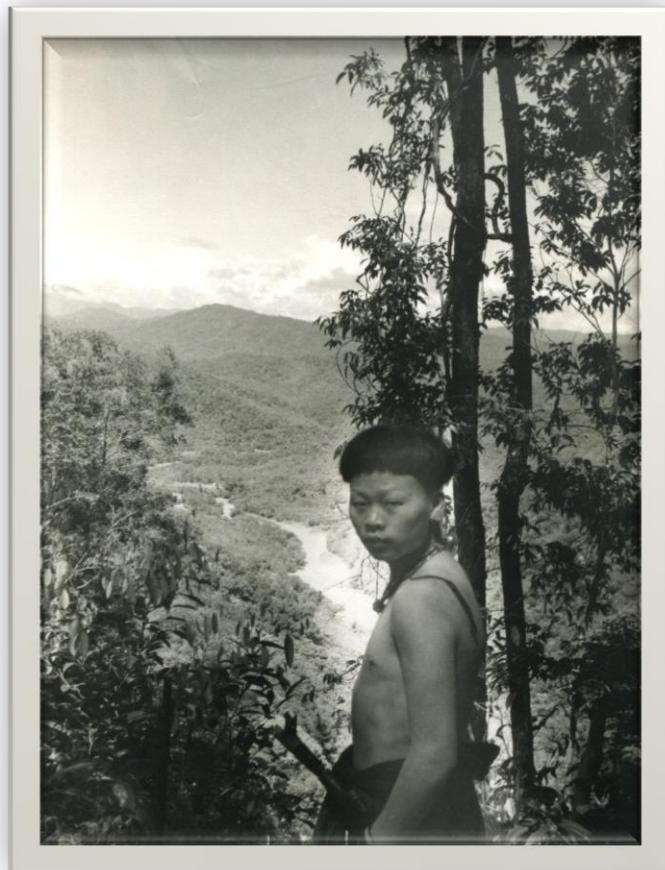


# **SARAWAK ANECDOTES**

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**A PERSONAL MEMOIR OF  
SERVICE 1947 – 1965**



by Ian Urquhart



DEDICATED TO

BUNTY

who married me in Kuching, Sarawak

and to

MURDO and ALEXA

who were born in Sibü, Sarawak

and to

NEIL

who was born in Sibü, Malaysia

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Acknowledgements to Mr Paul Pickering for his patient support as I struggled with my computer.

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Ian Urquhart started writing these memoirs in the mid-1990s and completed them shortly before he died in June 2012. He always hoped that they would be freely available to family, friends and anyone who shared his love of Sarawak and its people.

This book has been published on the internet at [www.sarawakanecdotes.co.uk](http://www.sarawakanecdotes.co.uk) so that it may be read by anyone with an interest in the subjects it covers. It may be referred to or quoted with due acknowledgement to the author. © I A N Urquhart 2012

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Front Cover: Nomadic Penan at Lio Match (100 islands) with Kubu (Fort) in the distance, 1956.



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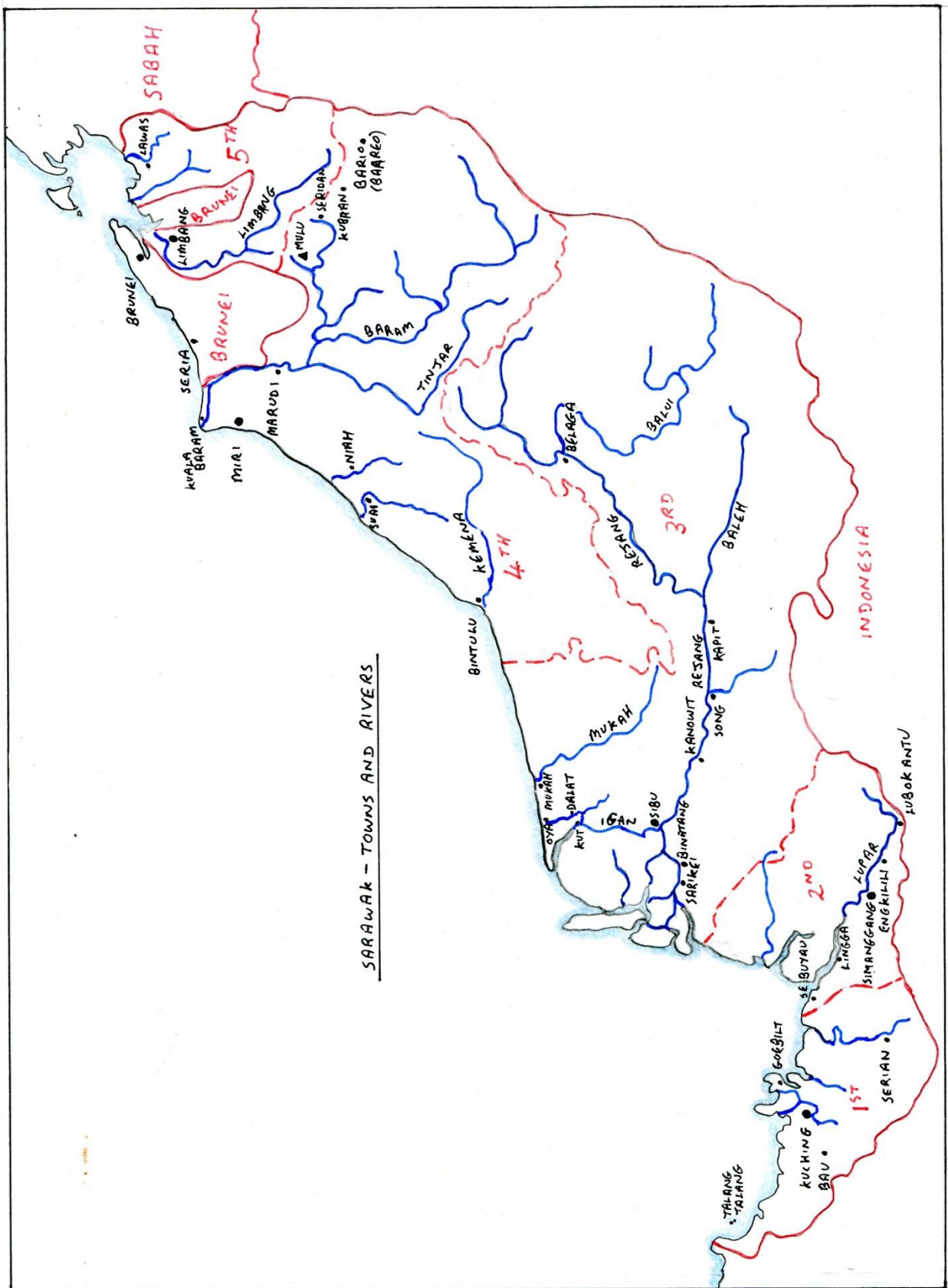
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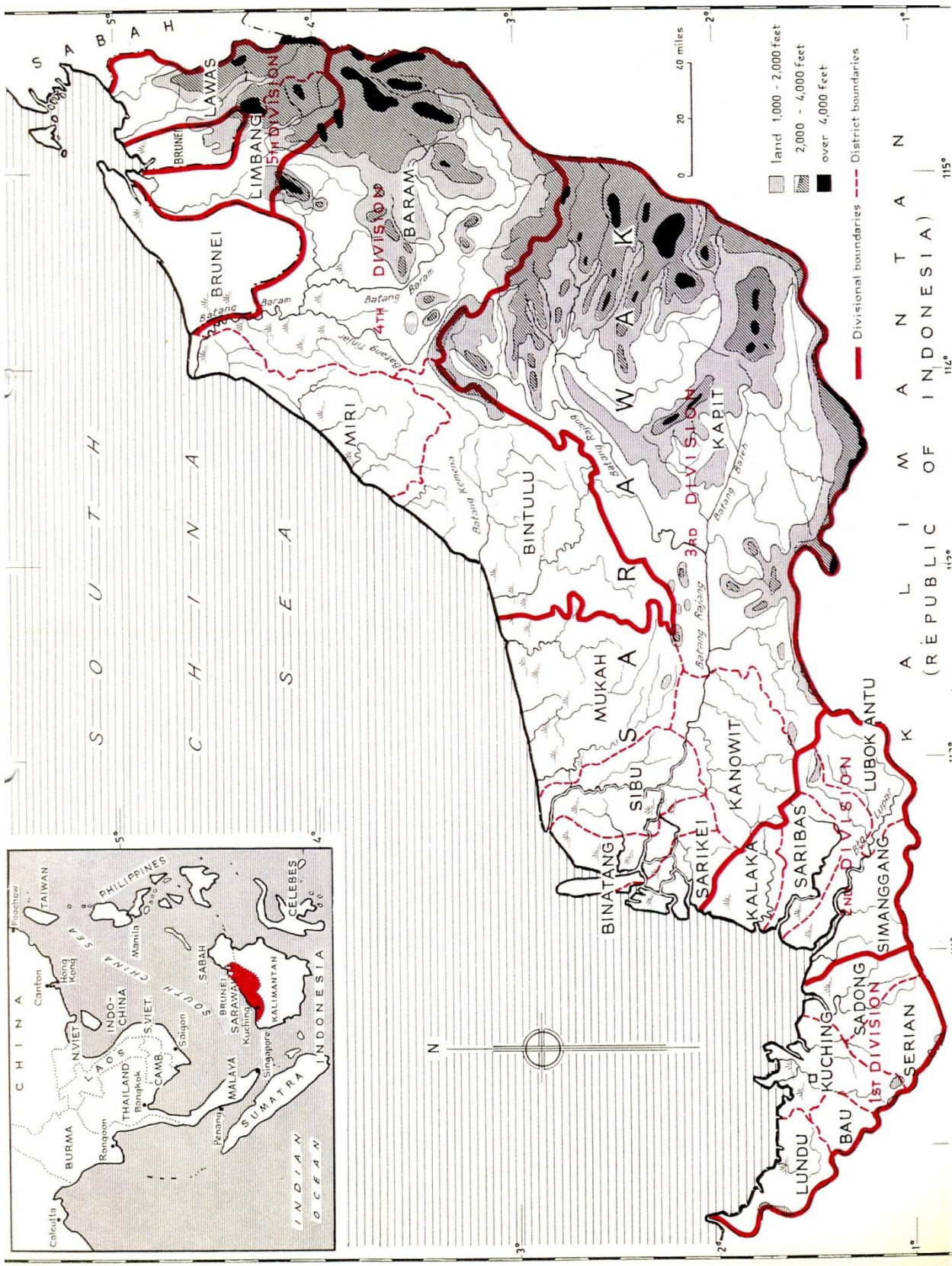
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## 1 – INTRODUCTION

Why have I written “Sarawak Anecdotes”? Well, I wished to put on record this mishmash of disconnected facts. Some of these I experienced at first hand, some were stories that I was told about in person and some are my own views of certain developments in Sarawak. Through it all I have expressed some views, tinted perhaps with a certain amount of cynicism, even of schadenfreude, and a distorted sense of humour. A few of my articles and opinions are of a serious nature. My object in passing on my views is to entertain and/or interest my readers and, above all, to give our grandchildren an idea of how Bunty and I occupied our time in Sarawak.

In 'Anecdotes', I have commented in my own words (not usually going into the subject in great depth) on matters that have already been officially but unemotionally and dully recorded elsewhere in governmental officialese – a style of language which would be quite unsuitable for my purposes. Some of my personal experiences, on such subjects as the introduction of Local Government will, I hope, give a human touch, unfortunately lacking in Government documents, to what are after all (whatever the style of words used) important matters.

After demobilisation from the Army in 1946 at the end of my war service in India and Burma, I was lucky enough to have been sent to Sarawak about three months after it had become a colony. I thoroughly enjoyed my 18 years in the Sarawak Administrative Service. I felt that I was really taking part in a worthwhile job in what was one of the happiest and nicest countries that one could possibly work in. When I arrived in Sarawak it was one of the few examples in the world of a multi-racial country in which there was the very minimum of racial tension and where the greatest forbearance was shown by each race regarding the differing views and customs of others. I largely attribute this to the wise and tolerant government of the three Brooke Rajahs during their century as heads of state. One of the wisest principles that the Colonial Government inherited from the White Rajahs (and which it made a point of not changing), was the important right of access by individuals of all races to any departmental officer and, so far as the Administration was concerned, not only to their offices but also to their homes. This meant that I, and later on my wife and I, made lasting personal friendships with individuals of all races. The many formal and informal visits by the ruled to their rulers and vice versa also meant that Government was able to keep in touch with the views of the people.

When I was asked what my job was and answered that I was in the Colonial Service, I presumed that the speaker would think, as I did, that I was doing my best to carry out the worthwhile job of helping to improve the lot of mankind in Sarawak. However, I found out that many British people, and even more Americans, had never troubled to consider what were the objectives of the British during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century while administering India and the various British colonies nor of how successful or not they were in achieving these objectives. I not infrequently realised, by their looks of disapproval, that they had no wish to talk to me about colonialism as they hurriedly changed the subject of conversation to something less distasteful.

If I asked such people to tell me what they thought my job consisted of, I usually found that they knew nothing at all about the Colonial Service and certainly nothing about the ethos and practical problems of carrying out modern British colonial policies. This, of course, did not stop them from pointing out to me how iniquitous it was that people of

one race should subjugate people of other races against their wills and carry out harsh policies that brought great prosperity to Britain at the expense of the colonial territories. If I asked them to quote cases to me, they had all heard about the atrocious behaviour of the Belgians in the Belgian Congo in Victorian times and of the dreadful colour bar that, according to them, existed pre-war in India and in Shanghai, which many seemed to assume was a colony! It is a sad fact that so many individuals (even educated ones) are prepared to air their ignorant and dogmatic views on a certain subject either during a private conversation or during international meetings (not excluding the United Nations) and, worse still, that they often did not feel the need to take the trouble to become properly knowledgeable and up to date on the subject under discussion.

This is not the place to write a thesis on the evils and good points of British colonialism in the past and in my lifetime. So far as I am concerned, it never occurred to me that, after India had been given its independence, I was about to experience the British Government's rush to get rid of its colonies. As Britain had taken over Sarawak when I was aged 26, I felt quite safe that I would be able to stay in my job until I was 55. Surely, no-one could have expected that the British Government would assume control of Sarawak in 1946 and would be ready to give it its independence only 17 years later!

My own opinion is that, in a few cases, the rule by foreigners can be justified. I also hazard a guess that many of the inhabitants of several of those many British Colonies, that quite peacefully got their independence in the 1950s and 1960s, most of them without the loss of any life, now regret that they are experiencing much lower standards of living and even of freedom than they did on their independence day. In multi-racial countries, there is something to be said for having expatriate rulers, who will be retiring to a country other than the one that they are ruling, and so be acceptable as adjudicators in racial problems.

In India, the number of British forces was tiny in comparison with its huge population, especially as they had to deal with its great internal security problems largely due to the sad effects of religious intolerance. J.K. Galbraith, the American economist, once said that the British ran India with fewer people than were employed in the modern kitchens at Harvard University!

In 1939, the 26 million people of British West Africa had merely 528 Colonial Service administrators to cover ALL the various departments of Government, 332 police and military officers and 387 public works officers. The Judiciary for this 497,000 square mile territory numbered 69.

If British rule had been so hateful, one would have expected that the two world wars and, especially in the second of them when Britain struggled alone against Germany and was nearly brought to her knees when Japan entered the war, would have been an excellent opportunity to rise up and throw the British out. The only country to do so was Ireland towards the end of the First World War! On the contrary, India and some of the colonies provided large numbers of volunteer soldiers to fight on Britain's side. The Indian Army was the largest volunteer army in the world. After the loss of Singapore, when it looked as though Britain might lose the war, the Japanese expected that the large number of Indian soldiers, captured at that time, would eagerly join the Indian National Army (INA), started up by them. The majority of these Indian prisoners despite being tortured, refused to join the INA, which remained an ineffective body of very low morale and a number of those prisoners, who had joined the INA, changed sides as soon as they had a chance to do so.

This has been a long project started in the mid-1980s when I retired to Croydon. I have often had cause to regret that I did not keep a diary, especially now that I realise that I have a far from infallible memory and so cannot guarantee the complete accuracy of all my Anecdotes. I have included a selection of my photographs to illustrate these recollections and bring into focus a life that has long disappeared.

Enough pontificating by an old man, which can be so boring. I repeat that my main object in writing these 'Anecdotes' is to entertain my readers by producing a light hearted mixture of disconnected snippets from Sarawak; and I stress that what I have written is NEITHER meant to convey a typical picture of the history of my life NOR of the life of anyone else in Sarawak NOR to provide a balanced image of the development of that friendly country. The more colourful and idiosyncratic of the Somerset Maugham type characters that I have quoted in 'Anecdotes' make for more interesting reading than would the dull and respectable lives of the majority of the people who worked in Sarawak. If you want a book to give you a proper picture of colonial Sarawak – this is not the book for you. I hope that 'Anecdotes' will leave my readers with an impression of what a delightful place Sarawak was to live and work in.

Stratford-upon-Avon  
June 2012

## 2 – BACKGROUND PICTURE OF SARAWAK

This is not the place to give a detailed history of Sarawak or of its geography. Suffice it to say that the large island of Borneo bestrides the Equator and is divided into two by a range of mountains. The southern two thirds of the island is called 'Kalimantan' and is part of what used to be the Dutch East Indies and is now Indonesia, while the northern one third now consists of the independent Sultanate of Brunei and of two of the Malaysian states – now called Sarawak and Sabah. The international frontier between these two areas is along the watershed from the high central mountains with those rivers that flow north into the South China Sea being controlled by the British until the creation of Malaysia in 1963. Because of the high rainfall in the interior, there are a multitude of rivers flowing into the South China Sea, the biggest of which is the Rejang River, some 350 miles long. It has a large delta at the top of which is situated Sarawak's second town, Sibul, 80 miles from the river mouth where the river is almost a mile wide. The capital of Sarawak is Kuching on the Sarawak River some 18 miles from the sea. The Rejang and Sarawak Rivers are navigable by ocean-going ships for 170 and 22 miles respectively from the sea. Unfortunately most of the rivers have shallow bars, which limit the size of vessels entering them, though small coastal steamers and launches can use some of them. Because of the type of terrain, when I came to Sarawak there were virtually no roads and cross country travel entailed sailing down one river to the sea and then up another one.

Sarawak is an east-west lying country and so, contrary to a north-south positioned one, its fauna and flora are much the same throughout its length though, of course, the vegetation varies with the temperature and the amount of rainfall caused by the height of the terrain.

From the sea to its interior frontier with Indonesia, Sarawak has three main types of country. Namely:-

A wide coastal area often consisting of an area of mangrove swamp and behind it an area of swamp rain forest, while in other places cliffs come down to the sea's edge. There are also some areas of casuarina lined beaches. The rivers are often lined from their mouths to the swampy areas by mangrove or nipah palms.

Inland from the swamps is the coastal plain proper with a rolling countryside, in which there are isolated mountains or mountain groups sometimes rising to 2,000 feet. or more.

As one goes further inland, the foothills start getting ever higher and many of the rivers develop frequent rapids which hinder boat transport. The local natives are skilful at negotiating these in perahus propelled by paddlers or outboards. A perahu is a boat hewn out of a tree trunk and ranging from a one man paddler to a boat some 30 feet long. Sarawak's highest mountain is Murud (8,000 feet, 2,400m) on the Indonesian frontier.

Sarawak has a wet and a wetter season with annual rainfall varying from under 100 inches (250 mm) near the coast to over 200 inches (500 mm) inland in the neighbourhood of the mountains, where the rivers may rise in a short time 50 feet above their normal level. From April to September the winds blow mainly from the South West and this is Sarawak's drier season, with occasional periods of up to 3 weeks without rain.

From October to March they blow from the North East across the South China Sea, often with high winds, and this is the wetter season, known as the 'landas'.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Brunei was a powerful Malay Sultanate covering the whole of Northern Borneo – indeed the name 'Borneo' derives from the word 'Brunei'. In 1839, the Sultan of Brunei still held nominal sovereignty over the northern third part of Borneo but was having difficulty controlling parts of his realm. It was in that year that James Brooke, a gentleman, who hailed from Devonshire, sailed up the Sarawak River to Kuching. James had been in the East India Company army, was wounded and was sent home to England to recuperate. He overstayed his leave and had to leave the army. At that time his father died and left him £30,000. Being an adventurous type, he bought a 140 ton schooner, called the Royalist with, eventually, a couple of guns on it, and sailed to Singapore. There the Governor of Singapore asked him to take a letter to Kuching and hand it over to Rajah Muda Hassim, the Sultan's representative there. The letter thanked the Rajah for safely looking after British sailors who had been wrecked on the coast near the mouth of the Sarawak River. Whilst there, James Brooke became aware that the upriver Land Dayaks were in rebellion against the Government. The Rajah asked him to help in dealing with the Land Dayaks. This he managed to do with the approval of both sides and by a promise by the Malay rulers not to treat the Land Dayaks so harshly in future. James left Sarawak for Singapore but, on returning to Sarawak in 1841, he found that the Land Dayak rebellion had broken out again. Once more Rajah Muda Hasim asked for his help and James took some sailors from the Royalist and two guns upriver. The Land Dayaks agreed to submit if James Brooke would become their ruler instead of the Brunei chiefs. On 24<sup>th</sup> September 1841, the grateful Sultan handed over that part of his realm that lay between Tanjong (Cape) Datu and the mouth of the Sadong River to James to administer as Rajah of Sarawak. The Sultans could not control the interior tribes along the various rivers, starting with those on the eastern boundary of James's realm. James sought to persuade the inland tribes (mostly Sea-Dayaks, who called themselves 'Ibans') to make peace with him and so the incapable and poverty struck Sultan made James ruler of that bit of land. In due course James had to deal with his new neighbours and so it was that periodically the Sultan surrendered ever more of his realm to James or to his successors – his nephew Charles Brooke (1868 to 1917) and the latter's son Charles Vyner Brooke – and from this small beginning resulted the romantic saga of the three White Rajahs of Sarawak and of how the northern third of Borneo became known as British Borneo. In 1877, the Sultan had leased the northern part of his realm to the 'Chartered Company of North Borneo', which became known as British North Borneo. The reason that the Sultans could not keep the peace in their lands was partly because they had become degenerate and partly because they had no money to build an army to control the quarrelling interior tribes or a navy to control the pirates that often raided the coastal areas. Further they were Malays and Moslems and ruled through Malays, often their own relations, and lacked the vigour to control the inland tribes.

In 1888, Britain established Protectorates over Sarawak, Brunei and the Chartered Company of North Borneo, which meant that Britain would not interfere with their internal policies but did control their foreign affairs. The largest of these territories was Sarawak, which is now about the size of England without Wales and also a little smaller than Malaya. The Chartered Company of British North Borneo became, after the war, the Colony of North Borneo and, on the formation of Malaysia in 1963 was known as 'Sabah'.

By 1906, the once mighty Sultanate of Brunei had been reduced to two small enclaves, each completely surrounded by Sarawak except for their coast lines. At this point, the poverty struck Sultan asked Rajah James Brooke to take over his remaining two bits of territory in exchange for a pension for himself and his family. This made sense as these enclaves were not viable on their own and the Limbang River basin (by now within Sarawak) had traditionally traded through Brunei town, although this was now difficult as it was cut off from Brunei Bay by an international frontier. Having failed to object to the many previous surrenders by the Sultan of his territory to the Rajah, the British Government now inexplicably put its foot down and forbade the transaction with the result that the British Government now had a Protectorate over these two unviable enclaves of Brunei. Because Brunei had no worthwhile revenue coming in and was desperately poor, the British Government had to support the two enclaves at the British taxpayers' expense until many years later oil was found off shore of Seria just before World War Two and then Brunei became extremely rich. If the Rajah had been allowed to incorporate the rump of Brunei into his domains, then post-war the Colony of Sarawak would have had the revenue from the oil found at Seria and this money might have been much better used developing Sarawak with a population ten times that of Brunei than of enriching the Sultan of Brunei. Brunei was given its independence in 1971.

Administratively, Sarawak was divided into five Divisions, or provinces, each headed by a Resident (the equivalent of a Provincial Commissioner in many British African colonies). Each division was divided into districts, headed by a District Officer (D.O.). First Division was the area given by the Sultan to the first Rajah Brooke, i.e. from Tanjong Datu to the mouth of the Sadong River and its upriver area. Second Division was to the East of the First Division and, in succession the Third, Fourth and Fifth Divisions were East of each other. The Fifth Division covered the river areas of the Limbang and Lawas Rivers and thus had a frontier with the Colony of North Borneo and with the main part of Brunei, as well as surrounding the Brunei enclave known as 'Temburong'.

Apart from Kuching (the capital), which could be called a town, and Sibu and Miri, which might be described as townships, most of the people lived in small bazaars, villages or longhouses, which are in fact villages under one roof. The population consisted of a large variety of races, including various native tribes, of which the Ibans (or Sea Dayaks) were the most numerous, Malays (who were Moslems), various Chinese races and a few Indians. After the Ibans, the Chinese were the most numerous group. It was typical of Sarawak that the traditionally indigenous people were entitled to call themselves "native" and were proud of this word, which had such a pejorative meaning in so many parts of the world. The Chinese were not considered 'natives'. Apart from the Ibans (Sea Dayaks), the Malays, the Land Dayaks and the coastal Melanaus, there was a group of tribes, collectively known as 'Orang Ulu'. 'Orang', in Malay, means 'Person' or 'People' while 'ulu', though a short word, is a most useful one. Included amongst several meanings are 'Upriver' (as in going to or being in an Upriver Area). As an extension of this meaning, it is used in the sense of 'Far Inland', 'Not Easily Accessible' and so, by implication, 'Lacking in Amenities'. 'Orang Ulu' means, therefore, 'Upriver People', often with the added assumption by 'Downriver People' that, because they are difficult to reach and so they know little about them, then of course they must be uncivilised 'Primitive People' who have, according to rumour, all kinds of disagreeable habits and indeed, in general, they are likely to be dangerous, untrustworthy and to be feared!! Amongst the tribes that are included in the term 'Orang

Ulu' are the Kenyahs, Kayans, and Nomadic Penan but there are others, some of which are limited to only one longhouse.

Vyner had three daughters and a brother Bertram, who had announced that he did not wish to inherit Sarawak although he used to administer the country when Vyner was absent. Bertram had a son called Anthony who Vyner had made his heir but later Vyner lost confidence in him and disinherited him. Anthony accepted this at the time and never queried his uncle's power to make these decisions. The Rajahs had ruled Sarawak as a benevolent dictatorship and managed the country in the best tradition of a decent English gentleman running his estate. They and their officers were in close touch with the people, who were always easily able to approach them, so their rule was much appreciated by the people, as the Rajahs interfered with them as little as possible. The Rajahs had noted and been appalled at the huge control on the economy of a Colony that international companies (such as Dunlop or the United Fruit Company) usually had on the natives of many undeveloped countries and so they had kept such businesses out of Sarawak, even if the result was a country that remained largely backward and undeveloped.

In October 1941, Vyner Brooke decided the time had come to institute the first steps towards democracy by introducing a new Constitution with its declaration of the 'Nine Cardinal Principles of the Rule of the English Rajahs' together with an advisory council known as 'Council Negri' with limited powers. At the end of 1941 the Japanese invaded Sarawak and occupied it until their surrender in 1945. There was then a short period when the British territories in Borneo were run by the BBKAU (British Borneo Civil Affairs Unit) largely an Australian organization. In 1946, the elderly third Rajah returned, but soon realised that the Japanese occupation had outdated the gently unchanging life of his people and that he was too old to undertake the task of not only reconstructing the devastated country but also of raising the standard of living to make Sarawak a suitable country to compete with others in the modern world. So, as Vyner still had little faith in the ability of his nephew, Anthony, to cope, he exerted all the pressure he could to persuade Council Negri to agree that the country should be ceded to the Crown as a Colony, which was carried out in July 1946.

When Sarawak became a Crown Colony in 1946, the public was told that their new constitution would include the Rajah's Nine Principles and that no change to their Colonial Constitution would be made by the British sovereign without the consent of the people. The Preamble to Rajah Vyner Brooke's 1941 Constitution included:

### **Cardinal Principles of the Rule of the English Rajahs**

1. That Sarawak is the heritage of Our Subjects and is held in trust by Ourselves for them.
2. That social and educational services shall be developed and improved and the standard of living of the people of Sarawak shall steadily be raised.
3. That never shall any person or persons be granted rights inconsistent with those of the people of this country or be in any way permitted to exploit Our Subjects or those who have sought Our protection and care.
4. That justice shall be easily obtainable and that the Rajah and every public servant shall be freely accessible to the public.

5. That freedom of expression both in speech and writing shall be permitted and encouraged and that everyone shall be entitled to worship as he pleases.
6. The public servants shall ever remember that they are but the servants of the people on whose goodwill and co-operation they are entirely dependent.
7. That so far as may be Our Subjects of whatever race or creed shall be freely and impartially admitted to offices in Our Service, the duties of which they may be qualified by their education, ability and integrity duly to discharge.
8. That the goal of self-government shall always be kept in mind, that the people of Sarawak shall be entrusted in due course with the governance of themselves, and that continuous efforts shall be made to hasten the reaching of this goal by educating them in obligations, the responsibilities, and the privileges of citizenship.
9. That the general policy of Our Predecessors and Ourselves whereby the various races of the State have been enabled to live in happiness and harmony together shall be adhered to by our Successors and Our Servants and all who may follow them hereafter.

A few weeks after the Rajah's first steps towards transferring his powers to the people, the country was invaded by the Japanese. It soon became obvious that, when Sarawak became part of the Japanese empire, the Japanese had not taken any notice of Cardinal Principle Number 8.

Though the three white Rajahs were very different personalities, they had one feature in common – their attitudes were such that the majority of local people liked them and approved of their methods of ruling them. It is interesting how the first Rajah managed to put into effect a peace that pleased the Sultan's Malay representatives, with his methods of effecting a peace with the Land Dayaks and caused the latter to ask that he should rule them. I have stressed the importance I attach to the enlightened attitudes of the Rajahs to their people as undoubtedly Sarawak was run in a very different way from the normal British colony and their influence continued to be felt for the whole period that Sarawak was a Colony.

Administrative officers transferred to Sarawak from other colonies were mostly very surprised at the lack of trouble between the people of one tribe and those of other tribes, and the happy and informal relationship between the people and their District Officers. An early establishment of this relationship by the first Rajah is exemplified by the date of "Jan. 10<sup>th</sup>, 1842 – This day the first laws and regulations are to be promulgated in Sarawak; and as the event is a rare one, I here inscribe a copy for the benefit of future legislators, observing, that there is an absolute necessity for mildness and patience, and that an opposite course would raise such a host of enemies as to crush every good seed".

Here are the regulations, which I had printed at Singapore in the Malayan language:

James Brooke, esquire, governor (rajah) of the country of Sarawak, makes known to all men the following regulations:

1<sup>st</sup> That murder, robbery, and other heinous crimes will be punished according to the *ondang-ondang* (i.e. the written law of Borneo); and no person committing such offences will escape, if, after fair inquiry, he be proved guilty.

2<sup>nd</sup> In order to ensure the good of the country, all men, whether Malays, Chinese or Dayaks, are permitted to trade or labour according to their pleasure, and to enjoy their gains.

3<sup>rd</sup> All roads will be open, that the inhabitants at large may seek profit by sea or by land; and all boats coming from others are free to enter the river and depart, without let or hindrance.

4<sup>th</sup> Trade, in all its branches, will be free, with the exception of antimony-ore, which the governor holds in his own hands, but which no person is forced to work, and which will be paid for at a proper price when obtained. The people are encouraged to trade and labour, and to enjoy the profits which are to be made by fair and honest dealing.

5<sup>th</sup>. It is ordered that no person going amongst the Dayaks shall disturb them, or gain goods under false pretences. It must be clearly explained to the different Dayak tribes, that the revenue will be collected by the three Datus, bearing the seal of the governor; and (except this yearly demand from the government) they are to give nothing to any other person; nor are they obliged to sell their goods except they please, and at their own prices.

6<sup>th</sup>. The governor will shortly inquire into the revenue, and fix it at a proper rate; so that every man may know certainly how much he has to contribute yearly to support the government.

7<sup>th</sup>. It will be necessary, likewise, to settle the weights, measures, and money current in the country, and to introduce doits, that the poor may purchase food cheaply.

8<sup>th</sup>. The governor issues these commands, and will enforce obedience to them; and whilst he gives all protection and assistance to the persons who act rightly, he will not fail to punish those who seek to disturb the public peace or commit crimes; and he warns all such persons to seek their safety and find some other country where they may be permitted to break the laws of God and man.

I feel sure that it was largely due to the Rajahs' legacy on handing over Sarawak to the King, that enabled me to feel so happy living in Sarawak for eighteen years.

### **Description of a Longhouse**

When I arrived in Sarawak in 1947, most of the interior peoples of Sarawak did not live in a village with each family living in its own house, but, for traditional defence reasons, they built a building for their village that, from the air, looked like a rectangle built on stilts often beside a river. Inside the rectangle the building was divided into two rectangles under the roof ridge by a wall. On one side of this wall, it had doors in it at intervals giving access to a series of family rooms each consisting of a bedroom cum kitchen (known as a 'bilek'). On the other side of the central wall was a long uncluttered rectangle, which forming a long covered balcony or village street called 'ruai' by the Ibans. In other words a longhouse was like a terrace of houses built on stilts with a



Arriving at Kampong Seragang, 1953

covered balcony, also on stilts, running the whole length of the terrace. The ruai had steps (known as 'tangga') at each end, so that someone entering the longhouse at one end could walk the whole length of the ruai and leave the house by the tangga at the other end or, when he had reached his own bilek, he could open his door and go into his family area. Each family's share of a longhouse consisted of its private quarters or bilek on one side of the central wall and that part of the communal ruai that was opposite his bilek. The sloping roof above the ruai ended about six feet above the floor of the ruai, where there was a low wall to fill in the space between the floor and the end of the roof. This wall could be pierced, usually opposite the door of a bilek if the owner of the bilek wished to build an open air extension to his property known as a 'tanju'. Here such activities as drying out clothes or padi could take place, as it was an area that could not be reached by pigs and that could be watched should chickens flutter there and start pecking happily. The experienced traveller, especially if he was much

heavier than the usual native, would step cautiously on to this often rickety platform. The bachelors and male guests slept on the ruai. Visitors were entertained on that part of it that belonged to their host. Honoured guests were made welcome on that part of the ruai that belonged to the longhouse headman, whose segment of the building was usually in the middle of the longhouse. Not all the bileks of a longhouse were of the same size. The ones at each end near the tangga were often much smaller than those in the middle and were occupied by poorer people such as widows. A longhouse was described as having so many doors; thus a 38 door longhouse was one with 38 bileks (family rooms). On tour, I expected to sleep on the ruai and usually selected a part of it away from the centre of the house, with all its noisy entertainment, but often I was invited to set up my camp bed in the headman's room and sometimes, unfortunately, I couldn't refuse the headman's offer of his own bed.

Because the Kayans and Kenyahs reckoned on staying put in one place for several generations, it was worthwhile building their longhouses with massive hardwood posts. Traditionally, the Ibans tended to leave their land after they had used it up and then would go uncomfortably long distances to find reasonable planting conditions so it made sense to move the whole longhouse. Thus their houses were built with a large amount of medium sized posts to support the roofs. The Kayans' and Kenyahs' longhouses had cantilever supports for the roof, whereby large transverse beams were balanced on two rows of centre posts. Along the unsupported ends of these crossbeams other beams were laid lengthwise, which in turn supported the rafters at their mid-point. In this way, the whole weight of the roof was borne by the central posts of the house. The ruai of the

Ibans looked much more cluttered with its many posts than was the case of the Kayan and Kenyah longhouses which had a greater sense of spaciousness from end to end as there were no posts blocking the view.

For sanitation, the longhouse people relied on pigs. Rubbish was pushed through a hole in a family's kitchen floor. Ladies also defecate through this hole while men usually wander off into the surrounding undergrowth. While I wouldn't go so far as to say that the ground around and under a longhouse was as free from smell as most of our wives expected of their homes, nevertheless, the pigs, being omniverous, and helped by the poultry did a good job of keeping the ground clean and by so doing obtained 90% of their food intake free. Flies were uncommon, partly due to the fact that the pigs and chickens had left nothing for them to feed on and partly due to the heavy rainfall, which washed away their eggs.

### The Peoples of Sarawak

In Dutch Kalimantan, indigenous people, other than Malays, were called 'Dayak'. With the arrival of James Brooke, the upriver inland people became known to the British as Land Dayaks, though they called themselves 'Bidayuh'. They were more fair skinned than the Malays and a rather gentle group of people. Their neighbours to the East called themselves 'Iban'. They were an extrovert, boisterous group and became known as 'Sea Dayaks', a singularly inappropriate name for people who lived inland along the



From Map Book of Malaysia by Peter Collenette. Publ Borneo Literature Bureau, 1963.

riverbanks right up to the international frontier. However, they loved fighting and in James Brooke's time some of those living near the coast used to join the pirates coming along the coast capturing any ships they came across and raiding the coastal areas. These were the Ibans that James Brooke first came across and hence were given the name 'Sea Dayaks'. The pirates were Illanuns from the Philippines, who took advantage of the Landas's north west winds to sail in their sea-going well armed boats going westwards close to the coast and then southwards as far as the Dutch town of Pontianak. Any captured sailors or people captured during the raids on coastal or downriver villages or in vulnerable boats were killed or kept on board until the pirates had returned home and then used as slaves. The Illanuns took advantage of the arrival

of the South West winds to leave Pontianak and reverse the direction of their pirating trip, taking with them their slaves and carrying their booty back home to the Philippines. The Rajah drew the attention of the Royal Navy to the pirates, resulting in the latter suffering several defeats. As well as getting rid of piracy, the Rajahs did their best to eliminate head hunting.

In 1841, the various tribes along the rivers between the realm of the Rajahs of Sarawak and of Brunei were quarrelling amongst themselves in little squabbles but also launching sudden surprise attacks by one longhouse on another. This could be due to land quarrels but just as likely due to a desire to increase the number of heads they had.

### **Headhunting**

Head taking meant a lot to the Dayaks as heads were needed to be produced at various ceremonies when they were asked to intervene with the spirits, so that the good spirits would give the village fine harvests and the bad spirits would be discouraged from inflicting disasters on the people. Amongst the Sea Dayaks, the man who took a head became a hero and was entitled to tattoo the back of his hand and fingers even though the taking of a head was often achieved in a far from heroic manner. The fact that Borneo was basically a jungle-covered countryside meant that controlling large numbers of moving men was very difficult. On the other hand, it was easy to remain concealed while approaching an unsuspecting village or a single victim tending his land. A young man, wishing to show off, could bring home the head of an isolated woman working in the fields and this would be just as acceptable as a head obtained in a fight. With the Sea Dayaks, the heads were smoked and kept on that part of the public verandah where the head hunter lived. The Land Dayaks kept the heads in a central house on stilts, in which slept the bachelors. Contrary to rumour, the heads were never shrunk though they were smoked thoroughly.

The Rajahs had exerted gentle but steady pressure on the Dayaks and other tribes to abandon head hunting and, indeed, had started up inter-longhouse regattas in the various rivers to absorb the competitive spirit of the headhunters. Though smoked heads could be found hung up in pagan longhouses, headhunting had died out long before the Japanese invasion. There was a slight recurrence of hunting as the Japanese were losing control and the Allies were beginning to return to Sarawak but it ceased again when the Allies were in control. When I first arrived in Sarawak, it was not uncommon to see smoked heads in longhouses but, by the time I left Sarawak, it was difficult to find longhouses that still kept treasuring heads.

### **Typical Welcoming Entertainment**

What now follows would not normally be included in a chapter on Basic Background, as it scarcely applies to town dwellers or tourists (who like their comforts) and to those who do not travel to inaccessible rural areas, as I continually did. As it would be tedious if I repeated the initial welcome and treatment that varied but little as I arrived on a scheduled upriver visit, I am now describing it once for all my visits. These were very many as in every district that I administered I kept in touch with the local people by visiting them at home.

The District Officer's travelling could be done by boat or by boats provided by the local people, or by travelling overland with the local people providing porters. It might be thought that Government was a hard master requiring longhouses to provide boats and

paddlers or (when travelling overland) porters. However, apart from the fact that porters and crews were paid (either in cash or in kind, probably tobacco), the very fact that communications were so difficult in inland Sarawak meant that the locals were delighted to find that the D.O. was accompanied by a hospital assistant with medicines and, in really distant areas, he would carry much needed shotgun ammunition with him. The presence of the D.O. would mean that he could hear court cases in situ, as it would have been prohibitively difficult for both parties plus their witnesses to go to headquarters for a court case. In any case, it would be pointless if, as often happened, it proved necessary to visit a piece of land during the court proceedings. It was recognised that the arrival of the D.O. was a good excuse for a party as the area headman would be present and the whole population would gather together, for no-one would wish to miss all the goings-on, especially as it was unlikely that there would be another such visit for at the very least a year.

In Sarawak before tourists flooded in, all races in Sarawak were most hospitable to any visitor that turned up. As my strongest memory of ulu travel is having to drink far more alcohol than I wanted, I will first of all describe some of the drinks that might be served.

The Chinese were not allowed to make alcoholic drinks at home. There were Government run distilleries that produced arrack, made out of rice and I know not what. Apart from having a very high alcoholic content, I found the flavour absolutely revolting and its effects on me were disastrous. I did my best to get out of consuming arrack or at any rate limiting my intake to only a few sips. As the years went on and various alcoholic drinks became ever more available in Sarawak, those Chinese who could afford it showed a partiality for beer, whisky and especially for brandy. I would often ask for Chinese tea, but it was only very old friends who granted my request, as most considered that it was beneath their dignity to give such a drink to their D.O. Sometimes, when invited into the house of someone like a poor rubber tapper, I might be given a glass of hot condensed milk with a raw egg in it - no doubt very nutritious!

As Moslems, most Malays did not drink any alcohol and some were so religious that they would not allow an alcoholic drink in their house. Often on arriving in a Malay house, it was not until I was told what was available or, more usually, some unknown liquid had been put in front of me that I knew what my hospitable Malay host proposed to offer me. It was always a pleasure to be offered coffee (usually black but sometimes with condensed milk). Many Malays were fond of very sweet and brilliantly coloured red, yellow or green fizzy drinks such as cherry ciderette, which were quite acceptable to me in small quantities. If they knew I would be visiting them and they offered me beer or even whisky, then I knew that they had bought it especially for me, which was very kind of them.

The ulu tribes of Sarawak were allowed to brew their traditional drinks (which did not include distilled alcohol). For most of them, their rice beer was only drunk at feasts or when entertaining guests, on which occasions they would often indulge injudiciously. Although I have often seen some of them drunk on such occasions, I do not remember any one of them getting violent or abusive, though they often became maudlin and clinging. As their rice beer was a valuable source of vitamin-C, it was a pity that their consumption of their traditional brew (which had Vitamin-C value) was not limited to one or two glasses every night rather than not normally being drunk at all until justified by the advent of a party, when an excessive number of glasses was likely to be drunk. The main drink brewed was known to the Ibans (Sea-Dayaks) as 'tuak' and to the Kayans,

Kenyahs and other Orang Ulu as 'borak'. The Nomadic Penans were not used to taking or making any form of alcohol. Many Europeans, on tasting their first glass of tuak or borak, could be easily deceived as regards its alcoholic potency – it was, in fact, stronger than most beers. At its very best (an extremely rare situation) rice beer could be clear and an attractive pale yellow colour and, especially if one was hot, tired and thirsty, more than acceptable as a drink. From such a best brew, it deteriorated through various degrees of cloudiness until it began to take on an unpleasant deep beige look with what looked like lumps of porridge mixed into it. At worst, it tasted of vinegar and it was then most difficult not to make a wry face on quaffing it. I occasionally met Ibans who had dosed their tuak for me with arrack. With the first sip I knew when this had happened and felt justified in refusing the kind offer of this hateful stuff on the grounds that it was not a traditional drink.

As the D.O.'s boat rounded the last bend in the river or, as the case may be, when the lookouts saw that you were coming along the path, there would be great activity in the longhouse. The people would have fixed tree trunks from the high water mark down to the low water mark, so that, depending on the level of the river, the visitors would not need to step into the mud. It must be realised that what seemed a perfectly adequate tree trunk to a Dayak, usually seemed less than adequate to the expatriate town dweller. The first problem for the D.O. on arrival was to negotiate successfully his exit from the boat, which would tilt as he stepped out and, if the river was low and the bank muddy, he would be faced with stepping on to a sodden tree trunk covered in mud and slime. He would then move from tree trunk to tree trunk until he reached terra firma. At the foot of the notched tree trunk that serves as a ladder to enter the house, a double row of maidens would be waiting for him. They would be dressed in their finery and in my early years, before civilization caught up with them, they would have been bare breasted. Each maiden would hold a bottle of rice beer and a tumbler and each would be determined to ensure that the D.O. and his party would feel refreshed by her ministrations. However hot and thirsty he was, a wise D.O. would beware of drinking deep, though he must not cause offence by refusing anyone's drink. If he mis-estimated and drank too little from a glass, he would find that the maiden had tilted the glass abruptly and the whole tumbler was being emptied into his mouth, while to ensure successful completion of her object, the maiden had put her arm, that was holding the bottle, firmly round his neck. He would now have the option of gulping and swallowing or of allowing the sticky liquid to run out of his mouth, down his neck and into and onto his clothes. He would know too that these welcoming drinks were just a prelude to the entertainment that would be waiting for him once he was settled down on mats in the public meeting area of the ruai opposite the headman's door.

To be really comfortable in an ulu longhouse, a town dweller like me ought to have undergone a course on how to sit comfortably, yet with decorum, on the floor for long periods, either on his haunches with his feet flat on the ground or cross legged and take no notice of the pain in the thighs or on the ankle bones. To avoid the onset of cramp, to the amusement of the locals, I would keep on shifting my position by sitting sideways, like a woman with a short skirt on, and her legs bent sideways at the knee. I tried to avoid the most comfortable position, that is with the legs outstretched in front of me and the soles of my feet facing the assembled populace. With many tribes in Sarawak, it was considered boorish to sit with the soles of one's feet facing the audience.

Once the D.O. was settled down in an Iban house, he might hopefully suggest that any business to be done should be carried out at once and that it was especially desirable

that any court cases should take place then before he became inebriated. The general view was, however, that this was a very poor idea and it was essential that the longhouse ensured that the spirits were on their side as soon as possible. The formalities for this were that extra special handwoven blankets were laid down as mats on the floor in front of and where the D.O., the Penghulu and any other distinguished guests would be sitting. On these blankets were laid out a large empty plate and a series of small plates, with such items on them as rice, eggs, tobacco, salt, and any



Author participating in Bedarah ceremony at Penghulu Gringang's harvest festival at Rumah, April 1950.

other food which might please the spirits. Each guest that had been asked to prepare an offering then built up a little hill with the rice and other offerings on the empty plate. On top of all this would be placed an eggcup full of tuak. A squawking cock would then be produced and handed to the senior guest to hold it upside down by its legs, the guest would then wave it over the mound on the plate while he chanted (if possible in the local language) an invocation to the spirits to provide the inhabitants of the house with plenty of rice, children, chickens, pigs and anything else desirable that he could think of. A tiny cut would be made in the cock's comb and a few drops of its blood would be added to the mound, and the plate would then be put on one side in a safe place long enough for the spirits (if they so wished) to partake of what was on it,

after which the owner would be entitled to use the contents for himself. Sometimes the cock's neck would be slit and there was then plenty of blood to be waved over the plate and also often over the nearest hosts, who were delighted. This placatory ceremony to the spirits was known as 'pirieng' or 'mirieng' to the Ibans. The cock would be released or, more frequently, slaughtered and served up shortly afterwards at the next meal, with its muscles still tense. Immediately after placating the spirits, the house had to show its appreciation of the presence of its guests. In the case of male guests, a maiden and in the case of female guests a male, with a tumblerful of tuak in the hand, would sing a song to the guest, which might last for ten minutes or more. The song would praise the guest and, though usually kind, could be witty, personal or draw attention to some unusual quirks or habits of the guest. I remember that in the song to a forest officer (Bill Smythies), who was with me, he was addressed to the amusement of all in the house as the man in bathing shorts, carrying an open black umbrella, who fished with rod and line and never caught a fish. Personally, I often found the song, with its frequent choruses, in which the whole house joined, while the singer waived a glass rhythmically

in front of me a most hypnotising procedure and it certainly did not help one to keep sober. The song would end on a crescendo as the singer tilted the tumbler towards the guest's mouth and the whole house joined in the chorus till the tumbler had been emptied. In fact, it was permissible, after two thirds of the glass had been drunk, to hand the glass back to the singer to refresh herself, but if it was felt that the guest had not taken enough, several girls would help the singer to empty the glass down the throat of the guest – this usually resulted in the victim not being able to cope with the volume being poured into his mouth and thereafter, as he moved around, a disagreeable smell of tuak emanated from his clothes. He was then expected to sing a song in praise of the house in general and the girl in particular, although for foreigners, it was not necessary that the song should be a long one.

Only after all the guests had been attended to, was the longhouse prepared and indeed ready to feel relaxed enough to proceed with matters of general concern such as any court cases, taking the census, collecting any taxes, dealing with the sick, issuing ammunition, hearing complaints about Government's policy or listening to their requests.

### **Construction and Control of a Long Boat**

A typical journey to the ulu would often involve the D.O. and a certain amount of his staff setting out in the government longboat, which was made out of a tree trunk of durable timber suitable for its purpose. The builder hollowed out the log and then made it wider than nature intended by lighting a controlled fire inside it and against its sides, which caused the log to warp outwards at which stage he would insert cross bars inside it to stop the trunk reverting to its original shape when cold. This was a very skilled job. To the widened tree trunk were added side planks, firmly fixed to the log and watertight to raise the level before water would pour in. If it was a large longboat, a canopy with a sliding roof would be installed. The D.O. Kapit's boat was driven by an outboard motor with a plank on which sat the outboard driver. My boat was nearly 5 feet wide in the middle and 30 feet or more long. Such a boat would have comfortable cushions laid out on the floor under the central sliding roof, where two or three people could recline. Racing boats would be much narrower than mine but could be 60 feet long and might rarely approach 80 feet in length

A local man with knowledge of the river would sit cross legged in the bows and he and the outboard driver at the back would have to work in perfect harmony if disaster was not to ensue. There was little difficulty when the water was smooth but controlling the boat, either going up or down through the fast flowing upper parts of the river and often having to negotiate rapids, was another matter. It was advisable to have a driver that knew his river well, as, depending on the weather, some rivers could rise and fall 20 feet or more and a low level of water, which necessitated pulling and pushing the boat upriver, could, after rain, become a racing, raging torrent of quite large waves leaping over and around razor sharp rocks and carrying with it logs.

The Bowman would have to know which route to take to negotiate rocks which at high water might be entirely covered, while at other water levels it could cause a variety of turbulence situations depending on how much of it was showing. It not only needed great skill to go slowly upriver with an often heavily laden boat, but also how to control the boat by making sudden and split second decisions when approaching danger points travelling at great speed downriver with little chance of being able to turn the long boat. Where space between rocks was at a premium, the best method often seemed to be to

head for the centre of a large wave over an invisible rock that was close to the surface or to make for the side of a rock that showed above the surface and rely on the deflection wave effect as the water parted on hitting the rock to divert the boat sideways from the rock just at the last moment. Expert navigators frequently going up or down a river would have learnt by experience as they approached rapids to note carefully the level of the water on that special day on certain rocks or on certain tree trunks and adjust the route to be taken accordingly. At certain levels of the water it would unwillingly be decided that it would be appropriate, on that particular occasion, to off-load the boat and carry its contents round the rapids and a skeleton crew would guide the boat downriver or pole it up close to the river bank or even drag the empty boat overland. There were times when the journey had to be abandoned until the water was at a more favourable level. Once the river got too small for the government longboat, the party would switch to several smaller boats, borrowed from and crewed by the local longhouse inhabitants, to reach the next longhouse, which would repeat the process until boats could no longer be used and the party had to proceed on foot with porters provided from one longhouse to the next.

### 3 – SOME ASPECTS OF THE RAJAHS' SERVICE.

During my time in Sarawak, I heard stories about the policies of the Rajahs and of various happenings during their regime. As I was one of the first batch of Administrative Officers posted to Sarawak in January 1947, I found myself amongst a large number of Rajahs' officers who had survived the war and who viewed me with mixed interest and, indeed, suspicion.

Bit by bit I was learning what it had been like to be an officer in the service of the Third Rajah. One of the most admirable aspects of this service was the way his officers soon learnt to know, understand and like the way of life of the people administered by them. The number of expatriates, especially in the Government Departments, was small. The Rajah was very much the autocrat and insisted on being kept informed in great detail of what was going on, and it was a brave officer who altered the normal routine or spent a small sum of public money without getting the prior approval of those above him.

While the First Rajah was in control, his nephew Charles left the Royal Navy, changed his surname to 'Brooke' and for many years helped his uncle administer his domain, spending many years living an outstation life, especially amongst the Ibans as the First Rajah, Sir James Brooke, had got involved in pacifying the unruly Ibans to the East. On the death of his uncle in 1868, Charles Brooke ruled as Rajah until his death in 1917. He was succeeded by his son Sir Charles Vyner Brooke who became the Third Rajah. He had also spent a lot of his early life in various outstations. He chose his staff carefully, with a preference for English West country boys straight from public school and who were good at games. A very few were accepted after having first gone through university. On arrival as cadets, they would be placed under an experienced D.O. to learn the job and during this time would lead a dog's life. Their first tour lasted seven years. The last thing the Rajah wanted was a governing class of white people who considered themselves as 'heaven born', as was said of the Indian Civil Service. The Rajahs had strong views that it was white women who were the cause of what colour bar there was in India and Malaya and so wouldn't allow their officers to marry until after their first long leave. To make up for this they were happy to see long term liaisons between an officer and a local girl, as this kept him contented. In this way he learnt the language quickly and also got to understand the mentality of the people amongst whom he was working.

Both Malay and Iban women use certain words much more frequently than do their menfolk and vice versa. An interesting sideline of learning a language with the help of a "sleeping dictionary" was that, not only did the white officers become fluent quickly in the local languages but, to the amusement of the locals, they used the words that women speakers tended to use and which male speakers would much more rarely have used.

On his first leave home, the young man would joyfully visualise all he intended to do, only to find that old friends were all busy in jobs and had no time to spend gallivanting around with him and, in any case, in seven years they had lost touch with each other. What had been old friends, now soon made it clear that they were not in the least interested in Sarawak and sadly both parties found that they now had little in common. By having such a long first tour, the Rajah had ensured that he would retain his officers and indeed the young officers greatly looked forward to the end of their first leave. The Rajah tended to keep his more senior officers in the same posting for several years so

that they got to know the feel of their District and the local people really well, and also to be known by them. D.Os. and Residents were normally expected to obtain the Rajah's agreement to any controversial action but, in an emergency requiring immediate action, they were not expected to delay dealing with it if it was impractical to consult higher authority. In the Colonial Service, D.Os. rarely spent as long as three years in one station and communications by then were such that they were expected to refer problems to higher authority.

A D.O., and even more so a Resident, was very much a dictator in the area he administered. As these officers were always accessible to the people, they were very much on a common wave length with them and if (without a European wife to criticise them and stop them behaving outrageously) some of them let power go to their heads, their occasional idiosyncratic behaviour at times seems to have been excused by the locals. In any case, if the worst came to the worst, the people could always go and see their Rajah and complain. The Rajah himself (or his heir in his absence on leave) kept tabs on all that was going on and nothing of importance could be carried out without His Highness' approval. The country was poor and run on a shoe string and, for instance, a relatively big government office like that at Sarikei had been refused permission to get a typewriter by the Rajah in person until the late 1930s! The Rajahs maintained a policy of minimal interference with local customs.

Perhaps this is a good point at which to mention that the Rajah had no army and the Sarawak Constabulary was a small police force armed merely with rifles. This state of affairs carried on until the outbreak of the Brunei rebellion in 1962 when it became necessary for the British and Malaysian armies to come into the country. Foreigners visiting Sarawak were often astounded and alarmed, when, on going through Customs, they were told to hand in their weapons, for it was perfectly safe for them to go anywhere in the country unarmed – indeed Sarawak was one of the safest countries in the world.

The stories that I still remember are the most unusual ones. I recall being told by Bob Snelus, a university graduate, who had first arrived in Sarawak in 1934 and had been posted to Sibuan, where the Resident had the only car in the township. This new Cadet Officer was invited to drinks in the evening by the Resident at his house, as were what few other European men there were (of course not married). After a few drinks they all adjourned to the verandah steps and the Resident, said, "Let's shoot at my Baby Austin", whereupon he started off with his pistol and some of the others with much hilarity cheered him on. Suddenly, the Resident changed his views and said, "Who started this silly game?" (A question no-one cared to answer). He glared at everyone and then said, "I will shoot at anyone I see after I have counted ten" and proceeded to count from one to ten at a rapid rate. The new cadet was appalled and too inexperienced to take evasive action and hid behind the Resident as he stood on the top step, finished counting ten and peered into the gloom. The various Europeans had jumped down the verandah steps mighty quickly and sped towards the exit of the garden or took shelter wherever they could. The Resident saw a bush quiver, aimed at it and the Superintendent of Lands and Surveys streaked away from it skipping nimbly in a zig-zag motion down the path. The Divisional Engineer, a plump man, was lying down flat in the muddy monsoon ditch but his posterior showed and a bullet landed on the mud near him, so he breathed out and tried to flatten himself even flatter than flat. The Resident then turned round, completely calm, to the alarmed Bob Snelus and told him

that he could go home now and would not be shot at, a permission, as can be imagined, that he availed himself of promptly.

This same Resident expected all the government officers to be in the club every night and they could not (and dared not) leave before him without his permission.

A D.O. had arranged with a certain Chinese shop keeper in his local bazaar to keep soda water in stock – an item that would not be bought by anyone other than him. One evening, on running out of soda water, he sent his houseboy down for some bottles but the towkay had run out. Naturally he had the man arrested and put in gaol for that night! Thus he ensured that thereafter soda water was always available at that bazaar.

The Rajahs' house, the Astana (Malay for 'palace') in Kuching, was a beautiful building of great character but it lacked modern amenities. The kitchen was in a separate building from the house and to reach it one had to go along a corridor and then down a



The Astana 1959

partly covered very long flight of steps. The Astana originally relied on rainwater from the roof and while most of the public and private rooms were on the first floor, the bathrooms were on the ground floor reached from the bedrooms by going down a flight of steep steps and, apart from a door and perhaps a curtained window to the outside, they were walled in and so protected from the sun. The bathroom facilities consisted of a 'thunder box' emptied by the nightsoil man, and a 'tong' (a very large pottery container like a 44 gallon drum or water butt filled by a pipe from the roof) next to which was a

dipper, and there might be a table and chair. In the cool, dim atmosphere of the bathroom, the temperature of the water in the tong would be lower than the day or night air temperature and so seemed desperately cold the first time the dipper was used to wet the hot sweaty body.

Throughout the country, the houses of government officers were usually built on stilts and the sanitary and washing facilities were, as in the Astana, down steep stairs to a room built on the concrete of the ground floor.

The Second Rajah realised the necessity of keeping fit. An often repeated and, it seems to me, sensible advice of his to new arrivals was, 'In tropical climes, you should drink a lot of liquid by day and the resulting sweating will keep the pores of the skin clean. In the coolness of the evening, drink a lot so that the liquid going through you washes out the inside of your body.'

The Third Rajah arrived on tour at one ulu district to find that the D.O. was, as expected, awaiting him together with the local dignitaries, but, unexpectedly, was dressed not in his official uniform but appeared dressed as an Iban, with loin cloth, parang by his side and a hat with hornbill feathers on his head. Initially, the Rajah's entourage was in a dilemma as to whether they should applaud this picture of integration with the local

people or whether they should feel that the D.O. was letting the side down on the arrival of the Head of State in this District. As the Rajah took a little time to decide what his reaction should be, there was a pause until he ordered the D.O. to return home with all speed and come back properly dressed, after which the entourage felt free to express their heartfelt views that the D.O. had shown a complete lack of judgement.

Some of the Rajah's officers married local girls, which was quite acceptable but would have been unthinkable in pre-war Malaya and discouraged in post-war Malaya until Malcolm Macdonald, who enters these anecdotes more fully in Chapter 8, came out as Commissioner-General for South-East Asia and began to change such old fashioned attitudes. As a result, in Sarawak, Eurasians were not looked down upon to nearly the same extent by all communities as they were in India and Malaya. One of the Sarawak Eurasian girls was a friend of the Third Rajah's daughters. Being half Chinese she spoke some of the local Chinese dialects and also Malay and, as a matter of fact, she was fair enough to have passed herself off as a European if she had so wished but she did not do so as she was proud of both her parents. The Rajah heard that she had become engaged to an administrative officer in Malaya and then that the officer had been told by the authorities there that, if he married her, he would be dismissed from the service. The Rajah was furious and arranged that, when next in London, the marriage should take place at St. Margaret's, Westminster, and he in person would give away the bride and there should be a great social reception afterwards, with pictures appearing in such papers as the Tatler. After this the Malayan Government reluctantly decided that it could not dismiss the officer, so, to show displeasure, the officer was sent to lonely Christmas Island, which naturally suited the newly married couple very well.

Dating from the time of the Second Rajah, there had been an 8 p.m. gun fired from Fort Margherita at Kuching to signify that callers on the Rajah should have left the Astana by then and that he was about to go in to dinner. This harmless piece of tradition was carried on during the time Sarawak was a colony.

In the 1930s, Rajah Vyner Brooke decided to start an airforce. He bought a second hand seaplane from the Irrawady Flotilla and engaged a pilot. After the plane had spent some time in the Kuching area, it was decided that the plane should set off on a trip round the country showing the flag. The first visit was to Simanggang, the divisional headquarters of the Second Division, and Ibans from the whole division had been called to come and see close to their first plane ever. On the appointed day the plane appeared from the direction of Kuching amidst growing excitement on the river bank amongst the watching Ibans. However, no-one had thought to inform the pilot that the telephone line to Betong was strung across the river. The plane went into it and crashed into the water and the Ibans were very impressed at the wonders of the white man. They cheered loudly but did nothing about getting into their boats to effect a rescue. That was the end of the Sarawak Air Force!

#### **4 – THE ARRIVAL OF THE JAPANESE AND RULE BY THE BRITISH BORNEO CIVIL AFFAIRS UNIT (BBCAU)**

The Japanese invasion started at the end of 1941. The Rajah and Ranee, who had left for Australia on leave before the outbreak of war, had instructed his Officers, in the event of invasion, to stay at their posts until they inevitably had to hand over properly to their Japanese successors. Many did this, but as stories of Japanese atrocities became known, a group of British officers left Kuching and went up the Serian Road and on to Dutch Borneo and most of these people escaped being captured. In Third Division (Sibu was the Divisional H.Q.), a group of expatriates (including some wives) went up the Rejang and over the frontier to Long Nawan. The Resident decided to stay there so the others felt that they should also do so, and later on they were caught by the Japanese and murdered. Philip Jacks expressed his disagreement with the route, which the Resident had recommended, and at Song the main party went on up the Rejang River and Philip went up the Katibas River, over the frontier to Dutch territory and made for the Dutch coast and so escaped to Australia. In Second Division (Simanggang was the Divisional H.Q.), G.R.H. Arundell, who was as much at home in an Iban area as he would have been in U.K. and who was married to an Ulu Ai Iban, went up the Batang Lupar to the Ulu Ai and settled down there living the life of a Sea-Dayak. Eventually, to the shame of many Ibans, who believed in being hospitable to their guests, he was murdered by an Iban, who had, a few years before, been sentenced to death for murder by Arundell and, on Arundell's recommendation, the Rajah had commuted his sentence to one of imprisonment. The remaining white Sarawak Government officers and civilians, together with those captured in British North Borneo and Brunei, were interned in Kuching at Batu Lintang.

As the Japanese war drew to its close, some Ibans were tempted to take up head hunting again. A few Japanese and Chinese heads were taken and one longhouse showed visitors with pride the smoked skull of the Japanese Education Officer, still with his spectacles on, hung up in the traditional type basket from the roof rafters. After the war, headhunting did not resume and, as the Dayaks became ever more Christianised, they even buried their heads, so that by the time I left Sarawak it was relatively rare to see smoked skulls hanging up in a longhouse. Just as many of my acquaintances have assumed that I shot tigers in Sarawak or must have been chased by elephants (when such beasts do not exist in Borneo, apart from a few elephants in North Borneo that escaped into the wild from logging operations there), so I was frequently asked how did the Dayaks shrink the heads and my enquirers were frankly quite disbelieving when I told them that the Dayaks knew no more than I did how to shrink a head.

Philip Jacks, who had been lucky enough to get on the last flight away from Dutch Borneo, spent his war in the navy and resumed his duties in Sarawak as soon as he could. He was rewarded by being given a Japanese skull, which he used as a tobacco pouch, and, indeed, wherever he was it caused no end of comment when he produced it prior to filling his pipe. Eventually, he became engaged to a charming Australian lady and it was when he was in her mother's house, leaning up against the mantelpiece and slowly filling his pipe from the skull that his future mother-in-law, to his great chagrin, took a firm line and said that he must get rid of his tobacco pouch or break off the engagement. As will be seen later, he chose the former alternative.

Several years after the war the Japanese War Graves Commission requested the Sarawak Government to return Japanese heads to them for proper disposal. The Sarawak Government declined to intervene, but said that it had no objection if the Japanese would like to come and discuss with the Ibans themselves the return of the skulls, but it could not hold itself responsible if trouble ensued, and such was the aura amongst Japanese that surrounded headhunters, that the correspondence thereupon ceased.

Willie Tait, the Rajah's Postmaster-General of Sarawak, was a genial Yorkshireman. On leave once, he was picked up after an enjoyable party by a policeman in London late at night as he leaned on a lamp post for support. The copper asked him who he was and thought he was joking when he said "The Postmaster-General of Sarawak" and carted him off to gaol for the night to sober up. As the Japanese were invading Kuching and most of his staff had fled. Willie bravely took over the wireless and continued tapping out news to the British forces in Singapore of what was happening in Kuching until he was found by the Japanese. With some other British, he was taken to the Astana and locked up there. Because of his activities with the wireless, Willie was then taken out onto the lawn to be shot. Being a practising Roman Catholic, he turned to his executioners and requested that he be allowed to make his peace with his God before he was despatched. His request was granted and he took as long as he possibly could in kneeling down and confessing his sins and praying many prayers to the Lord to save him, failing which that his soul be kindly dealt with, until eventually the Japanese interrupted him saying he had had long enough. The Postmaster-General regretted that the Lord had apparently ignored his prayers to save him but then said to the Japanese that surely they could not expect him to die with a full bladder. This request was also agreed to, and he wandered over to a tree and took as long as he could over this important performance. At last it seemed that the Lord must have heard his prayers, for a lone British plane appeared over Kuching and the Japanese hastily returned their prisoner to his prison after which, apparently, they had so many other matters to think about that they forgot to execute Willie! Interestingly, no-one has been able to identify which plane it was that saved Willie or why it was there.

R.W.(Bill) Large had joined the Rajah's service pre-war as a police officer in the Sarawak Constabulary. When Japan entered the war, he got permission to join the 2/15th Punjab Regiment, which had been posted to Sarawak. He was awarded the Military Cross, was captured and spent the rest of the war at a P.O.W. camp in Java, having reached southern Borneo with his troops hoping to get transport to safety. After the war, Bill returned to the Sarawak Constabulary and, in due course, married my sister. He told me this story, which, he agreed, was a bit difficult to believe or explain.

Before the war, the Serian Road from Kuching was being maintained and the Public Works Department (PWD) engineer in charge told some of his local labour force, mostly Land Dayaks, to go up one of the many small hills near the 10<sup>th</sup> Mile, but they refused saying the hill was 'hantu', i.e. a spirit haunted it. To show them that this was nonsense, he himself went up the hill and, after a long time, several of the men, tremblingly and keeping close together, decided to look for him. They found him with a high fever and brought him down near death's door. As a result, an RC priest found some of his flock were wavering and so he went up the hill, with the same result as the P.W.D. engineer!

During the war, a company of the 2/15th Punjabs under a British officer (none of whom had heard the story of the haunted hill) sent a patrol up it. In no time they returned down again helter skelter as stones from no visible source were being hurled at them. It took a big party with beating gongs to go up and recover the arms, which some of the soldiers had dropped in their panic.

Needless to say, being an inmate in Batu Lintang under the Japanese was a mentally harrowing and physically horrible experience. The quantity and quality of the diet provided were both quite inadequate. One of the saddest examples of spiritual collapse was that of Hudson Southwell, a very sincere missionary of the Borneo Evangelical Mission (B.E.M.) in Fifth Division, who had very high standards in resisting Satan's temptations. It was an example of the effects of severe under nourishment that such a man, when working in the kitchen, couldn't resist eating a couple of peanuts out of an unexpected but tiny ration of them, which he was supposed to divide amongst all the inmates. He immediately regretted what he had done and never forgave himself that he of all people, as a Christian minister, had succumbed to such a temptation.

The Japanese, appreciating tradition, had not interfered with the pictures of the Rajahs in the Astana, which survived the war intact. As a comparison with this rare good behaviour of the Japanese, it must sadly and shamefully be stated that some members of the forces of the B.B.C.A.U., which administered the three territories from the end of the Japanese occupation in 1945 until the return of the Rajah in 1946, despoiled the country considerably by offering starving people food or cigarettes in return for valuable articles. Troops who had arrived with only their usual equipment on their backs returned home with suitcases full of goods and one officer was indeed seen taking a grand piano home with him. In Brunei at this time, the Sultan had some illegitimate daughters known as the 'blububs'. The B.B.C.A.U. commanding officer of the Australian forces there came into the officers' mess one day and announced "For the first time in my life, last night, I slept with a princess." Some days later he came into the mess and announced "For the first time in my life I have caught VD from a princess."

Although the reputation of the B.B.C.A.U. suffered through such actions as these, nevertheless, it was remarkable how well it administered the three British states in northern Borneo, which were in an appalling state after the war, and did so with a very small staff. Much of the staff was made up of Australian officers who had no experience of administering countries such as Sarawak, helped by a few Rajah's officers who had returned after having served in the forces or, having been interned, had rejoined the service after only the minimum of leave.

The B.B.C.A.U. could not carry on government without using some of the staff who had worked under the Japanese. The policy in such cases was to turn a blind eye on those who had merely co-operated with the Japanese, and accept them into the post-war Public Service provided they had behaved as they would have done under the Rajah and not committed war crimes.

Abang Openg (born 1902) was one of those who had served under the Third Rajah, the Japanese, B.B.C.A.U., and the Colonial Administration, ending his career as the first Governor of independent Sarawak!

The career of J.B. Archer started in the Second Rajah's time, ended on Sarawak becoming a colony and he then spent his retirement in Kuching. He had been appointed a cadet officer in 1912. By 1939 he was Chief Secretary under the Third Rajah. He retired from this post in 1941 and the same year he was interned by the Japanese. He served as Political Adviser to the BBKAU. On the resumption of the Third Rajah's Government, in 1946, he was once again made Chief Secretary and loyally propagated the Rajah's view that the best course for Sarawak was to become a Crown Colony, though in his heart of hearts he probably wished that Sarawak could have continued being governed by the Brookes. In 1946, on behalf of the Rajah he handed over the country to his Majesty's representative. He had married a local lady, hence his retirement to Kuching, and was often to be seen in the Sarawak Club. He was an affable man and liked to keep up to date with Sarawak affairs and so was willing to chat with junior officers like me. I learned a lot about Sarawak from him.

Archer had some good stories. Over a drink in the Club, he told me that the round tower in Kuching, which was part of the Education Department in my time, had been the Rajah's gaol. A Chinese was incarcerated in this building. He worked out to his satisfaction that, if he made a hole in the roof of his cell, he would be able to escape. Eventually, he somehow acquired a suitable tool and, working at night, he started to carry out his plan. The trouble was that he had misestimated where to make his escape hole. Above him was a cell with three Chinese women prisoners in it. They were surprised to hear noises under the floor and even more surprised when a small hole appeared in their floor, which was widened and a man's head then appeared. He was disappointed at what he found but made the hole big enough to get his body through, and then started to investigate whether there was any chance of escaping from the women's room. But, having been starved of male company for a long time, they had other ideas and drew lots. The winner insisted that the man had sex with her, which he did. Then lady No. 2 said it was now her turn. This startled him, but he managed to satisfy her. However, when it came to No.3's turn, he was unable to perform and in a dudgeon she ungallantly shrieked out loud enough to be heard by the gaolers that she was being raped!

To help ships navigate in the Sarawak River, various signs and notices had been placed along the banks of the river by the Marine Department in the Rajah's time. One of these was worded "Rocks. Hug this shore". It remained unaltered until the Royal Australian Navy came upriver after the Japanese surrender. The notice was then altered, with typical Australian humour, by replacing the 'S' with a 'W'. So far as I know, this last version remained unaltered for years and perhaps the original notice had been unnecessary, as I never heard of a ship foundering on the rock.

## 5 – MY SELECTION AND ARRIVAL IN SARAWAK, KUCHING IN 1947

### The Selection Process and My Journey Out

I had spent most of my war years in India and Burma and, on demob in 1946, I applied to join the Colonial Service, which I considered as being a public service job on a par with one in the Home Civil Service, the Armed Forces or the Foreign Service. I was called twice to the Colonial Office for a one to one interview with a sympathetic and charming, but doubtless percipient official, who put me fully at ease and who was, I believe, Major Sir Ralph Furse. To him I expressed a wish that, if selected, I would prefer to be sent to a colony in Asia rather than Africa and was told that there were vacancies in Sarawak. To his surprise, I knew something about Sarawak as I had had a stamp collection and, indeed, had read up in the Encyclopedia Britannica about each of the Asian colonies. Perhaps this is why I was told that I would be acceptable, subject to the decision of a final selection board. This took place in Whitehall and I entered the board room to find a horseshoe table, with about ten gentlemen around it, and, in the middle of the floor, a lone single chair, on which I was invited to sit and thus they could see every twitch of my tense body. In front of each man was a history of my not very long life. The chairman enquired if I would like to be sent to Sarawak, to which I assented, and he then said "Sir Shenton", (presumably Sir Shenton Thomas, the former Governor of the Straits Settlements, who had been interned by the Japanese and treated humiliatingly by them). "Would you like to interview this candidate, as you know that area well?" The following conversation took place, while all eyes were fixed intently on me:-

"Were you ever taken prisoner by the Japanese?" (He knew from my record the answer to this question).

"No"

"Would you like to have been taken prisoner by the Japanese?" This was obviously a very deep question, on the answer to which my whole future might depend. Clearly the obvious answer could not be the right one. I couldn't long delay giving some brilliant reply and finally I could think of nothing better than, "No"

"Did you ever see a Japanese prisoner of war?" "Yes"

"What did you think of him?"

"He was unconscious, otherwise he wouldn't have been taken alive."

"Did you see any British prisoners of war of the Japs?"

"Yes"

"What did you think of them?"

"They were emaciated."

Sir Shenton had no more questions, nor did anyone else and I was told that I would hear the result of my interview later. My brilliant repartees at this interview must have pleased the board members, for on 19<sup>th</sup> January 1947, I was accepted into and, more importantly, taken on to the payroll of the Colonial Service, and shortly thereafter I received my posting orders as a cadet to join the Sarawak Administrative Service. The British Government's rigid principle had always been that members of the Colonial Service were expatriate employees of the government of the colony in which they served and so that colony was responsible for their pay and pensions. The Colonial Service's head was a cabinet minister. This lasted until 1954 when the Colonial Service was abolished and became known as Her Majesty's Overseas Civil Service as part of a new government department, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Later in January, I set sail on the flagship of the Royal Mail Line the “Andes”. This fine liner was being run as a troopship and so I presumed that she would be dry. I shared a cabin with two other Sarawak cadets (Ian Harper and Dick Rennick), who were also ex-army officers and the first evening we assembled before dinner in the lounge, and the steward came along and asked us if we would prefer beer or ale? Our spirits rose at this and we said that we thought the ship was dry. He answered with typical British humour “The ship is dry; I can offer you ginger beer or ginger ale!” We hoped to have a carefree journey out to Singapore and so were upset to receive a note from another civilian on board, who was a Mr Edward Twining, a member of the Colonial Service and Governor designate of North Borneo. His orders to us were that we were to meet everyday except Sundays at 11 a.m. in the lounge and he would instruct us in Colonial Service matters. Furthermore, there would be an exam on the last day before reaching Singapore. This Mr Twining was better known later as Governor of Tanganyika and in due course became Lord Twining.

We thoroughly enjoyed our periods with Mr Twining before lunch, as he regaled us with stories and pearls of wisdom learnt during his time in the Colonial Service and on the last day, for our exam, he 'forgot' to turn up! Unfortunately, I have forgotten most of his stories, many of which were hilarious and some fascinating and always useful. He told us that the authorities considered money to be more important than any other facet of our administration and that it didn't matter how much money was lost, as that could always be explained away, but we would be severely frowned upon if any one of us could not account for a small amount and in such a case we must not argue but pay up as quickly as possible.

When we reached Columbo, Mr Twining went ashore lightly carrying an empty Gladstone bag. When he returned to the ship, he was struggling to carry up the gangway what was now a full bag. That evening we three cadets were invited to his cabin, where he poured out strong whiskies for us, which he had acquired when making a courtesy call on his old friend the Governor of Ceylon. As a result we three were late in going into dinner and the other teetotal passengers looked at us suspiciously as, compared with them, we were unusually cheery and talking loudly.

The modern tourist arriving in Singapore by air does not know what he is missing. Arriving from the west, the ship sails between Indonesia and Malaya and winds its way past countless idyllic looking islands covered in a deep green vegetation and often with inviting looking sandy beaches. We were astonished on arrival to find Japanese P.O.Ws. acting as wharf coolies. We stayed a couple of nights at Raffles Hotel, which had made a remarkable recovery after the war.

General Ritchie had been on board the Andes with us as he was taking over command in Malaya. The Straits Times had resumed publication under very adverse conditions, as paper was difficult to obtain and staff generally and expert printers in particular were not available. This no doubt explains the gaffe when it printed that General Ritchie, the famous battle scared warrior of the Middle East had arrived on the Andes. Next day there was a sincere apology and “of course ‘battle scared’ should have read ‘bottle scarred!’”

## **My Arrival in Kuching**

On 12<sup>th</sup> February 1947, we flew from Singapore on a Sunderland flying boat – by modern standards no doubt very slow, but it was spacious and very comfortable – and landed on the Sarawak River at Pending, which was the deep water port for Kuching. The river had been cleared of floating logs and debris for the purpose. We three were the first Colonial Service Administration Cadets to be appointed to Sarawak since it became a Colony.

The Rajah's views on administration had a great influence on the newly appointed Colonial Service officers, for the British Government had agreed not to change things without the consent of the people. In many ways the Rajah's method of running his country was far in advance of that of most colonies. To start with most of the senior posts in the field and those in the various branches of Government in Kuching were in the hands of experienced Rajah's officers. These officers looked at us in astonishment. They had been used to treating new cadets in their late teens as dirt. And we three were around 27 years old and had had experience of commanding men in war. For example, I ended the war as a major and battalion second in command. We were treated courteously but, at the beginning, the atmosphere between the Rajah's officers and the newly arrived colonial appointees was tinged with a certain amount of suspicion, as the pre-war staff had to adjust to the new style Colonial Office staff. One of the new cadets was actually married – an unheard of situation in the Rajah's time! It wasn't long however before the Rajah's officers became a minority and then the atmosphere improved.

## **Some Aspects of My Time in Kuching**

The secretariat then merely consisted of a Chief Secretary (C.W.Dawson – ex-Malayan Civil Service and an internee of the Japanese) and a Secretary (R.W.Turner – also ex-Malaya Civil Service) and one of us cadets (Ian Harper). The Finance cum Treasury Departments had to make do with a Financial Secretary (Charles Gascoigne) and a Treasurer (E.W. [Tubby] Cousens) both of whom were Rajah's officers, the latter being now nearly blind due to his treatment in the Kuching internment camp. To my dismay and alarm, I was posted to the Treasury Department on 14<sup>th</sup> February to help out. In the army I had had little to do with accounting and so I now had to learn from scratch. I cannot say that I found accountancy matters very congenial but, eventually, with the cool, calm light of hindsight, I realised that, as was so often the case in my career, the powers that be knew better than I myself what was good for me. In the Treasury, I had to learn how to fit in with the colonial accounting procedure in use. In fact, my time in the Treasury turned out to be of great use to me in my career in Sarawak and thereafter.

The government administrative buildings, built long pre-war, were ideal for the climate, as they consisted of an open ground floor with a very high ceiling, from which dangled electric fans. The rooms were vast and, on the outside, instead of walls, had a series of enormous doors. The verandahs were wide and covered over, thus giving shelter from the sun and rain. These verandahs were used by the public as short cuts and, when the doors were opened which was the case during office hours, nearly all within the room were visible to those on the verandah. In 1947 neither the Chief Secretary nor the Financial Secretary had a room with a closed door, though they did have a screen round their part of the office, for, consistent with the Rajah's policy of government being accessible to the people, even in the state capital, the public could look in and see the

clerks and the officers at work and, if he was a brave and determined member of the public, he could enter a government office to talk about matters that concerned him. Above the ceiling was a high attic, roofed with hard wood shingles. With such an airspace above the ceiling, the architecturally beautiful and climatologically efficient rooms of the Rajah's buildings kept a cool and remarkably consistent temperature by day and by night throughout the seasons, whether the big doors were open or closed. Those working in such conditions were far healthier than the staff in later years, who had privacy when these buildings had been converted into air conditioned cubicles with closed doors.

It was several years after the regrettable conversion of these historical buildings, that the then Financial Secretary, John Barcroft (a Rajah's officer, who had been a D.O. and a Resident and spoke Malay and Iban perfectly), decided that Government needed more money and he thought that the easiest way to achieve this was to impose a Trades Sale Tax, as this would mostly only affect the richest part of the population, which was of course mostly, though not entirely, Chinese. However, he had not realised that, most uncharacteristically for the Sarawak Chinese, this proposal was causing a deep down and firm opposition amongst the Chinese traders, resulting in threats of a trade boycott, and Government had to climb down and ignominiously withdraw the proposals. Once, when commenting to me about his lack of finesse over the Trades Sale Tax, Barcroft blamed the air conditioning. He said that in the old days he would be head bowed down over his desk deeply engrossed in matters of state, when he would hear an apologetic cough, and on looking up he would see on the verandah some senior citizen or other, whom he well knew and respected, and whom (despite his private wish to carry on with his work undisturbed) he could not, without being rude, avoid inviting in. After an initial conversation about nothing in particular, his visitor would come out with what really concerned him and so, as a result, John would be more in the picture about something or other local than would otherwise have been the case. Barcroft told me that, if his door to the verandah had been open while his proposals for the Trades Sales Tax were still at the stage of being discussed, undoubtedly some leading Chinese would have coughed discreetly and he would have realised very quickly the strength of the opposition to this tax, and Government would never have carried on taking the wrong path that it did in this case.

Having been in India during the war, I was very conscious of the connection between rats, their fleas and bubonic plague. From India, Bob Chater had recently come to join the Sarawak Customs Department. He told me that, during the war, when he was the newly arrived manager designate of the Connemara Hotel in Madras, he had been put in an attic room pending the departure of his predecessor. He had been sitting in bed late at night reading, when he saw a rat cross the floor and expire in front of him. A very worried Chater made sure his mosquito net was properly tucked in all the way round and next morning, as soon as anyone was at work, he reported the rat's demise. In quick time a team had arrived, removed the rat and disinfected the room. An autopsy revealed that the rat had died of a heart attack!

Thus, when I was at my desk in the Treasury and was told that a clerk, who had gone into the loft to look for a file, had found a dead rat, I immediately looked up the telephone number of the health authority. There was no such body but there was the Director of Medical and Health Services, Dr. T.K. Abbott, a down to earth Australian. So I 'phoned him, though I did not realise at the time what an important man in the

hierarchy he was. Neither did I realise that there was no bubonic plague in Sarawak. On informing him that there was a dead rat in the Treasury, I was astounded when he said "So what?" I mentioned that perhaps it was a carrier of bubonic plague. Having found out that I was the newly appointed Cadet Officer, he promised to deal with it. In due course a team arrived in overalls and with gas masks, buckets and a stirrup pump, went up into the loft, put the rat in a bucket, came down again and surrounded the table of Tubby Cousens about 20 feet away from me. He was surprised at this and even more so when they put on their gas masks and, without any explanation, sprayed him well and truly with something resembling tear gas. He was forced to flee on to the verandah and, after the team had disappeared, I ventured to go over to him and explain that I presumed that he had been mistaken for me!

One of the duties put on to me was that of enciphering and deciphering the Colonial Service code, which worked on the principle that a jumble of five letters would mean a short sentence or a proper name. One evening just as I was going out to enjoy myself, an 'immediate' coded telegram arrived and I found out that this 'urgent' message, which had made me abandon my programme, read "In the code book under AZXEN, delete quote General de Gaulle unquote and insert quote Mr Creech-Jones unquote". How, totally out of touch someone in the Colonial Office must have been if he thought that the General was the sort of person who could be deleted! How many people now know that Mr Creech-Jones was the then Colonial Secretary?

The White Rajahs had purposely tried to prevent too quick a development of their country, despite the fact that this policy had the disadvantage that the state lacked cash, that could have been derived from taxing foreign firms, who had invested large sums in the country. However, the Third Rajah did decide to start a railway and approached Vickers, whose manager was delighted at the thought of the profit to be made. When he found out that the Rajah was cautious and wished to start with a railway of only ten miles long, he said to him "Rajah, you have come to the wrong firm. You should have approached Messrs Hornby!" By the end of the war the railway consisted of nine miles of narrow gauge track ending at a stone quarry, a few small open trucks and one tiny engine, all of which had been put under the control of the Director of Public Works. This gentleman decided to take his wife and family on a holiday in Australia, and so, before setting off, sent a complimentary ticket to the general manager of each of the Australian railway companies enabling them and their immediate families to travel free on the whole of the Sarawak Government Railway. In due course a similarly worded complimentary ticket arrived back from each of the general managers, and he then felt able to implement his plan for a happy holiday in Australia!

At the time of my arrival, pre-war social niceties were still observed. We new cadet officers had to sign the Governor's book and dress up in a suit to call on the Chief Justice, the Chief Secretary and the Financial Secretary. We arranged to do this when we hoped that the distinguished gentlemen and their wives were out (in which case we left cards) but to our annoyance and doubtless too to those whom we found at home, we sometimes found ourselves invited in and had to make polite conversation to someone about whom we knew nothing at all.

In the time of the Rajahs the only foreign firms allowed to function in the state were the Borneo Co. Ltd. (B.C.L.), the Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China and an import/export firm Sime Darby, but now that Sarawak was a colony, foreign firms could

not be kept out and so Harrison & Crossfield sent Geoffrey Smith over from Singapore to open up in Kuching. This young man surprised many of the Rajah's officers, who were only now beginning to realise how rapidly the high standards of conventional behaviour, insisted on in pre-Japanese times, were changing, when they saw Geoffrey going round on a motor bike and he even went along the few miles of road that led from Sarawak to a place called Bau. In his monthly report to H.Q. the D.O. Bau (Graham Lloyd-Thomas, a Rajah's officer, who had been interned during the war) wrote "A most peculiar event occurred on Saturday when a European (dressed in a shirt and shorts !!) was seen to arrive in the bazaar on a motor cycle, ride around and then leave, without having had the courtesy to call on me!" How different from only a few years later when D.Os. were only too pleased to be left alone by visitors arriving in their area. I must say that I could see nothing wrong with what Geoffrey had done though, of course, I kept those thoughts of mine to myself.

To start with in Kuching, I shared a huge Government house with Wally Witt, an Australian who had come up the Sarawak River in a Royal Australian Navy ship soon after the Japanese surrender. After demob, he returned to Kuching and became the first of a new brand of trader – an expatriate who would probably not have been allowed in the country pre-war – when, seeing a scarcity, he opened up a pharmaceutical business. I lived downstairs and he was upstairs. One day, after breakfast, I was, as usual, sitting on my throne when, immediately above me, I heard Wally flush his toilet and a shower of water landed on my head – I decided that an urgent visit by a plumber was desirable.

The old regime tut-tutted a lot at the way things were not as they used to be. Wally, Geoffrey and I drove to a river near Kuching for a swim. The Deputy Chief Secretary noticed that Wally was in bathing shorts, and cut him dead when next he met Wally in the street – not that that worried Wally much. Doubtless, the bazaar Chinese would be surprised to see a European adjusting to the climate by driving around in shorts, but I doubt if they would have been shocked, as after all most of them had no more clothes on than Wally did. As regards myself, while desiring in that heat to wear less well fitting clothes, I continued to conform to the norm amongst Government officers by wearing a white shirt, white slacks and sometimes a tie with a well fitting bush jacket and a belt with a polished buckle. Wally was told that his use of a Government quarter must cease as it was required for the influx of new officers, so he moved into a house in a residential Chinese area, which he shared with Geoffrey. It was in his garden, when Wally complained to me about his neighbour's hens continually coming into his garden that I, with a closed black umbrella approached the hens and then suddenly opened and shut it in quick succession. The effect was extreme panic amongst the squawking fowls, who never trespassed again!

In 1947 Chief Justice R.Y. Hedges was an Australian and rather a recluse, who rarely entertained and who lived with an attractive Eurasian girl, Lena Ricketts, the daughter of a Resident, now deceased, who had retired in Kuching. In about 1952 Hedges retired from Sarawak and the Governor, Sir Anthony Abell, who was a bachelor, gave a farewell party for him the day before he left. What was the astonishment of the gentlemen and of their scandalised wives to be greeted by His Excellency together with the Chief Justice and Lena. Many of the female guests and a few men expressed (not to the Governor but amongst themselves) how very shocked they were that the Governor should so publicly condone a liaison that everyone knew existed, but did not

acknowledge and the chit chat that went on about this was considerable. It was not till next day at the airport, when people turned up to see the Chief Justice off, that it came to light that the day before Lena and Hedges had got married and so, at that party (for about 24 hours), Lena had been in fact the first lady of Sarawak! What a difference a marriage certificate can make!

Also in 1947 I got to know Ong Kee Hui, then an agricultural officer. So far as I know, his father (a distinguished and most respected Hokkien headman) was then the only Sarawakian who had a degree (in his case in poultry keeping). Kee Hui later became a rich banker, the owner of the Hock Hua Bank, and then entered politics. I doubt whether he then foresaw that, in only 16 years of Colonial rule, it would have been felt reasonable to give Sarawak its independence within Malaysia and that soon thereafter Kee Hui would have become a Malaysian cabinet minister in Kuala Lumpur and have acquired lots of Malaysian and Sarawakian titles with the accompanying list of initials appearing after his name on letters addressed to him. Kee Hui, together with his younger brothers, invited Geoffrey Smith and me to join them at the Malay coastal village of Buntal for Easter. This was a really friendly gesture to two very recent arrivals in Sarawak. We stayed in a typical Malay house on a coconut palm fringed beach and I was delighted to get to know some Malays, who are a most courteous and dignified race. It was there that I asked what would happen should a coconut fall on my head and was hardly reassured when I was told that there was nothing for me to worry about as coconuts did not fall on the heads of those who had not done wrong! On another occasion, Kee Hui and his brothers took me to an area of virgin jungle on the slopes of Matang Mountain, where a clear stream came tumbling down a series of waterfalls into rocky pools ideal for a bathing picnic. Being Chinese or European and all male, we undressed to swim. Had there been Malays or Indians present, this would have been considered indecent. In the case of the other native tribes, the men would be prepared to undress in public but would delicately cover their private parts with a hand. I was climbing from one such pool up a 15 waterfall to another pool, enjoying the cool water flowing over me, when, on reaching the top, hanging from the edge by my fingertips, I hauled myself up to look over the ledge and immediately let go and fell down backwards, as on the edge of this part of the waterfall was a coiled up snake looking at me from about a foot away.

One of the B.B.C.A.U. appointed police officers, Joe Marlow, at Kuching was an ex-Border Regiment man (my regiment during the war), and so he taught the newly resurrected Sarawak Constabulary "Do Ye Ken John Peel", our regimental march, and for a period it became the Constabulary's march. He also taught them The "Campbells Are Coming". Malcolm Macdonald, the son of Ramsay Macdonald (the first British Labour Prime Minister), had recently become Governor-General of Malaya and the British Borneo Territories and paid his first visit to Sarawak. Joe, being a Cumbrian and so a sassenach, did not realise the implication of his choice of music, until after a welcoming banquet, there was a musical interlude and the Constabulary band marched in playing "The Campbells Are Coming" and Malcolm Macdonald stood up and asked the Governor whether this was a studied insult to him.

I was delighted when this Border man asked me if I would like to accompany him on a police patrol lasting ten days round the Land Dayak districts of Kuching and Bau. I prepared a lot of arguments to influence Gascoigne to believe that, by going on such a trip, I would become a better Treasury officer. He said that my arguments were poor

indeed but kindly added that he could dispense with me for this period and off I went. I had been struggling to learn Malay and on arrival in one Land Dayak village hot and sweaty I asked, as I thought, for a coconut and got no response at all, until someone listening to me enquired, in English, what I wanted “a head” for. I had asked for a ‘kepala’ instead of a ‘kelapa’. At this time, many of the Land Dayak villages were still at the top of hills, where they had been built traditionally as a safety precaution against enemies, and where they stored the heads of their enemies in the bachelors’ house.

When we reached Bau, we were kindly accommodated by the D.O. and his wife – Graham and Joan Lloyd-Thomas. They had a pet hornbill and a pet gibbon ape, but the latter was mischievous and was always being punished for its misdeeds. The difficulty in administering a punishment was that punishment should not be inflicted unless this could be done immediately after the crime had been committed. The gibbon seemed to sense this and also to sense when punishment was due to him, for with the considerable agility with which it had been endowed, when it saw that retribution was on the way it would leap around the room and out of the window and up a tall tree and stay there until it had become quite pointless to spank it. On the occasion that we were there the gibbon was up a tree and carefully staying there and ignoring all tempting bribes to come down. It well knew that it had been naughty when it had got hold of the beak of the unfortunate hornbill and weaved it in and out of the bars of the cage until it had died.

This trip was my first one to the ‘ulu’ and I thoroughly enjoyed it as I did nearly all my many others.

The first Governor of Sarawak was Sir Charles Arden-Clarke and in due course he received a second knighthood, which inspired his old friend Twining (by then Sir Edward and Governor of North Borneo) to send him a telegram “Congratulations on twice a knight. Remarkable at your age.” This telegram was circulated round the Secretariat but to Sir Charles’s annoyance no-one could think up a suitably witty response.

### **Anti-Cession**

Like many countries throughout the world, the people of Sarawak were not overly concerned who ruled them, provided matters that they considered important were sorted out as they wished. Here one comes up against the age old problem as to how qualified are ordinary members of the public to have the long term vision to decide whether changes will be for the eventual good of the country. If asked, probably most Sarawakians in 1946 would have said “Why should we accept a Government imposed on us by a far-away country, when what we want is to revert back to the life we had under the Rajahs before the Japanese invasion?” They were scarcely qualified to realise that it was quite impossible for the elderly Rajah to do what they wanted, with the means at his disposal, when the country was in such a parlous state and totally bankrupt. In addition, he had lost confidence in his nephew and heir, Anthony Brooke. History teaches that far sighted leaders have the greatest difficulty in dragging the masses to accept that, for their good in the future, certain changes have to be accepted now. Even if it had been possible to revert to the pre-war situation, would this have been desirable when it would have meant Sarawak remaining very backward and completely unable, on its own, to compete as an equal with other independent states in the modern world?

When in 1946 the Third Rajah put the proposal to Council Negri to cede Sarawak to the British crown, the Cession was passed by only a small majority, which included the votes, unwillingly given by some of those of the Rajah's expatriate civil servants on the Council. Gradually, an Anti-Cession Movement came into being, which wished to reverse the cession to the Crown and wanted the Rajah's nephew, Anthony Brooke, to be installed as the Fourth Rajah. As, apart from a few expatriate officers, the Rajahs had largely relied on the upper class Malay (and therefore Moslem) community to fill all posts in government departments, it was a considerable part of the Malay community that supported Anti-Cession as it was perfectly clear to them that, under Colonial rule, jobs would be given to the best qualified candidate, regardless of race and religion. When I went walking in the Malay kampongs (villages) many of them had anti-cession placards. Very strong feelings were held and, as always in such situations, caused terrible and bitter splits within that community. Pro-cession family members on one side would no longer speak to members holding the opposite view point.

Not many Chinese or non-Malay natives joined the anti-cession movement. In 1948, on a visit with me to Binatang, the Governor asked an Iban Penghulu what he thought about the change over from Brooke Government to Colonial rule. He answered "Yes. I have heard that we are now ruled by a great white king, who lives far away, but what really interests me is whether you will grant me my request that I in particular and all penghulus in general, should be issued by Government with a shotgun free". I felt that perhaps he had got his priorities right about matters that affected him!

Various long standing Government officers, from office boys to Senior Native Officers, were members of the Anti-Cession Movement, while carrying out their Government jobs. The Government began to feel that this was an unsatisfactory situation and, after much hesitation, it decided that all Government officers must be loyal to the Government and sign a document to this effect. If they were members of the Anti-Cession Movement they had the choice of ceasing to be members of the movement or resign their job. The number who chose to resign their posts was small. The cession problem, however, continued to split the Malay community until the Governor's assassination by pro-cession Malays caused such revulsion that the Anti-Cession Movement collapsed. This murder is described in my Kapit chapter.

## 6 – SIBU 1947 – 1948

In August 1947, Jim Bettison, the Divisional Treasurer, Third Division, a Rajah's officer, who had been interned and then taken his consequent leave to the minimum possible extent so that he could take up his job again, had been persuaded that he had done more than devotion to duty required and should now go on four months' leave, during which time I would take over from him. My titles were to be Divisional Treasurer, Postmaster of Third Division and Assistant Custodian of Enemy Property within Third Division. On Jim's return I would mercifully be released from Treasury duties and become a Cadet Officer at Sibu, the divisional headquarters of Third Division. He was an entertaining character but had a single track mind on financial matters. He organized the family accounts in such a way that he and his wife had a budget, which was to be strictly enforced. For instance if his wife's dress allowance had been estimated at a certain figure for the calendar year and in November she saw a bargain, which was just what she wanted and which would cost much more if left till January in the subsequent year but there was no money in her vote to pay for it, they had to go through the books and see where a saving could be made. If, and only if, one of her or one of his expenditure votes had a surplus, then a virement would be recorded in writing in one of their expenditure votes showing a deduction (to the value of the dress) from the votehead with a surplus and showing a credit to the same value in her dress allowance vote! I have yet to meet another married couple that controls the family revenue and expenditure in this way and several years later, when I married and told my own wife this story, she showed little understanding or appreciation of running our financial affairs in such a manner.

When I came to take over the contents of the safe from him, I was appalled to find that it contained \$1,750,000 in notes and cash and that a large amount of the sum was in \$1 notes, some issued in Sarawak's currency and some in Malayan (which was also legal tender). I said nothing when he told me that when he came back from leave it was his great hope that I would have achieved his ambition of having accumulated \$2,000,000 in the safe. In the time available for the hand over I could not possibly count all this money, so I had to be satisfied with taking samples from each pile of notes and counting them (they were all correct), hoping that the remainder were not deficient. As soon as he had gone, I got on to the manager of the Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China, which had only recently opened in Sibu, and for the next several weeks for an hour during our respective lunch hours, accompanied by his chief clerk and my chief clerk as witnesses, I handed over as much money as I could to him. It says a lot for my predecessor that not one of the bundles of \$1, \$5, or \$10 notes or bags of coin was found to be deficient. I felt quite a beast when I saw his face, on his return, when I only handed back to him some \$250,000, which was quite ample for normal Government purposes.

Without any regrets, in December 1947 I moved away from the Divisional Treasurer's office on becoming an Administrative Cadet and was allocated a table in the Sibu District Office.

Sibu in 1947 was a small town, partly on what could still justifiably be called a low lying island at the head of the Rejang River delta and some 80 miles from the sea. The delta consisted of a maze of rivers of differing lengths (several of them were cul-de-sacs) twisting and turning in all directions and some of the branches joined up with each

other. On two sides the island faced the huge expanse of the Rejang River almost a mile wide. On the third side was the start of the delta due to the large Igan River breaking away from the Rejang and making its separate way to the sea near Oya. Unfortunately, a shallow sandbank at its mouth made this river unnavigable from the sea except to very small boats. On the fourth side separating Sibu Island from the mainland was what used to be a channel of the river but it had now largely silted up and only filled with water at high tide. This large ditch was clogged up with tall ginger plants, whose white flowers emitted powerful delightful odours of tropical style perfume. By the time I left Sarawak, this ditch had so silted up that there was very little evidence that Sibu had started off as an island.

The Rejang River was 348 miles long. At Sibu the river was still tidal but only very rarely changed direction. A high tide combining with flood water from the ulu resulted in flooding as the area in and around Sibu was mostly low and swampy. Sibu was beyond the coastal area and so there was no welcome sea and land breeze. Thus the climate was hot and sticky, varying but little between day and night and between the rainy season and the rainier one. One could only leave Sibu by water as there was no road longer than about three miles. In fact Sibu was a geographical and climatological horror and the only nice thing about Sibu was its people, who, as in most Sarawak towns and bazaars, consisted largely of Chinese in the commercial area and natives in the neighbouring kampongs or villages. In the case of Sibu, the natives were Malays (who were Moslems) and the Melanaus (some of whom were Moslems, some Christian and some pagan and at that time living in a longhouse). Amongst the variety of Chinese in Sibu, the majority were Foochows (many of them Methodists), who were commercially very astute and felt themselves to be vastly superior to the Chinese of Kuching. Hokkiens, Hakkas, Teochews and Cantonese also resided in and near Sibu. There were Iban longhouses quite close to the town.

Sibu was the headquarters of the biggest and most populous division of Sarawak and, while I was there, Third Division was headed by a Resident (John Barcroft). He was a Rajah's officer as were the District Officer (John Fisher), the Superintendent of Lands and Surveys, the Divisional Engineer, the Agriculture Officer, the Education Officer, the Police Officer (who was later to become my brother in law), and (of course) the Divisional Treasurer, who was also Postmaster and Assistant Custodian of Enemy Property. These were the sum total of European men apart from the Manager of SESCO (the electricity company), the Manager of the Chartered Bank and the manager of the B.C.L. Two of the government officers were married and so was the B.C.L. manager. These people lived in houses raised on stilts. What few roads there were, were mostly raised above normal flood level, were narrow and unmetalled; there were very few motor vehicles. Beside the roads were monsoon ditches that filled up at high tide. The monsoon ditches were fringed, on the side away from the road, with high bamboo hedges, which effectively absorbed the dust blown off these earth roads in dry weather.

Before I arrived, there had been an elderly, pre-war rubber regulation officer, who had returned after the war and who had a horse. On one occasion, he had been riding in the bazaar past a house of ill fame and the ladies were leaning out of the upper floor windows looking at the scene below them, when to the evident amusement of the passers by, they commented on the unusual sight of a horseman. He shouted up at them to cease their comments or he would come up and do something to them. To the

even greater amusement of the onlookers, they shouted back that at his age there was little point in his coming up but that he should send the horse instead. When he left, his job was taken over by the Agriculture Officer.

Soon after my arrival in Sibu, a Royal Navy ship (H.M.S. Black Swan) arrived, under the command of a Captain. I was an unimportant witness, on the occasion of the presentation of the O.B.E. to the Paramount Chief of the Ibans, Temonggong Koh, who had come down from his longhouse, which was the furthest upriver in the Balleh, the biggest tributary of the Rejang River. Judging by the tatooing on the back of his hands and fingers, in his youth he must have taken many heads. Shortly before the end of the war, a few allied troops were parachuted into the interior of Sarawak and made contact with the local people, who were delighted to see them. A landing strip was made and Koh was taken up in a plane to point out the Japanese positions. This he did but he also took the opportunity to point out the houses of a few of his Chinese creditors, some of which were subsequently bombed, though this fact did not emerge in his citation.

At this time, an unusual situation developed which wasn't greatly to the liking of the rather conventional and stuffy Captain. Sir Charles Arden-Clarke's son happened to be doing his National Service as an able seaman on the Black Swan. Up to now the Captain and the A.B. had not met socially at all. However, the Governor had requested that his wife and he should be allowed to see their son as much as possible while the ship was in Sibu, and so the A.B. and the Captain were guests at the same drinks parties and both were seated close to one another amongst the viewers present on the great day. Everyone was assembled and it was only after the proceedings had started, that it was realised that, while the Temonggong was dressed traditionally in a loin cloth, with a beautifully incised parang in an equally beautifully decorated scabbard and on his head was a fine hat decorated with hornbill feathers, problems were likely to arise when it came to the pinning on ceremony, as he had a bare torso and it was deemed unsuitable to pin his medal on to this, his hat or his loincloth. Much whispering went on until Koh realised that it would be wise to accept the offer of a neighbour's British style jacket, which admittedly looked incongruous as part of an Iban chief's traditional get up. After the ceremony, the Governor, with Koh beside him, drove round the decorated streets of Sibu amongst a wildly cheering crowd and the Chinese showed their appreciation by letting off fire crackers, one of which landed on Koh's hands which were folded on his lap. He involuntarily tossed his hands upwards and the squib was thrown into the air and landed on the Governor's lap. His jerk reaction was to toss it aside and it landed once more on Koh, who, this time, threw it over the side of the car. Thereafter, the Chinese were told to limit their appreciation to hanging squibs joined by fuses in long lines from the top floor of buildings. The bottom one would be lit and then one after another the squibs would go off with flashes, sounding like a machine gun in action. The only damage from these Chinese crackers being if lighted bits of squib fell on cars parked below.

Traditionally, servants in European houses were either Malay or Chinese, but as I (and later my wife) have never felt the necessity to be bound by "but it has always been done this way" and as I knew that much of my future would be in largely Dayak areas, on arriving in Sibu I decided to be unique and engage a young Iban (Sea-Dayak). I also took on Jim Bettison's elderly Malay boy while his boss was on leave. This pleased Jim as he did not have to pay him a retention fee and it pleased me as during his master's absence, the boy could instruct my 19 year old Dayak (Kepu) straight from a longhouse

in the art of becoming a 'tuan's' servant. To return hospitality I invited what few tuans and their mems there were in Sibü to my house for evening drinks. The preparations had started off well, when I heard a commotion in the kitchen. On investigation it turned



With Kepu anak Dajai at his house at Bawang Assan, October 1948

out that the old fashioned Malay servant was telling Kepu off because it was not done for boys to wear outdoor shoes in the house and Kepu was incensed as, having just received his monthly salary, he had bought especially for this party a pair of heavily brogued brown shoes, which were the first shoes he had ever owned and to which he was devoted. Incidentally, when he was barefoot he walked most gracefully, but with shoes on he had an up and down motion with his feet, which was as ungainly as it was inefficient, but, when wearing them, he, at any rate, was pleased with himself.

I next asked Kepu to take the cigarettes round and told him to start with a group in earnest conversation consisting of John Barcroft, Batty Miles, the B.C.L. manager and his wife (Millie) and the manager of the Chartered Bank. Conversation ceased abruptly as Kepu, full of confidence, barged and elbowed his way into the middle of this group and with a friendly smile, revealing a gold plated front tooth, took out a cigarette from the box and popped it into Millie Miles' mouth and popped another into his own, lit her cigarette and then his and then popped cigarettes into the mouths of the others present, lit them and moved away from the now completely silent group, well satisfied with himself.

In Sarawak in 1947 many items of necessity were rationed and/or unobtainable, and I thought I had managed rather well in obtaining a couple of bottles of gin, one of whisky, one of Benedictine and one of Cointreau for my party, mentioned above. After a bit, John Barcroft, said that my whisky sodas were a bit mild, weren't they, and so thought the D.O., John Fisher, both of whom were far from being teetotallers. I then mixed a cocktail with a measure from each bottle that I had, and was rewarded with a "That's better" from my superior officers. In due course they left my bungalow and successfully weaved their way along the S-bend of my raised garden path, with its monsoon ditches on either side, until they reached the road. I had waived them "Good-bye" and stayed on to watch whether they managed to leave my premises safely. There had been much

noisy talking as they wended their way along my path, then there was whispering and then silence, so instead of re-joining my guests, I watched to see what had happened to them. Apparently, they had reached the road when they decided, one on each side of the road, to hide down in the monsoon ditch. A Malay came cycling along and shrieked out when suddenly a pair of figures leaped out of the ditch at him, but he was too quick for them and pedalled away at great speed. The two senior government officers in the division then decided that they must co-ordinate their actions better and once again each disappeared below road level, each into his own ditch. It wasn't long before a Chinese came cycling along the road, singing a little song to himself, doubtless to keep up his spirits as he went along the ill lit road. His spirits were far from cheered when two figures erupted out of the ditch in front of him and he fell off his bicycle in his distress. "If I am not Resident here, who is?" said one figure. A question which went unanswered as presumably the Chinese spoke no English. "What are you doing here so late?" said the other figure. This question also went unanswered. "Well done, my fine fellow." said Barcroft and gave him some money. "You may carry on now." and helped him on to his bike. The Chinese went on at great speed and I wonder what went through his mind. The two officers then went in the direction of their homes in a cheerful mood.

International misunderstandings can often be due to ignorance as to how to behave. Soon after my arrival in Sibu, I drafted a letter and handed it to my Chinese clerk to type. He came back in a great rage, threw the letter down in front of me and said "I refuse to type so offensive a letter!" I was startled and re-read the letter but could find nothing offensive in it at all, so I asked for clarification. This enraged him further and he said "Look at that!" pointing to the word "Chinaman". I said "Well?" And he said "It is a rude and derogatory word". Thus was I taught that in the Chinese community "Chinaman" has a pejorative meaning and from then on for the singular or plural I have always used the same word "Chinese".

My wooden house on stilts in Sibu was a square, out of which wooden partitions had been put up to make smaller squares, which formed my L-shaped living room and my bedroom, from which steep steps led down to a small room which was my bathroom. There was no running water, but rainwater from the roof was led down a pipe into a 40 gallon container and beside this was the aptly named thunderbox for disposal of the body's natural products. Another small building behind my house served as kitchen and quarters for my boy. It too had a rainwater container. For cooking purposes my boy had an open fire. In due course my sister, Binda, came out on a visit and stayed with me. I asked her to teach my boy to make pastry and suggested she should start with a fruit pie. She was willing to be helpful but maintained that she would have difficulty doing this on an open fire, so an empty kerosine tin was put on its side and unwillingly she had to put up with this as an oven. My Malay was as yet poor, but I had looked up 'flour' in the dictionary and found that in Malay it was 'tepong' and this I had instructed my boy to purchase. He was very interested in improving himself and watched carefully as my sister showed him how to make pastry and watched as the pie was put into the makeshift oven. After what she thought was the right time for it to be cooked, she got the pie out, took one look at it and said that it would need far longer than she had estimated. Two or three times thereafter she took out the pie and put it back and we even went for a walk round the block to fill in time and my mouth was watering at the pleasures to come. Eventually she announced that though the pie still didn't look cooked it must be done and it was taken to the table. It turned out to be quite uneatable

and it was then that I learnt that while 'tepong' does mean 'flour' it can also mean 'starch'!

I took Binda, travelling with me partly by medium sized outboard and partly on foot in an area of small hills that were mostly under rubber or under lalang grass. Lalang is a beastly coarse long grass that is difficult to eradicate. It grows on land where the natives have slashed and burnt the forest cover to plant hill rice too frequently to allow regeneration. Lalang covered land offers no shade and so the sun can beat down on the heads of travellers unmercifully, while it is often tall enough to cut out the effects of any cooling breeze.

Binda was surprised when, after we had been travelling for an hour or two, the Hospital Assistant, an Iban, who had been sitting behind us in the boat, leaned over to her and asked "Do you mind if I micturate?" Though astonished at the request and indeed the wording, she told him that she had no objection and so he crept to the very front of the boat, beside the guide and pee-ed facing forwards and then, much relieved, he returned to his place, thanking her as he passed her. Had a lady wished to relieve herself, the boat would have had to draw into the bank and allow her to disappear amongst the vegetation on the bank.

Left to Right: William Nais (Probationary Native Officer – P.N.O), Iban woman, Binda (harassed and tired after 3 hour walk over hills and through swamp in hot weather when Dayaks lost their way) and Ibans in Penghulu Imai's area when travelling from Sungei Menyan to Sungei Sengan, 1948.



The only other matter of note on our journey was, when extremely hot and sweaty and rather tired after much travelling on lalang covered hills, we were encouraged by hearing cocks crowing and so knew that we were near our destination, where we could expect a drink, relax and go down to the river to refresh ourselves. Two of my memories of travelling on foot in the ulu are firstly, when I was beginning to feel tired I would ask "How much further" and, with further experience, I soon realised never to be satisfied with the answer of "Satu bukit lagi" or "one hill further" because I soon found that what seemed a 'hill' to a local often seemed a 'mountain' to me and that what seemed 'one' to him seemed to be 'many' to me. My second strong memory was of my pleasure when travelling and I heard a cock crow: that sound could only indicate that we were close to habitation.

However, in this case, as we approached the longhouse, the path was barred by a branch and our Penghulu (head of a group of longhouses) said that clearly there had been either a death or a severe case of sickness. So a 'Pantang' had been put on the

house, which meant that no outsider could enter or inhabitant leave it. Doubtless from the point of view of avoiding the spread of contagious diseases, these 'Pantangs' were an excellent idea, but to us tired travellers, the idea of having to walk a further several miles to the next longhouse was far from amusing.

After a long walk, I often wondered how I would survive the night's entertainment or, as the case might be, cope with a further long walk after only an hour's rest. The fact is that I found that a couple of glasses of tuak (Sea-Dayak rice wine/beer) worked wonders as a restorative for body and soul.

To many of the Rajah's officers a cadet was an ignorant young man to be treated as a fag would have been treated by a prefect in a public school, and it took a little time for some of these men to take into account that most of the new colonial service cadets were in their mid-twenties and had had positions of command in the forces. When I arrived in Sibul as Treasurer I decided that I would work hard at passing my Malay and law exams and so had no wish to spend the whole of every evening drinking in the Island Club. On one occasion, after a couple of drinks, I got up to go home and Fisher, the D.O., then said peremptorily "Sit down and order yourself a drink, which I will pay for". I was surprised at his tone, but thanked him and said I would have "Just one". After a bit I got up to go and Barcroft, the Resident, said "Stay here until you have my permission to go. I will pay for your drinks and don't worry about your exams as I will decide whether you get through or not." However, I had had enough to drink and said pleasantly enough that I wished to go home and off I went, leaving a scandalized group of assembled club members to discuss what was the world coming to when the Cadet Treasurer got away with speaking to his elders like this.

The same Bob Chater, mentioned in Chapter 4 in connection with rats, had arrived in Sibul as Superintendent of Customs. He had failed his Malay oral exam due to nerves and so could not be promoted. Some time later, Resident Barcroft sent him a message, since he was Secretary to the Island Club, Sibul, to come at once to his office as the Club clerk had reported a theft. Chater arrived and found Gladys, the Malay Club boy who could speak no English, in the office. Agitatedly he told Bob what was missing. Equally agitatedly, Bob questioned him closely on when he had last checked the stores, where the key had been kept, whether he had any suspicions, etc. and then Barcroft said "That's enough! You've passed your Malay oral. There hasn't been a theft!"

Despite my behaviour in the club, my bosses must have approved of me as several weeks later, when I had ceased to be Treasurer and was an Administration Cadet sitting amongst the clerks in the D.O.'s. office, Barcroft paused for a moment by my office table and said "Ian, I have temporarily forgotten, what is the Malay for 'knot'?" I said that my Malay was not yet good enough to answer his question and he blasted me and said that it was time I knew such words. I went to the D.O. to find out the Malay for 'knot'. When Fisher heard what had happened, he said "Barcroft knows perfectly well what is the Malay for 'knot', whatever you do, don't go to his office and tell him". A few days later I took my written Malay exam and strange to say by coincidence I was required to translate 'knot' from English into Malay! Fisher must also have approved of me as the evening before I took my law exam he opined what, in his experience, might be the chapters that it would be advisable to revise.

As an example of the difficulty the Rajah's officers had adjusting to the new type of cadet officer, I now record how in 1947 the D.O. in Simanggang, the H.Q. town of Second Division, was Philip Jacks and he found himself with a Cadet Officer (Desmond Bruen), who until recently had been a lieutenant colonel commanding a battalion of Gurkhas. This fact did not prevent him insisting that the new cadet should do as he himself had had to do many years ago, which was to turn out the prisoners every morning at 7.00 a.m. This used to rile Desmond as it seemed a pointless exercise, and one which had not been carried out at all when the same D.O. didn't have a Cadet Officer. To make matters worse, as Desmond left his house at about 6.50 a.m. he passed the bottom of the garden of the D.O.'s house, and could see the latter, having just got up, reclining in his sarong in a comfortable chair on his verandah sipping his early morning cup of tea and condescendingly waiving to his slave going by. Desmond asked why it was necessary for him to turn out the prisoners, who were few in number, and was told that from time immemorial this had been the job of the Cadet Officer. One day Desmond got up rather earlier than usual and, at great inconvenience to himself, did a detour across country to the prison, as a result of which he was out of sight of Philip. He signed the prison register and returned the same way. That morning he was summonsed to see Philip in his office and told to explain why he had not turned out the prisoners. He said he had done so. Philip called for the register and was mortified to find that Desmond had signed it at 7.00 a.m. Philip said he hadn't seen him go by as usual and Desmond answered that he hadn't realised that, when going to the prison, he had to be seen by the D.O. Such differing views on discipline did not make for a happy atmosphere.

Desmond told me of a later occasion, when Philip (who was renowned for his slowness of thought and had by now been promoted to Resident Fifth Division), was staying with Desmond and Anne Bruen in Lawas, where Desmond now worked as D.O. Philip had complained to him that there was no loo paper and he had had to make use of the airmail edition of the Times, which he had taken in with him to peruse while sitting on the throne. Desmond was astonished, went to see for himself and found that there was loo paper there and called Philip to show it to him. The latter was not in the least put out and said "Ah, I see. In my house the loo paper is always on the right as one sits down but in yours it is on the left."

While I was in Sibu, the Government called in Dr. Edmund Leach to report on whether it would be advisable to arrange for anthropologists to come out and make reports on various races of Sarawak. Many of the old officers puttered at this suggestion and said that they knew much more about the various races than any anthropologist could find out in the time available to him. Dr. Leach's visit to Sibu coincided with a week-end, when most European officers met at the Island Club for drinks before lunch and then went to one another's house for a curry lunch preceded by more drinks of course, after which one took a siesta and felt liverish for the rest of the day. One of these aperitifs, which I first had in Sibu, was known as a 'Swiss Itch'. It consisted of a sherry glass of pink gin. The custom was first to put some snuff (or powdered pepper) on one's clenched fist, between the thumb and first finger curled round one another, sniff it up both nostrils, one after another, and, before sneezing started, downing the gin in one!

One Sunday, I came to from my siesta at the early hour of 4 p.m. and looking out of my window I saw John Barcroft and John Fisher weaving their way home in a joyful mood, followed by Dr Leach writing busily in his notebook. Clearly he was recording the

peculiar habits of the British at the week-end for inclusion in a treatise on 'The British in Sarawak'.

Philip Jacks, who had reluctantly given up his skull tobacco pouch, had married in Australia and had then been appointed D.O. Sibü in August 1947. He arrived in Sibü ahead of his new wife (Phil). The day before she was due to arrive he had engaged a Malay girl to be the house amah. That evening he was seated on his verandah in full view of all the passers-by in the road outside, when the young amah stood in the doorway of the verandah and giggled. He asked her what she wanted, and she thereupon threw herself upon him, sat on his lap and, in full view of the passers by, kissed him. She had obviously got the wrong idea of why she had been engaged. Most embarrassed, he pushed her away and dismissed her, so that when Phil arrived next day he had not yet had time to find a suitable amah for her.

A few days later, Philip and Phil were out strolling when suddenly they were startled to hear a loud whoosh whoosh coming from close behind them, apparently at head height and involuntarily they both ducked. Though they had both missed a heart beat, Philip immediately knew what it was and explained to his trembling wife that Batty Miles of the B.C.L., who lived further up the road, had a pet hornbill. This bird had wings of a considerable size which, when flying, made as much noise as would a swan's. The bird used to perch unseen on a tree then launch itself off on a glide towards the ground until, at about 10 feet, it would start flapping its wings to fly, hence the loud sound. In front of Philip and Phil was a Malay lady on a bike and she swerved violently when she suddenly became aware of the bird and lost control, wobbled and fell off the bike head first into a bamboo hedge, with her legs waving frantically. Philip got hold of the legs, pulled and got her to her feet, and what was their mutual embarrassment when it turned out that she was the giggling amah!

The Chinese in Sibü were very hospitable and those that were well off would give quite large dinner parties, consisting of anything from eight to 24 courses. Usually the food was presented in a bowl or on a dish, placed on the table and then each guest used his chopsticks or spoon to remove from it what took his fancy and put it in his own bowl or direct into his mouth. Most of these dishes were soupy or savoury and after a bit one's spoon would inevitably be coated with a layer of fat, however much one had licked it. In Sibü the habit was that the last dish of the meal would consist of something sweet such as a large bowl of tinned peach slices or of litchis (lychees) in syrup. Before the final dish was put on the table, a bowl of very hot water was placed there in which the guests could rinse their spoons or chop sticks. I soon learnt to watch out for the arrival of this bowl and be amongst the first to clean my spoon, as after several people had done so, there was a nice layer of fat on the surface of the water.

Pre-war, Mrs Hoover, the wife of the American Methodist bishop, was intently engaged in talking to her neighbour and so failed to note the arrival of the bowl of hot water. Eventually she turned round, dipped her spoon several times into the bowl, which had been well used for the cleansing of spoons, and, watched by the startled Chinese, took several spoonfuls of semi congealed fat in, by now, warm water and poured them into her bowl, whose contents she proceeded to consume, saying, as she finished the last spoonful, how much she enjoyed Chinese soups. With carefully concealed regret, the polite Chinese then felt obliged to do as she had done and from then on in Sibü the bowl of hot water was known as 'Mrs Hoover's soup'.

John Fisher turned to me one day, saying that he thought it essential that I should broaden my horizon and so he had arranged that evening at 9.30 p.m. that I should lead a group consisting of a police officer, an Indian Government doctor and four grave diggers to the cemetery where we were to dig up the body of a Chinese who had been buried some five days before, as it was now suspected that foul play had caused his death. The reason for doing this job at night was so as not to offend the susceptibilities of the neighbouring Chinese and a Magistrate had to be in charge during an exhumation. With pleasure, I pointed out that I was not yet a Magistrate, but this did not impress him and he said that he would happily wait in the club for my return, when he could sign the requisite document stating that all the necessary procedures had been carried out. Our group went to the cemetery in a couple of jeeps and making as little noise as possible, so as not to disturb any locals, we wended our way in single file, lit by a couple of hurricane lamps, stumbling as we weaved our way in and out amongst the gravestones till we reached our destination. The grave diggers got down to work and in due course I received my first whiff of putrefying flesh. I had a handkerchief soaked in dettol but it had little effect in disguising the smell. The wind was fickle and I found it difficult to decide which was upwind. Eventually the body was brought up and laid down beside the grave and, with the help of the two lanterns, the doctor proceeded to extract the stomach and then more than startled me by rushing over to show his exhibit to me, which had to be close to my face due to the poor light of the lamps, and he said "See! There is no trace of any poison". I was revolted by this and protested that there was no need for me to inspect the stomach as I was not qualified to comment on it. Privately, I wondered how he could, in the dark and with only a cursory examination, be so sure that there were no traces of poison in it. The body was reburied and I ensured that I travelled back in the jeep that didn't include the doctor and the stomach. The D.O. was charming to me and said he didn't like exhumations and could he buy a drink for me as he presumed that I needed one? He presumed aright as he signed the official certificate.

I did my first official trip upriver. During my trip up the Retus River travelling in a perahu, I first came to love the Sarawak countryside as seen from a not very large boat and especially, as in this case, a narrow, peaty river slowly meandering through virgin jungle.

I was travelling to all the longhouses in a penghulu's area in Iban and Orang Ulu areas, the chief of a group of anything from about six to 20 longhouses is known as a Penghulu. As my knowledge of Malay was still small and in any case this area was inhabited by Sea-Dayaks, I was accompanied by a senior native officer, Benet Jarrau, who was invaluable in teaching me how to behave. In this case my mentor happened to be one of the very few S.N.Os who was an Iban but was educated enough during the Brooke regime to be in Government service. He was obviously much respected and liked by the local people and I couldn't have had a nicer and better person to answer all my many questions.

It was at an early stage of this river trip, with the tops of the trees on each side meeting each other, thus largely excluding the sun, though there was the usual dappled effect where the bright streaks of tropical daylight penetrated the gloom, that, ahead of me I saw what appeared to be a brightly coloured leaf floating downwards in a see-saw action. It was difficult to pinpoint as it changed from being in gloom to being in a bright ray of light. The leaf was changing direction as if it was affected by the fitful wind. When however, it started to float rapidly upwards, I looked closer and realised that in fact there

was no wind. I had to revise my opinion and decided that it must be a large butterfly. It flitted around rapidly and on one occasion seemed to loop the loop! As we approached nearer to it, it ignored us and I could then see that it was an insect eating bird (possibly the Greater Racket-tailed Drongo) with its body about the size of a thrush, with a forked tail far longer than its body. It was enjoyably doing the nearest thing a bird can do to looping the loop in the dappled light of the jungle. From the body, there extended from each part of the swallow tail a length of feathers rather longer than the bird itself. Where the tail left the body the length of the feathers (nearly as far as the tip) was very short but at the tip the feathers broadened out to form the shape of a largish ball. This tail enabled the bird to change direction sideways, downwards or upwards at a moment's notice. What I saw was a most beautiful and effective example of how a bird had adapted to be able to change direction as it followed its insect quarry.

I also remember on this trip hearing for the first of many times the magnificent song of a Bulbul, whose strong and warbled notes outshone the song of our native blackbirds, though they did not have the variety of the latter.

After this trip it was felt that I could be trusted with a sub-district and I was posted to Binatang.

## 7 – ASSISTANT DISTRICT OFFICER BINATANG – 1948

In May 1948, I was posted down river to become Assistant District Officer Binatang under Bob Snelus, the D.O. Lower Rejang, whose H.Q. was at Sarikei and with whom I was connected by an overland telephone line. On one occasion I was talking to Alastair Morrison, the Assistant District Officer at Sarikei when there was apparently a thunder-storm between us as there was a loud bang, a momentary swearing and the conversation ceased. I rang up again and found Alastair, quite reasonably, very unwilling to resume talking to me as, when I had experienced the bang, he had felt a severe electric shock and the 'phone had been jerked out of his hand.

Alastair and his wife Hedda became very good friends of mine. His father had been the famous London Times correspondent in Peking. Alastair spoke Chinese and pre-war met his future wife there. Hedda was a German, and, aged about 16, got polio and was told she would never be able to walk again, but she must have been as determined and positive a personality then, as she proved to be later, for she overcame her difficulties and, with a mis-shapened foot, she limped throughout Sarawak walking to a greater extent than any other European woman, bravely overcoming all the obstacles that Sarawak's mountains and jungle could throw at her. Hedda was a wonderful photographer and pre-war, in Peking, she had combined with an American lady and they travelled around, doing their best to avoid the areas where the Japanese military were active, looking at traditional Chinese furniture, which Hedda photographed and the American lady commented on, in what was to become a most interesting book. Hedda also spoke Chinese. Alastair was over six foot tall and had large feet, two unfortunate attributes to have in Sarawak unless accompanied by a low centre of gravity and a good sense of balance, which he lacked. Small bare feet are necessary assets when negotiating narrow native tree trunk bridges over chasms or notched tree trunks leading to and from longhouses. Alastair had been a member of Force 136, which supported the Chinese (mostly Communists as it turned out), who, in the jungles, were carrying on a guerrilla warfare against the Japanese in Malaya.

As one would expect from someone like Hedda, she was delighted with the photographic possibilities while in Sarawak and it never occurred to her that she might not be allowed to accompany Alastair on tour. Bob Snelus could not recall cases of British wives accompanying their husbands on tour pre-war and so referred the matter to higher authority. Barcroft, the Resident at Sibü, recommended that such a precedent should not be set but felt that this problem was too great for him to make a decision and so he forwarded the matter to even higher authority. Apparently, after deep thought in the Secretariat, he was overruled and, of course, it turned out that someone like Hedda was very much appreciated by the ulu peoples.

Binatang (this word means 'animal' in Malay) consisted of a small Chinese bazaar beside the main branch of the Rejang delta and steamers between Kuching and Sibü tied up there. In 1909 an elderly Chinese towkay, preparing for the inevitable, ordered a top quality coffin for himself. This very necessary article arrived in due course and was put on display upstairs and the towkay had a party to celebrate its arrival, with, naturally, much burning of incense and letting off of crackers to ensure that the spirits looked upon the coffin in an auspicious manner. What the spirits thought of the placatory proceedings is not clear, but what was clear is that the wind blew and the shop-house

caught fire and was consumed, together with the new coffin and several other shop-houses in the bazaar.

The road to my bungalow (about a mile away on a little hill amongst rubber gardens) led past orange orchards. Ever careful to make maximum use of natural products, many of the Chinese gardeners had made a ramp from their house leading to a little hut some twenty feet or so above ground level. This hut contained the privy, and by means of gravity, the natural effluents were distributed around the base of the orange trees, which flourished mightily. At night the journey between the bazaar and my house was especially attractive, as fireflies loved the orange groves and their flashing lights were a joy to watch as one walked along.

One day, riding my bike on my way home for lunch, I found that PWD had taken down a wooden bridge over a large monsoon ditch to repair it, and had temporarily replaced it with a single plank. As I began to cross it, I saw an elderly Chinese woman – probably the wife of a vegetable gardener or the owner of a small rubber holding – on the other side with a bicycle and a heavy bag hanging from the handlebars. She was clearly uncertain whether she could safely manage to carry her unwieldy load along the plank. She and I had no language in common, so I took hold of her bike to help her. I suspect that she thought that I was about to steal it for she held firmly on to it. Anyway, by signs she reluctantly handed the bike to me and I got it across the plank safely and then returned and helped her across. She took the bike and went on to the bazaar. I expect that she had never been in contact with a white man before and she was overawed and embarrassed, which explained why she hurried away from me without showing any sign of appreciation for my help. I gave no more thought to this happening than I would had I helped a blind man to cross the street and I would not normally have recorded this episode in my Anecdotes, except for the astonishing fact that some 16 years later, when I was at a party given by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Sibuluan on my ceasing to be Resident Third Division, I was startled to be told that the people liked me because I was not stuffy and quoted the time when, despite being the senior Government officer in Binatang, I had helped an old woman in need!

Binatang was surrounded by a large area of Chinese rubber gardens, some vegetable gardens and some sawmills. On one occasion a Chinese Kapitan (Headman) came to see me in my office and asked for immediate money to rebuild a rickety old bridge that crossed a deep peaty stream and joined both sides of a bicycle track from some rubber gardens to the bazaar. I said that Government's system did not work like that and that it took time to get money to rebuild a rickety old bridge as I would have to put up a good case for consideration for the annual estimates. The experienced Kapitan did not try to argue with me but did invite me to come and see the problem for myself, so one afternoon I cycled out there and found a typical Chinese humped back wooden bridge over the river. I walked on to the bridge and was alarmed to find that it swayed ominously and I was glad to get off it again safely. The Chinese then said that if they provided half the cost of the repairs would government provide the remainder? I made no promises, but to my surprise somehow or other the money was found and the bridge was rebuilt.

A month or so after the completion of the work on the bridge, I had just arrived back at my bungalow for lunch, when I walked the same Kapitan carrying with him a bottle of whisky (almost unobtainable to buy so soon after the war), a duck and a little paper

parcel. Suspecting what the purpose of the visit was, I jokingly said that I presumed he was on his way home to have a nice party and to what did I owe the pleasure of his visit? He pushed the whisky and duck at me and said it was from the locals to show appreciation for what I had done. I thanked him very much for the kind thought, pointed out that all I had done was to pass on his request for cash and pushed the whisky and duck back across the table to where he was sitting. I also pointed out that Government officers were not allowed to accept gifts. He said that it was only a token gift and the locals would be upset if I didn't accept it. After we had chatted amiably for a bit, he got up to go leaving his gift on my table, so I thrust the duck and whisky into his hands and to show that no offence was meant I agreed to keep the little paper parcel. The Kapitan looked surprised but departed; and I then opened the little paper parcel and was very amused to visualise the look on the Kapitan's wife's face when he returned home for lunch and instead of handing over to her the salt fish she had expected, he handed over a duck and a bottle of whisky! Kepu was most astonished when he found out that the Kapitan China had brought me a present of salt fish!

A lot of Binatang Sub-District was swampy and it was while travelling with Dayaks in this area that, on two occasions, I saw orang-utangs quietly watching us while sitting high up in the trees. In the 18 years I spent in Sarawak, I never again saw any of these beasts in any of my other jungle travels. I am pretty certain that, only a few years after my time in Binatang, there would have been no orang-utans in the area as the forest areas they required would have been so depleted that they could not have survived there. Also, despite the fact that they were protected animals, the Dayaks would kill them if they saw them interfering with their fruit or crops.

My Australian friend Wally Witt came to Binatang to sell his pharmaceutical goods to the bazaar towkays and I asked him to stay with me. During the evening we were watching my puppy (Eustace) and the D.O. Sibui's (John Fisher's) puppy (Katy), which I was looking after while he was on leave and both animals were making my bungalow shake as their hind legs thumped hard on the floor as they scratched away at their irritating fleas. My friend said "what you want is anti-mite. I feel sure that none is available in the bazaar and I am the only agent for it in Sarawak". As I thought of the many mangy animals in the bazaar, I agreed that it was highly unlikely that anti-mite could be bought there and I enquired whether one rubbed it into the skin or what? He looked at me peculiarly and said "No. You put it on under the tile of the bitch when she comes on heat and it is to stop them miteing". I had hurriedly to re-adjust my ideas, and, once again as I thought of the promiscuous pi-dogs in the bazaar, I agreed that anti-mite would not be available there and, as I had no idea how often Katy would go on heat before I handed her back, I would like ten packets please. It wasn't long before Katy showed signs of going on heat so I got out a packet of anti-mite, opened it and found a bottle with a liquid in it that smelled strongly of citronella. I then called Eustace, shoved the open bottle under his nose and he threw his head back and rushed out of the room. I was pleased at this effect but wondered what Katy would feel if I put anti-mite (I mean anti-mate) under her tile (I mean 'tail') and the wind was blowing from behind her and she couldn't escape from the odour. Anyway, when I put the bottle under her nose, she threw her head back but did not run out of the room, so I deduced that dogs and bitches not only differed from each other at the rear end but also at the front. I applied the anti-mate but 'Love conquers all' and in due course Katy had puppies by Eustace.

The sand flies (with their irritating bites) became active from just before sunset for about an hour and a half and I was sitting on my verandah, applying some anti-mosquito lotion left over from my time in the Army to the exposed parts of my body, when a Penghulu suddenly called on me and enquired what I was doing. I had had no time to hide my valuable lotion from him and could only blurt out the truth. I explained about the use of my lotion and he very pointedly said that there were lots of sand flies and mosquitoes where he lived. I started to tell him that regrettably I couldn't help him out as this was my only bottle, when I suddenly remembered the anti-mate that, like my lotion, smelt of citronella, and I gave him a bottle. Bit by bit I got rid of the other bottles on various other headmen, to their pleasure and without any pangs on my part. I was transferred from Binatang Sub-District to Kapit District towards the end of 1948, without having heard whether there had been a sudden decrease in the birth rate in the Binatang area.

It was at Binatang that Kepu showed me a moth on my lamp and informed me that if I ate it knowingly no harm would result, but should it fall in my drink or food and I consumed it unwittingly, then I would most certainly die.

I have found what I recorded at the time in 1948 were my feelings during the first upriver trip that I did as Assistant D.O. Binatang. It was a nine day trip to an Iban area partly on foot and partly by local small boats (perahus). They are a consolidation of my thoughts based on my reception at the longhouses I met in this area. We visited two or three longhouses a day before reaching the one where we would spend the night.

Travelling the Pedanun, ulu Binatang and Jugam Rivers by boat and on foot, I was accompanied by the local Penghulu and Patrick Watt (an Iban Native Officer,) I started off on foot and after an hour's hard walking (or, as the case may be, sitting as immobile as possible in the uncomfortable boat) arrived within 100 yards of the longhouse. During the journey by land I would hope to be able to stop in a stream to cool my feet, face and hands. I got comfort and joy out of the straight trunks and the outline of the trees against the sky. I was always happy to look at such trees and continually got new pleasure from doing so, just as I do each time that I hear a favourite piece of music. Many people think of the jungle as being a monotonously green. This is not so as the leaves vary from light green to dark green and many have a yellowish, red or blue tinge and there are always the colour of dead leaves here and there. The tree trunks too vary in colour and texture. In season there are flowers and fruits. I read in books about the many orchids one can admire in the jungle. Personally, I rarely saw any, possibly because I was looking at the ground to see where next to put my foot down so as not to stumble. Also, on tour is not the time to dawdle with binoculars at the ready peering into the tops of trees to admire the fauna and flora.

The Dayak porters are splashing about as, after walking up a steep hill track and down the other side to avoid a gorge, Katy, Eustace and I are resting. I have no idea how far away is our next destination as the Dayaks seem to think I will be pleased with the usual answer of "Only one hill more". Whether their answer to my question is accurate or not, will be revealed to me when at last I can see the longhouse. From here on I become part of one of the great entertainment events of the year for that particular house. I refrain from pointing out to my hosts that I have done this for four days past, perhaps three times a day and will do it for five days hence, and that the last house on each day will offer me a noisy and exhausting all night session. Some houses show all the true old fashioned hospitality. Others have grown slack and shoddy. In the first case I have

to hide the discomfort of part of the entertainment while being pleasantly aware of the local pride of the people as regards what they are offering. It must be said that I sometimes suffered from all the discomfort of a backward wayside inn with few redeeming features. The first picture is represented by boisterous young men, long hair, tattoos, a well-built house, guns going off and maidens who have troubled to get dressed in their finery. All this, nearly always leads me to have to bear with equanimity the unavoidable over indulgence in drinking, because it is meant to be for the good of the guests and for our communal rejoicing and jollification. The brass guns go off; the 6 to 50 maidens, some of them not so young, are lined up with a glass (usually a tumbler) or a cup in one hand and a teapot or bottle in the other, waiting to serve us. The teapot or bottle contains tuak or arrack. Each female has her own brew of tuak. The deeper I drink from a glass or cup the better the donor is pleased, though her attempts at pleasing me do not reach to cleaning her finger nails or to holding a glass without inserting her thumb stained with betel juice and sireh inside the receptacle. Having passed this torture I have a short pause while the rest of the party goes through the same gamut; the crackers and squibs placed unperceived between my feet go off and Eustace and Katy take off. Precariously I climb the ladder to the threshold of the house and am left awkwardly balancing with the front of my two feet on each of the two top small steps while three or so squawking fowls, held in one hand, are waved upside down over my head while an incantation is said. At this stage, if the house wishes to do me very proud, I have to kill a pig tied to the top step with a spear. Having put a foot in the blood, I enter the gloom of the ruai and collapse on the verandah and, through a haze, begin to collect my strength for the next trial.

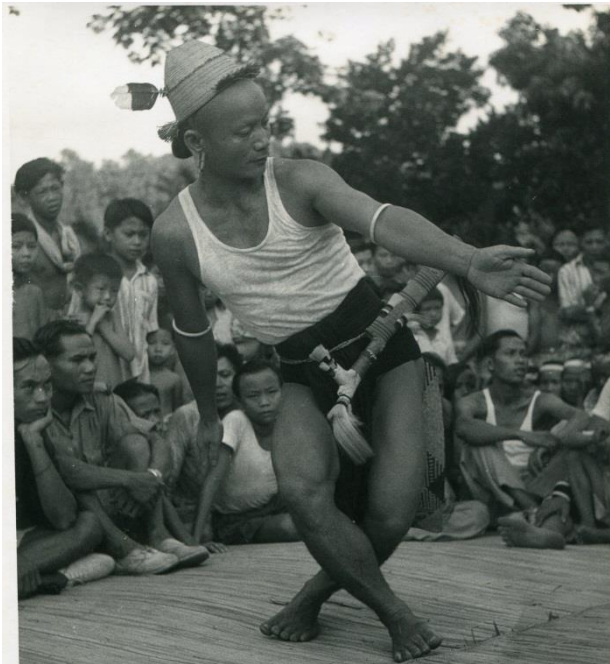
The first torture was the welcome to the house. Then inside the house is the pirieng ceremony (described in Chapter 2) to encourage the good spirits and placate the evil ones, followed by more drinking accompanied by the welcoming chanting while I smile at the tuai rumah's (head of the house) daughter or other lady followed by more forcing of tuak down my throat. Various efforts are made to drag me off to each of the 16 rooms or so for greasy cakes and more crude alcohol to add to the ferment already in my stomach. I fear that to the locals I am not as tough as were the pre-war tuans. Shall I avoid all this drinking by announcing that I am a teetotaler? Sometimes I can avoid visiting several rooms where I only take one sip from each glass and I can bear with equanimity the obvious scorn of the Dayaks at my lack of stamina. Can you wonder that I don't eat much on these trips? Neither do I sleep much.

## **Ngagat**

Especially in my early days in Sarawak, there was no reluctance on the part of the younger males to display their talents at dancing. This was called 'ngagat'. Sadly, by the end of my career in Sarawak the men who would volunteer to ngagat in public were middle aged as the younger men just did not know how to do it. They gradually adopted the rather wishy-washy shuffling dancing step of the Malays!

In most cases, the dance consisted of a mock war dance. The performer wore full traditional dress i.e. he was clothed in a 'chawat (a loin cloth hanging down in front of and behind him) and had put on a special ceremonial headdress, decorated with hornbill tail feathers. He carried a shield in his left hand and wore a scabbard with a parang in it (decorated with a tassel of human hair on its handle) attached to his left side. He started by strutting around with his head turning in all directions and up and down as he looked around for any enemy. This gave a good opportunity for the girls to

study his physique. Then he would suddenly crouch down on the balls of his feet, draw his parang from his scabbard and twist and turn his body, emitting at times a dramatic



Tua Rumah Taman Nyurang of the Kenyah Badang Tegulang dancing at my farewell party in Belaga, May 1950.

fearful yell as he faced invisible enemies and either struck at them, as he crouched, with upward thrusts of his parang or leaped upright and jumped as far as he could sideways still thrusting his parang and shrieking at his enemy.

Apart from Philip Jacks, who was excellent at ngagat, very few Europeans could take centre stage and look at all plausible. I used to be dragged out and a cane helmet with feathers in it was put on my head and I was given a parang. Thereafter my efforts to dance proper ngagat merely resulted in the whole audience collapsing in helpless laughter. My first problem was to lower myself very slowly and in full control of the muscles involved – muscles that had never before been asked to do such a movement. I was able to lower myself but not in full control to the crouching position as I did it with a

quick jerk, in such a way that any enemy, that had not yet seen me, could not fail to become aware of me. It made me realise how like a hunting cat I had to be. Unlike a cat or an Iban, I could not suddenly keep my crouching pose perfectly still for an appreciable time and then slowly move just my head to look around to see if any enemy was behind me. Nor could I suddenly jump around (still crouching) through 180 degrees and regain my position of readiness to deal with an enemy. Added to which, I had never learnt the art of emitting frightful shrieks that would convince a human or demon enemy that I was a force to be respected. Indeed my yells merely added to the public mirth. My impression of my relationship with the locals was that, while they admitted that I had certain abilities that they did not have, they had abilities that I did not possess.

Eventually, at last, I had the opportunity to do what I was appointed by Government to do – to work. I opened my water resistant tin (there is one kept at District H.Q. for each longhouse or village), containing various details including a list of head tax payers. While my Native Officer was collecting the taxes some yards away, I would give a talk, pass the messages and information Government had asked me to do, scold some people, speak approvingly to some, tell the Native Officer, in English, that I can't stand another drink, and then give a chance to anyone, who wished to do so, to bring forward his request. Often this resulted in my having to set up a Native Court, postpone my departure and, provided all the parties concerned were present as were all the witnesses, I would wash my head in cold water as I prepared to hear the court case. Ideally, I would have heard the court case at the very start of my visit. But in Sarawak it never occurs to anyone that matters judicial should have a higher priority than placating the spirits or social entertainment.

The court case being over, I would hope either to be allowed to go to sleep or to set out to catch up with my programme.

But this was Sarawak and either the pressing farewell ceremonies would be started up or the evening enjoyment would begin. And I bore it all because they so obviously enjoy what they are doing to me – it is spontaneous and well meant. Such houses seem to have high morale. Some downriver houses have broken with their traditions and, unfortunately, many are sadly reminiscent of a slum. There is often slovenliness amongst the people as they become more civilised and as they ape the rural Chinese. I enter such houses with a mixed sigh of relief, as I realise that I shall not have to over indulge in drinking, and yet a feeling of disappointment at the demoralisation of the people.

While studying my Malay I read that Wilkinson, the compiler of the first Malay dictionary and grammar, was seated in a perahu and was being paddled upriver when one of his Malay boatmen broke wind. Wilkinson, notebook in hand, said in Malay "What is that?", to which the reply was "kentut". Wilkinson, being uncertain whether he had heard the word aright said "repeat it", at which the boatman, after holding his breath at one end and trying to blow it out at the other and failing to do so, made a wry face and replied "Sorry, I can't".

Sir Charles Arden-Clarke, accompanied by John Barcroft and Bob Snelus paid a visit to Binatang. It coincided with the arrival of that old tramp steamer the 'Meluan' on its regular trip between Kuching and Sibü. The ship tied up just long enough to discharge and then take on cargo and passengers. Unusual on this trip was that one of the passengers was the Dayang Muda, the wife of Anthony Brooke who was forbidden to enter Sarawak. She was the sister of the late Donald Hudden, D. O. Baram, who had been murdered in the ulu Baram while attempting to escape from the Japanese. She was on her way to Sibü on a trip round Sarawak helping to keep the flame of Anti-Cession alive. To avoid any embarrassment, the gubernatorial party went to my bungalow while the Meluan was tied up. I, however, was told to stay at the wharfside, formally to greet the Dayang Muda and watch what happened. A party of some 130 Malay men and women were there to greet her. It was interesting that there wasn't a single non-Malay there representing the Anti-Cession movement.

Sir Charles, of course, spoke no Malay. At a meeting with the public, he asked a Chinese lady what were her views on Anti-Cession and when she answered in Chinese, he ticked her off publicly for not speaking in either Malay or English and took the opportunity to give a pep talk to all and sundry on the necessity of everyone speaking one of those two languages. While I, personally, thought it desirable that everyone should, in due course, learn Malay and/or English at school, when eventually universal schooling had happened, I realised that it would be a long time before this would happen. Meanwhile, it was a bit hard to expect a middle aged Chinese lady in 1948 to speak those languages when she probably never had occasion to speak to any non-Chinese in her life.

## 8 – DISTRICT OFFICER KAPIT 1948 – 1950

### General

In November 1948 I was posted to be D.O. in Kapit. The District was about the size of Belgium and was the biggest district in Sarawak. It covered the headwaters of the Rejang River but it had a population of only 32,000, with very few Malays and Chinese, Ibans forming the majority of the population. However, in Belaga Sub-District Ibans were not allowed as that area was reserved for their traditional enemies - the Kayans, Kenyahs, Punans, Penans, and various other tribes who, for administrative convenience, were collectively known as 'Orang Ulu (Upriver People). To them the Rejang River was known as the Baloi. The biggest tributary of the Rejang was the Baleh in Kapit Sub-District. Apart from the two sub-districts of Kapit and Belaga, there was another one downriver of Kapit called Song Sub-District, which included a large river, the Katibas. Geographically, Kapit District is as little representative of the rest of Sarawak as the Highlands of Scotland are of the whole of Britain.

I will now comment on some of the differences between the Ibans on the one hand and the Kayans and Kenyahs on the other. Each Iban, regardless of age or family descent, reckoned he/she was just as good as his/her neighbour of any race. The Ibans have a very egalitarian outlook and, while they admitted that due to my education I knew things that they did not, at the same time they were just as worthy a person as I was as they could do things that I could not – for instance walk with confidence on an unreliable log across a chasm with rocks and a fast flowing river below. Iban women tended to pretend that they were merely helpless ignorant females but in fact over matters that they considered important, they showed that, though their jobs in this life might be different from those of their menfolk, nevertheless their views needed to be given just as much consideration as that of the males, and, if need be, they were far from submissive or reticent. In public meetings on the ruai, Iban women were always near the front of the crowd. In my opinion, two of the most unpleasant sounds in this world are those of an Iban or Foochow woman who has a grievance and intends to express it long and loud, as I have known to my cost when hearing court cases. While normally in Sarawak a couple wish to have a male son so that eventually he can bring a daughter-in-law to join the family, the Ibans don't mind either way.

A lot of the Orang Ulu tribes traditionally are divided into aristocrats, ordinary people and slaves. In 1886 the Rajahs insisted that the category of slaves must be abandoned, but even during my time in Sarawak one could not help noticing in an Orang Ulu longhouse that there were those who had authority and carried it off with panache and lived in the middle (i.e. the more desirable) part of the longhouse, and that these people had handed down the generations the more valuable jars and beads. The women especially, as is the wont of women everywhere, were far better than the men at telling accurately the provenance of the jars and the name of each bead in a necklace, who had owned it and how it came now to be in their hands. They knew a valuable ancient bead from a modern one. Some of the beads were said to be ancient Egyptian, Phoenician, Venetian and some ancient Chinese.

At each end of the longhouse would be people who looked poor and downtrodden and while slavery had been abolished, nevertheless they did all the menial tasks. When a Government officer asked for porters, they were the ones who apparently always 'volunteered'! When, later on the head of a longhouse came to be elected, it was not

surprising how usually a close relation of the previous (and aristocratic) head was chosen.

In Iban houses, the rooms at each end of the longhouse also belonged to the poorer people, often widows, but they were not in the least downtrodden. An Iban headman, even someone with the prestige of the aged Temonggong Koh, would be heckled by males and even occasionally by females when the longhouse was meeting to reach a decision, and being an Iban headman was often far from being a sinecure. To be successful and a positive leader, an Iban headman had to rely on his personality and his skill in handling people. Like a good chairman of a meeting he needed to be firm but not dictatorial. However, some Iban headmen were elected because they were completely negative and survived by never making decisions that might be unpopular with some of the people in their longhouse. An Orang Ulu headman would rarely be heckled. If he was a natural leader, he could rally his longhouse positively behind him and achieve far more than would an Iban headman, but if, as regrettably was often the case, he accepted all the privileges of his position without having the quality of real leadership, the society would be stagnant, feckless and poor, and the decisions made would be such as to produce benefits to the aristocrats and especially to himself.

Kapit, situated on the bank of the Rejang about 160 miles from the sea, could scarcely be called a township. It provided a so-called 'hospital' with about 12 beds under charge of a hospital assistant, barracks for 14 policemen, clerks' quarters, a bazaar, a wooden fort, (built about 1888 and called Fort Sylvia, after the Third Rajah's wife), the D.O's. bungalow, a Methodist mission and an R.C. chapel.

The Rejang River at Kapit was navigable to boats of perhaps 500 tons. As the height of the water varied hugely, there was no possibility of having a fixed wharf. Song, Kapit and Belaga all had floating wharves. Kapit District had a population of about 800 Chinese (mostly in the three bazaars of Kapit, Song and Belaga and their immediately contiguous areas) and about 100 Malays downriver of Kapit. All the buildings were of wood; there was no electricity, rain water was led from the roofs to provide for drinking and washing, though many washed in the river.

Fort Sylvia was a rectangle with a bastion (Vauban style) sticking out from one of the corners on the river side of the building and another one sticking out of the diametrically opposite corner on the landward side, so that all four sides of the fort could be covered by enfilade fire. The fort was a real stronghold, as the walls were made of bilian - a remarkably strong and tough black wood, which is so heavy that it will not float; it is impervious to depredations by salt water and so is a very useful wood when building a wharf. The floor of the fort upstairs was also built of bilian planks. Belian is a very slow growing jungle tree and it is not surprising that, even though protected, it is rare to see a bilian tree nowadays. Upstairs, the fort used to have guns peering out of every port-hole, but these were lost at the end of the Japanese occupation.

On the ground floor was the post and telegraph office (with its own generator to enable Kapit to be in wireless communication with the rest of the country), the gaol and various storerooms.

The whole of the area of the fort upstairs, with its central square and two bastions, consisted of a space with no walls at all. A person who had just come up the stairs (in



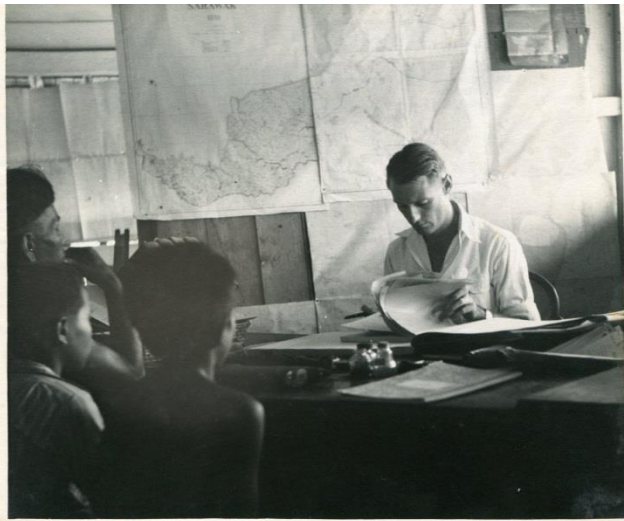
General view of Kapit December 1948: my house in foreground on left; Kubu (fort and government office) behind telegraph mast; temporary bazaar beyond and, on left, part of the levelling for the new bazaar. Rejang River in middle distance.

the riverside bastion) could look across the whole of the central square to the landward bastion diagonally opposite him. He would see in front of him, on the left of the square, a barrier about 4 feet high, which was fixed to the floor and was parallel to and about 10 feet away from that side of the fort, thus forming a large square in which were placed the clerks' tables. Members of the public would come up the stairs and into the central space, and lean on the railing opposite whichever clerk it was that they wished to speak to. One of these was the Treasury Clerk with his safe beside him, containing the cash reserves needed to keep the District functioning. The man at the top of the stairs would see, in the distance, within the landward side bastion, the D.O. at his table with his safe beside him. The D.O. could see all that was going on in his office and equally, the public had access to him at any time. The empty central area also served as the Court Room. When there was a court case, most of the central area would be cleared of the public and the magistrate would take his place at a table on a dais at the far end from the staircase. At the foot of the dais was a table for the magistrate's clerk, on which could be laid small articles that were part of the evidence to be used in the court case. Nearby was the box for a witness and the box for the prisoner. There was space inside this court area reserved for interested members of the public to sit on the floor and witness the proceedings. As can be imagined, court cases in Kapit Court were run somewhat differently from what U.K. judges are used to.

The D.O's house (consisting of only a living room and one bedroom) stood on stilts. From the house, an open walled passage way (i.e. a roof supported by pillars) led to the

kitchen and the quarters of the houseboy. Here was a lake surrounding the house on three sides with water lilies in it. The house was open from 6 to 8 p.m. daily for anyone who wished to visit his D.O. and merely chat with him, air his views or complaints and enjoy a drink. The people living in and near Kapit did not avail themselves of this chance to meet their D.O. as they had access to him during office hours, but the upriver people enjoyed this opportunity to chit chat with him. That part of the ground area that was under the bedroom was partly walled off and connected to the bedroom by a steep staircase. Here there were some huge jars into which came rain water from the roof and this was where the D.O. had his thunder-box and a dipper, with which he poured cold water over himself when washing. The thunder box was emptied by the night soil remover.

I found that the Government staff at Kapit were delightful and made a good team. There was the court peon/office boy (a young Malay called Abdul Latip), Lawrence Wilson (a Land Dayak clerk from far away First Division), an Iban hospital assistant, and the Chinese Chief Clerk, who had ong been in Kapit. There was the Malay Government outboard driver (Abang Sulaihi) with his experienced and wrinkled face and, when driving his outboard, his continually twitching mouth and blinking eyes. It was in his



At my desk in Kapit Kubu, November 1949.

hands that we (Government servants, including governors etc) relied to keep us all alive using his knowledge of river levels, rocks and boulders, the speed of rivers, his ability to select the right man to be his bowman from the people downriver of Song to upriver of Belaga and not forgetting his expert maintenance of and knowledge about outboard engines. And there was Abang Indeh, one of those invaluable Rajah appointed Malay native officers, who spoke all the languages of Kapit District (though but little English) and had been in his post long enough to witness grandchildren becoming parents, and who, when I had bright ideas on how to improve matters in the area, did not humiliate me with his knowledge, but

most politely and rather apologetically hinted to me that there might be factors that I had not fully taken into account (thank God that we had a relationship where we could discuss problems quietly together, and I learnt a lot from him). All these people and many more, including several from the bazaar, used to meet up at the Club, often for evening parties, and those who could (and those who couldn't) sang, some danced, Lawrence played the violin with verve and, in a way, the happy and relaxed international atmosphere was exemplified to me by "Lu choba lai here", which may not mean much to my readers, but was used by a Chinese clerk when I once asked him where another Chinese clerk was. "Lu" means "you" in Chinese, "choba" = "kindly" in Malay "lai" = "come" in Cantonese and "here" is English. In the two hours or so of daylight after the office had closed, most of the above people met for recreation and most of them were far better at badminton than I was.

About half the D.O's time would be spent at his desk hearing complaints, issuing licences, signing vouchers for payments, doing probate and generally doing the job of Magistrate, Town Clerk, Registrar of Births and Deaths, Coroner, and a host of other jobs, including (with, when necessary, the advice of the departmental officers in Sibu) education matters, public works, medical, lands and surveys, police, agriculture, treasury, etc. To contact the Resident in Sibu, he could use the telegraph; a letter to Sibu required a day, as did the return journey, though, if the river was in flood, the return journey by Chinese launch would take 1½ days. The rest of his time was largely spent travelling in the ulu or periodically going to Sibu to sample the excitement of town life there. In the office I would think in English and speak to the clerks in English but otherwise I would usually be speaking in Malay and, as my knowledge of the language improved, Iban.

After office hours, I used to go for long walks or play badminton with my staff and/or the locals and occasionally we played water polo in the lake. Of course there were meetings with local visitors from 6 to 8 p.m. Occasionally, some clerk or other would invite me to a party. There were no roads in the district and so travel was by boats of various sizes or along footpaths, some of which were little more than animal tracks. The D.O's longboat was powered by an outboard engine. Outboard engines at that time (so soon after the Japanese occupation) in that environment with the type of people there available to maintain them were a dicey matter; yet one's life often rested on the ability of the outboard driver and the state of his engine.

The ingenuity and adaptability of the Chinese have often been a source of admiration to me. Pui Siak Kong was a dentist cum photographer in Kapit bazaar where he had a shophouse. He developed, printed and enlarged my black and white films without the use of electricity. His dark-room had a glass window in its roof with a black curtain under it. When he had set up his apparatus, he would rush out of his front door and peer up at the sky. It was difficult enough for him if it was a cloudless sunny blue or a dull cloud laden sky, but at times it would be a sunny blue with clouds moving fast, which would obscure the sun and then allow it to shine through again for a lesser or greater period. Having estimated the strength of the light and that it would stay at that strength long enough for his purpose, Siak Kong would rush back into the dark room, working out as he did so what should be the necessary light exposure and would then pull back his curtain, wait the required time, pull the curtain over again and produce superb prints or enlargements!

There were Kayans and Kenyahs in Kalimantan, which was the name of the Dutch (later Indonesian) Borneo, who were related to people of the same tribes in Belaga Sub-District. These people found it worthwhile to make the journey of several days to come to Kapit to trade and look for work. While I was taking over the District from my predecessor, Dick Renwick, he told me that, on several occasions, he had sent them back at once and told them to take home with them the message that if they continued to come in, they would be arrested and tried as illegal immigrants. Just before I had arrived in Kapit, he had carried out his threat and arrested them. He tried them en masse and sentenced each of them to two months imprisonment. The first problem was that the couple of cells in the fort that were often empty for long periods could cope with the normal prisoner requirements for Kapit but were obviously inadequate for the present purpose. The 200 prisoners were gentle and charming people who had come to Sarawak because the conditions in Indonesia were worse than in Sarawak, and as they

were basically law abiding citizens the D.O. agreed mutually with them that they should go off into the nearest jungle and procure the wherewithal with which to build themselves shelters on the lawn between the fort and the D.O's lake. It was impossible to supervise them while they did this or indeed to do so while they occupied their shelters, but not one absconded. There were, of course, no gaolers.

The second problem was that each time a person was sentenced to imprisonment a form had to be filled in. There were only about ten of these forms at Kapit and so a telegram was sent to Kuching for 220 forms. The Superintendent of Prisons felt sure that there had been a misprint and sent twenty forms – after all, to date in the whole of Sarawak for the first eleven months of 1948, there had been only 22 cases of imprisonment and Government was looking forward to publishing figures in the annual report for that year, which would show what a law abiding lot the Sarawakians were. Great therefore was the Government's annoyance when, at the end of the year, their figures to date were upped by such a large figure from Kapit.

The prisoners were not unduly unhappy to be 'in prison', for they were getting good rations. There was nothing for them to do, so they used to carve small figures (because of course they were not deprived of their parangs!) out of soft wood and sell them in the bazaar or come and call on me (though as they were prisoners and, rather more to the point, as there were 200 of them and not one a teetotaller) I rather guiltily decided not to offer them the hospitality of a drink at my expense. Anyway the message got through, and no more of these illegal immigrants arrived looking for work.

Immigrants of a different type used to come in small numbers at long intervals. These were the Malohs (Balohs), who came from much further away in Indonesia and who had been doing these trips for generations. They were silver smiths and sold silver bangles and corsets decorated with silver coins to the Ibans. Many of them were reasonably educated.

The American Methodists were coolly friendly with me but showed no wish to come to my house or to invite me to theirs. Very occasionally there was a British B.C.L. timber man in a house across and a little upriver of Kapit, where the B.C.L. collected logs that had floated down the rapids and made them up as rafts. We used to have an occasional evening together. Apart from him, I was deprived of the company of my own kind, except when I went downriver to Sibu or when some departmental officer on duty or some other officer would visit me. As a result, when I did meet up with British (or Australians) apparently I never stopped talking, and I believe some other D.Os from ulu areas used to be affected the same way. My wife, whom I first met several years later in Kuala Lumpur, and who was suffering pain as a result of a car accident, thought, as she sat on her verandah, "I wish he would go, he is suffering from verbal diarrhoea and my head aches so", while I felt "what a lovely personality and what a lovely voice".

### **Malcolm Macdonald**

Sir Charles Arden-Clarke had left Sarawak to take up his new position as Governor of the Gold Coast and so Dawson, the Chief Secretary, had been appointed as Officer Administering the Government (OAG) until a new Governor had arrived.

The good Lord has (with hindsight on my part) looked after me a great many times, and none more so than after I had been in Kapit for a few weeks. I received a message that

the OAG accompanied by the Governor General for Malaya and the British Borneo Territories, who was Malcolm Macdonald and who was shortly to become the Commissioner-General for South East Asia, were proposing to come and stay with me for one night in Kapit, after which I would accompany them for a couple of nights as they went up the Baleh River as far as Temonggong Koh's longhouse and then they would spend a further night at my house on their way back.



Penghulu Temonggong Koh's farming house and the Nguan Rapids seen from hill above, October 1949.

What in fact happened is that the day before they arrived, I developed one of my peculiar periodic fevers, which I had had occasionally in India and which for lack of a better name was called 'dengue'. The doctors always suspected malaria but as they could never find the malaria parasite they called it dengue. On one occasion when I asked the doctor what I had had, he said confidently "seven day dengue because you got better after seven days and I haven't a clue what it is you have had". Anyway, the effect was that I had very high temperatures with much sweating followed by a sub-normal temperature and shivering, and clearly I was in no fit condition to receive honoured guests in a one bed-roomed house. I was on my way downriver to Sibu Hospital in an outboard, when I crossed with the gubernatorial yacht going to Kapit and we waved at one another. While in hospital, I received a telegram from Kapit "Hope you recover quickly and we will have the pleasure of seeing you here on our return" from "Govgen and party". Politely I sent a telegram back thanking "Govgen and party" for their kind wishes. In fact I didn't get back to Kapit till about four days after they had left there.

It was some months later that I learned from the OAG's Private Secretary, Terry Dilkes, that, so far as he was concerned, the trip had been most unpleasant and that I was lucky not to have been on it. For the duration of the journey, he had had to be Private Secretary to both officers. Rumour had it that Dawson had just heard that, contrary to his hopes, he had been passed over for the post of Sir Charles's successor and he was not in the best of tempers. I presume that if he had not heard this news, he would have taken care to do all in his power to impress the Colonial Office, and especially Malcolm Macdonald, so that at some future date he would be considered as a most suitable candidate for Governor.

On leaving Sibu to go upriver to my District, the first Sub-Office in Kapit District was Song. On the way there, an argument had developed between Dawson and Macdonald as to who was the senior. Instead of being reasonable about it, each party felt that it was a matter of principle that he was right. The P.S. kept his thoughts to himself, though his opinion was that Macdonald was the senior officer but that, within Sarawak, the OAG had precedence over him, just as a mayor takes precedence within his town over

all others, however distinguished. Be that as it may, when the boat came alongside at Song, Dawson quickly leaped ashore and started to inspect the guard of honour, at which Macdonald rushed round behind the guard and shook hands with the dignitaries before Dawson could get to them. As the boat approached Kapit, both men were at the ready but Macdonald was by far the fitter and he got to the guard first and inspected it, while Dawson had to be satisfied with being first to shake hands with those lined up. The P.S. said it was most difficult serving two people who were continually trying to outdo the other. When the party returned from the ulu and were in my house, Dawson suddenly said "It is most peculiar that Urquhart hasn't answered my telegram" at which Macdonald took obvious pleasure in saying sweetly "Oh yes, he did. I have his telegram here would you like to see it?" Dawson then turned to the P.S. and said "I told you to send the telegram, why did Urquhart address it to 'Govgen and party'?" The unfortunate P.S. said that he had used his initiative. Macdonald looked smug and the P.S. realised miserably that he had made an enemy of his boss.

Malcolm Macdonald was a breath of fresh air in South East Asia and especially in Malaya, where his natural friendliness with people of all races was well received, even if his unconventional ways upset the more old fashioned and rigid types within the Malayan civil service. Such people disapproved of him when he did not dress as formally on all occasions as they would have liked; also he refused to join clubs, even such select ones as the Singapore Cricket Club (which most British wished to belong to) as it had a racial barrier to entry. As Governor General of Malaya and British Borneo from 1946 to 1948, and then as Commissioner-General for the United Kingdom in South East Asia from 1948 to 1955, he was senior to all the colonial governors and the ambassadors from Burma to the Philippines.



The Commissioner General, Malcolm MacDonald, being given a welcoming drink by Ani. Note his bracelets.

Malcolm came to love Sarawak and more especially the Baleh River in Kapit District. As D.O. Kapit and later as P.S. to the Governor and as D.O. Baram (another favourite area of Malcolm's), I saw quite a lot of him. On one occasion he told me that, once he reached Kapit, he was delighted to be more or less out of reach of immediate telegrams requiring his decisions, and once he had started to move upriver of Kapit he could leave his S.E. Asian worries behind him, relax and no longer worry about what was happening in Indo-China or the Communist troubles in Malaya.

During my time as D.O., Kapit Malcom made several trips to my District and became very interested in Temonggong Koh and his family, who lived in the top house of the Baleh and in Penghulu Jugah and his family, who lived in a nearby longhouse slightly downriver. He took a personal interest in all the members of both these families, whom he called his 'adopted family' and, so far as he was concerned, their lives and their problems were probably of greater interest to him than were his international problems.

He got to know them all and worried about them, especially the Temonggong's beautiful granddaughter, Segura, when she became all modern and cut her lovely long hair short or appeared to be going off the rails with young men. His happiness with his 'Sarawak Iban family' showed itself in the way that he treated them as would a favourite uncle, by cordially greeting all the men and embracing, sometimes verging on the passionate, all the women on first meeting them after a long absence.

Poor Segurah, who had been sent for further education to the Methodist Mission as a boarder, happened to suffer from painful headaches on Sunday mornings, just when the whole of the Mission staff and pupils went to church and was unable to accompany them. About this time every Sunday a handsome young Chinese left the bazaar and decided to take a walk to the Mission. He left it before the church service ended. Mercifully, Segurah's headache had ended by the time they returned and, indeed, she was very cheerful.

The first time Malcolm came to visit me alone on one of his relaxing visits to the ulu, he arrived upstairs in the fort, went into the centre of the floor, and called out "How lovely to be free of all restraint" and he then stood on his hands and walked on them. The embarrassed clerks, who had all stood up when he (whom they thought of as the high and mighty Commissioner-General) came into the room, did not know where to look and averted their eyes at this display by such an important personage. Unfortunately his display resulted in his loose change falling out of his pockets and running along the belian planks and a shy clerk rushed forward, blushing hard, collected the coins and handed them back to their owner. Later on, I heard him say to Sir Anthony Abell (a successor of Sir Charles's), that "if I could lead my life over again, I would have liked to be D.O. Kapit!"

Malcolm once told me that, he had, as his guest in Malaya, Pandit Nehru. At this time the Pandit was reserved as he was going through a phase of being cross at British actions. He learnt that each morning the Pandit used to go into the garden and take up a yoga pose and contemplate. The second day of his stay, while contemplating, the Pandit was astonished to see the bushes part and Malcolm appeared walking on his hands and saying that he knew no yoga but could the Pandit emulate him? From then on the Pandit relaxed with him and they became firm friends, which was useful when Malcolm later became High Commissioner to India.

To leap ahead to the mid-1970s, I was living in Pembury, which is in Kent and not far away from Raspit Hill, near Ightham where Malcolm was residing. He did not drive or have a car, and about twice a year my wife and I would take him for a drive, ending up at either his house or ours for tea. It was at our house that I reminded him about when he walked on his hands at Fort Sylvia. Before I knew what was happening, this now very old man repeated this feat but, unfortunately, it ended with him losing his balance and falling over on to his back. He immediately got up and seemed to be quite unaffected by his fall.

Malcolm had no ancestral portraits to hang on the walls of Raspit Hill, so he spent what money he could on sculptures and paintings, obtained in various parts of the world, including a Stubbs, which my teenage daughter, Alexa, particularly liked. Once, it was about 5 p.m. in winter and therefore dark when we returned to his house for tea. We were startled when we got into his entrance hall and he said "Wait here in the dark". He

then groped around and opened the door to his drawing room, pulled all the curtains over the windows and only then did he switch on the lights. As he had various very fine paintings and objects on display, he had to ensure that no-one in the garden with binoculars would be able to place where exactly these valuable objects were! On one visit Alexa enquired where the Stubbs was. Malcolm said that reluctantly he no longer kept the most valuable articles on display and took Alexa upstairs to a broom cupboard, at the back of which, wrapped up in an old torn sheet, was the Stubbs. How sad that he could no longer enjoy such paintings without going to a hiding place to look at them!

On another occasion, Malcolm mentioned that he had been chit-chatting with King Sihanouk of Cambodia and asked him why, with his French upbringing and love of French culture, he sent young Cambodians to Moscow (not Paris) for training. The King's answer was "If I sent them to Paris, they would return as Communists. Because I send them to Moscow, they return disillusioned with Communism".

Malcolm led, what was to me, a beastly life, as he never had any time to himself or, for that matter, for his Canadian wife, Audrey, who only spent short periods with him in S.E. Asia. Practically every day of the year breakfast and other meals, took place with various people whom he had invited for a 'working meal'. So far as I can tell, the only times a meal was not a working one, was when he had accepted an invitation to go out and even then, very few of these meals were private and limited to friends. Yet he always made it a point to find time to write a letter of thanks, in his own handwriting, for hospitality received, such as when he stayed with me at Kapit.

My brother-in-law, Bill Large, in 1950 when Chief of Police in Brunei, developed T.B., undoubtedly due to his hardships when a Japanese P.O.W. In September 1950, Malcolm found time to go to the docks in Singapore to see Bill on his way on sick leave to U.K. and then wrote a letter to him sending him "some books to pass the time on board ship. I was delighted to see you already so much better". He then also sent a telegram to my sister going home on the S.S. Canton "I was delighted to see considerable improvement in your husband when I visited him yesterday as compared with three weeks ago in Borneo. Bon voyage and best wishes Malcolm Macdonald". He might be a workaholic but how typical of him to find the time to send these messages. He had also sent flowers to my sister while in Raffles Hotel before joining her ship to U.K.



Binda and Bill in Sarawak Club, May 1949

Malcolm had a great sense of avoiding causing offence, even to the extent that, though he had a stomach ulcer which reacted painfully when he imbibed tuak, so as not to hurt

someone's feelings, he would gallantly please his hosts by drinking a little and sometimes more than a little of what they offered him!

Temonggong Koh had a fighting cock which he kept in a basket under the slats of his floor just where the notched ladder led from the longhouse to the outside world. I witnessed Malcolm, barefoot, standing at the top of the steps, taking a fond farewell of the Temonggong, whose hand he was holding, when suddenly he leaped into the air with an imprecation. Apparently the cock fancied the sole of Malcolm's foot and with his powerful beak gave it a severe peck, which is not a nice thing to happen to anyone unexpectedly, when he thinks he is on a firm base. The Governor and I, who were also barefoot and were following Malcolm in saying farewell to the Temonggong, were very careful where we placed our bare feet at this time.

Over the years that Malcolm lived in Malaya across the straits from Singapore, there was a lot of tittle-tattle suggesting that he was having a sultry affair with Christina, the extremely beautiful wife of the millionaire Loke Wan Tho. Some years later, when I was Private Secretary to the Governor, Sir Anthony Abell, a man who hit it off perfectly with Malcolm Macdonald, I asked Sir Anthony what he thought about these innuendos. Sir Anthony first of all stated that with most people it is far from easy to reach the truth about their sex life. Of one thing, he was clear and that was that Malcolm loved beauty. It could be scenic beauty, a beautiful painting, a lovely building, a sculpture and, of course, a pretty woman and, especially one like Christina, who was intelligent and excellent company. Sir Anthony thought that he must have been very attracted by and enjoyed being with Christina but that he was not the type of man to steal another man's wife and especially so when the woman concerned was the wife of his very good friend Loke Wan Tho.

In one of his books Malcolm relates that, when in Japan, he couldn't cause offence to an important Japanese by refusing his offer of having a prostitute sent to his room. Instead of having sex with her, he had a very interesting time chatting to her about how and why she became a prostitute and what her family thought about it. When he reckoned that he had spent enough time with this lady to please his host, he paid her and off she went.

### **On Batangs and Tanggas**

I would not like any of my readers to get the idea that walking in swamp or hilly country in Sarawak is anything like going for a ramble in the U.K., or for that matter that going up (and worse still going down) a Dayak ladder is something that most white people can do as well as the Dayaks do. Throughout my ulu trips in Sarawak I suffered greatly trying to emulate the elegant way the locals moved, laden or unladen, when I was on tour in the ulu - so much so that I wrote a heartfelt article in 1949 that was published in the Sarawak Gazette. I happened to suffer from vertigo – an affliction that did not affect Sarawak natives of either sex or however old! Here is my article.

One of the joys of Sarawak, which will grow less frequent with the advance of civilisation and roads criss-crossing the country, is the joy of the ulu Sarawakian when watching orang puteh (white people) clumsily progressing along the byways of this country or entering or leaving their longhouse by the notched access ladder.

Sarawak is, generally speaking, a country of much coastal swamp or of very steep hills interspersed with dry or rushing torrents, according to the weather, and what areas of plateau there are, are usually amply provided with rivers. The whole area is covered in by a jungle of trees or by grasses of various heights, which tend to hold back rain water in the hollows and form little swamps. The heavy Sarawak rains wash away unprotected surfaces and cause very deep and precipitous gullies in such hillsides. As most ulu Sarawakians do not wear shoes, their feet are strong and broad and the toes very flexible while the soles, including the insteps, are leathery. Natives' houses are usually built on stilts and the staircases up to them are rarely of the wide or concrete type beloved of orang puteh, to whom it is an unending source of wonder how the Sarawakian can walk efficiently and gracefully across a countryside that has no road and enter and leave his house by a tangga (a notched tree trunk, often while carrying a heavy and unmanageably shaped weight). Where the soil is firm, there are some well beaten paths that would suit members of the Ramblers' Association, but where there are swamps, the natives find it more convenient to connect their villages and fields by cutting down trees, which serve the treble purpose of making a way through the swamp jungle, a road surface and a bridge.

It is when he comes to the batangs that life begins to be difficult for the European that is not an expert in gymnastics. A 'batang' is a numerical coefficient of length used in such cases as a tree trunk, a long river, a fishing rod, etc. A batang can be a tree trunk of any length but those that I used seemed almost invariably to be of negligible width. The tree trunks one walks on are sometimes more or less horizontal resting on the ground and sometimes horizontal above the ground supported at each end by other tree trunks or their smaller branches. But, as this is rather monotonous, one finds that they are often at an angle with one another and stuck in the mud and the other end about 10 ft in the air, resting on some part of a reclining giant of the forest, sometimes firmly, but more often showing a tendency to rotate and, when one reaches the middle, also to bounce up and down. Some batangs have a certain flexibility, usually apparent to the European when he is congratulating himself on having reached the middle without having fallen off, and it only needs the weight of an inexperienced walker to tip up the whole batang once the pivotal point has been passed. Some batangs are not noticeably rotten, but then most of them like to cover over their weak points with a deceptively fine looking cover of outer bark.

In fact a hole in a batang is often a sign that a European has passed that way recently. In more civilised areas, especially in rubber gardens, one may find that the Chinese have put down hard wood planks. These are always slippery and sometimes the plank, on which you are about to step, has an unpleasant habit of dipping down at its far end, when the man in front of you is about to move to the next one. This of course means that suddenly and unexpectedly you find that that part of the plank that you were about to step on has risen, with the result that instead of stepping on to the plank, you either hit it hard with the front of your ankle or even worse, it lands with its full weight on to the bridge of your foot as you step into the murky depths below, which much amuses all present except you yourself.

A further refinement of torture is the path made up of small branches that are of various lengths but invariably narrow that have been laid across a muddy

apparently bottomless swamp of peaty coloured surface water mixed with a mixture of natural tree roots. As regards padi fields, the guide (i.e. the man in front) will see before him crystal translucent water and he can easily see the branches lying on the mud just under the surface of the water but with every subsequent user, the mud is ever more churned up and only the sixth sense of the natives enables them to walk confidently on the now invisible path and not veer off into a fall of unknown depth until one reaches terra firma. The European just gropes his way along taking small steps at a time in the muddy water, slowing up the party considerably. The swampy areas in the jungle to be crossed can be anything from a couple of yards to a mile or more. Once again the guide can see whether to put his foot on a tree root or on a man made batang. The Ibans don't need to see, they just know. But all the miserable European can see is an opaque liquid and he knows that somewhere underneath the surface - it may be a couple of inches or a couple of feet - is a support that is, one hopes, trustworthy. The trouble comes when the weight is tentatively put on to an invisible support that the searching foot has found and then more weight is added and it turns out that the support was merely a "floater under the surface" and one collapses, grazing oneself as one falls on the branch on which one was supposed to have walked and getting peaty water all over oneself as one grabs at whatever is available to prevent oneself being engulfed in the bottomless swamp - and these swamps can easily be 10 or more feet deep. The wise walker will be amongst the first two when it comes to going single file across country in Sarawak before any peaty water has become too cloudy.

Scrambling along such a path at speed is a trying and heat-making process, but indisputably worse is the bridge batang. Unless a convenient tree of great girth can be felled and used to bridge the gully, rushing torrent or the, at times, dry rocky river bed far below, the natives will happily make a bridge out of a belian hardwood narrow plank, notched slightly at irregular and inconvenient spaces. Only in the driest of weather is this batang anything but damp and it is probably mossy, and often twisted sideways so that the bridge has a fine camber to encourage one to lose control and fall into the depths below. In some cases two planks or trees are placed side by side. This may give the European a false sense of security, for apart from the fact that the second batang was put there because the first had become untrustworthy (and only a local would know which was the first and which the second) it is more than likely that the tensile strengths of these two batangs are unequal. I used to get upset when I found that one batang might have a give of one inch when I reached the middle and also had a tendency to swivel to the left, while the other batang would rise and fall four inches at every step.

In some areas the natives add bamboo railings to their bridges. More European mishaps are caused through this than even by rotten batangs, as these railings are not meant to be used as supports. A bridge crosser who rests his weight and confidence on a native railing must be agile indeed if he is to regain his balance and not accompany the railing downwards as it suddenly snaps. Eventually I learnt that a railing is only to be touched lightly with the finger tips, when it serves its role as an aid to balance. In some cases, batang bridges are held together by what were once the strongest of rotans. These creepers are anti-European as they never seem to give that unmistakeable sharp crack as they snap when locals are crossing the bridge, but only when a foreigner does so.

A traveller in Sarawak must accept that one of the main qualities of a good batang is its ability, by using camouflage bordering on deceit, to give no indication until the last possible second as to whether it is a tipper, a rocker, a rotator or merely has a rotten core. It doesn't usually trouble to hide the fact that it is also slippery.

There is little to be said about a tangga, which is what the Dayaks consider to be a 'ladder' but which is in fact a narrow batang as nearly vertical as possible, with a few small notches in it to facilitate the ascent into or descent from native houses. The notches are quite unsuitable for the European foot, shod or unshod, unless perhaps he is an experienced mountain climber. Should there be any railings, they may sometimes be strong enough to use as a support when going up the tangga with a heavy weight on one's back. For this purpose they are well placed, being parallel to the tangga and about a foot above it. The Dayak sees no point in having a railing that helps one to go down a tangga, for he has found that gravity helps him to descend elegantly and under control, even if the top of the tangga starts some 20 feet or so above the ground. If the European wishes to try and avoid a gravity uncontrolled descent, he can either use the railing, to the amusement of the locals, by going down backwards as he would down a companion way on one of Her Majesty's ships, or he can descend facing forwards and putting his heels into notch after notch with his toes splayed outwards into space, while, if he remains vertical, he notes that there is a railing, about 2 ft below where a proper railing should be, in case he has to grab it. Should this be necessary, it is likely that it will ensure a subsequently uncontrolled descent, though he may perhaps manage to try to laugh the matter off (just as he feels that the railing has suddenly become loose and he is about to lose control) by jumping the remaining distance to the ground.

Even though most Europeans are not P.T. instructors or tightrope walkers, I believe it is a long time since there has been a fatal accident of a European when using a batang. It will greatly entertain the locals if the European will hope to keep himself alive by sitting astride the batang-bridge and edging forwards along it. If you are walking standing vertically as you cross the bridge, it can help to put one's two hands on the shoulders of the Dayak in front, provided you can persuade him to heed your calls to go at the speed you feel safe with. What is not recommended is to distort your body by holding on with one hand to the hand of the man in front and also to the hand of the man behind you. The best way to keep alive is to look at the problem, enquire if there is another way to cross the obstacle and, if there isn't, abandon the trip and go home.

### **The District Officer's Office**

In Sarawak there is a type of mason wasp that builds a hard earth ball about the size of a pea. Initially, the ball is hollow and an opening is left at the top, while the wasp goes off to look for a succulent spider, which it captures and paralyses but does not kill. The wasp puts the spider inside the ball, then lays its eggs on top of it and closes up the hole. In due course the eggs will hatch and the grubs will feed on the spider. One day I had cause to tick off Kepu as I looked around my living room because for a long time he had not removed these little balls, which were in groups attached to the glass of my pictures and in various corners of the room. I gave him a small locally woven basket and told him to go round and see how many of the balls he could collect. We were then both interested and surprised to see how many there were. That evening the Divisional Engineer was due from Sibu to stay with me. I heard the sound of his boat's engines

coming up the river and I went down to the floating wharf to meet him. I then escorted him back to my house, by which time it was beginning to get dark and I could hear Kepu under the house, pumping up my pressure lamp, as there was no electricity at Kapit. In the half-light we went up a small flight of stairs into the house and my eye lit on the little basket, which I passed to the D.E. saying "What do you think of this?" To my astonishment he said "Thank you", took a handful of the small balls and put them in his mouth, started to chew them and then spat them out saying "What the hell is this?" When I said "paralyzed spiders" he became enraged with me, used unnecessarily intemperate language and said that he had not seen them properly in the gloaming and thought they were peanuts!

Many Sarawak cats have tails that are short and cork screwed like a pig's tail. This does not affect their sense of balance at all, as they are very agile. I had a three quarter grown kitten, which had been with me from a very young age, and so I am sure that its mother could not have taught it all it needed to know. My kitten and I stepped out of the house together one day and it immediately rushed forward towards a three foot long very venomous krait and with great agility and speed managed to sink its teeth behind the snake's head and held on, despite the fact that the snake was coiling itself around the cat's body, until the snake was dead. Would a small British kitten have known how to deal with a poisonous snake?

During the lunch break one day, I descended into my bathroom, which was underneath my house on stilts and which had a concrete floor, and was surprised to see a dismembered scorpion, with parts of its body scattered all over the floor. I called Kepu, thanked him for killing the scorpion but added that another time would he please remove the remains. He said "What scorpion?" The mystery was explained when on another occasion I saw my cat facing a huge black scorpion. Both were quite still watching one another. The cat had one paw up with its claws retracted, which it held about two inches above the scorpion's head, and the scorpion had its tail arched over its back in the ready-to-strike position. Suddenly the cat banged its paw down lightly on the scorpion's head and raised it again immediately. The scorpion struck at the paw but missed it. For a few seconds they watched one another and then the cat repeated its action and once again the scorpion's strike was a fraction of a second too late.

This procedure went on until the scorpion was showing signs of tiredness and its strike reaction was getting slower. At this stage the cat's blows became stronger and then its claws began to come out until eventually it managed to pull the head from the scorpion's body. How did my cat know how to deal with a scorpion? And would a British cat have known?

Government bureaucracy is, I suppose, rife everywhere, and it exists even in Sarawak. Outside the Kapit fort was a tall bamboo pole, acting as a wireless mast with an aerial of two wires leading from it and separated at the top from each other by a wooden cross piece. This cross piece broke and so Kapit was out of touch with the rest of the country. I used my initiative and gave the equivalent of £1 to a small Malay boy to climb the bamboo and replace the piece of wood. In fact, as I watched him, I became extremely anxious when I saw how the tall bamboo swayed and bent under his weight, but mercifully all turned out right and so, soon after the breakdown he had repaired the connection and we were once again in communication with the outside world. Some two months later I got a letter from the Postmaster-General in Kuching to say that I had

spent £1 of his money without first getting authority to do so. I wrote back, explaining the circumstances of the case and pointed out that as the matter was urgent, I had used my initiative and, in this case, I thought that I had acted reasonably as it didn't seem to me that £1 was an exorbitant sum to spend. The P.M.G. wrote back to say that the principle of not spending money without authority should be upheld and if the matter was too urgent to seek his permission by letter, then I should have sought it by telegram. I did not send off a very sarcastic reply and let the matter drop there. Incidentally, had I sought authority by telegram to pay out £1, the cost of the telegram would have been more than that sum.

In 1948 my office was in one of the bays of Fort Sylvia, but at that time, consonant with the Rajah's views, it had no door to separate it from the main rectangle of the Government office. I was sitting there and heard a commotion in the main room and eventually distinguished words in Iban to the effect that the speaker was insisting on seeing me and was being discouraged by my clerks, who were saying it was pointless. I called the Iban in. Judging by his appearance he was about fifty years old and came from the far ulu. In rather a braggart manner, which Ibans often adopt but which Malays or even Chinese would rarely do, he shouted at me that he wished to complain about the behaviour of my postal clerk, who was in fact an elderly, experienced, respected and very trustworthy Malay, who spoke fluent Iban. On enquiring what his complaint was, he said that it was common knowledge that, when a Malay or a Chinese sold anything to an Iban they would try and take advantage of his ignorance to do him down. Well! He at any rate was not going to let any old Malay pull wool over his eyes. He well knew that when buying something, the initial price should not be accepted and in due course, after bargaining, the price would come down. However this postal clerk was not abiding by the rules and was trying to take the micky out of, what he supposed, was a gullible ulu Iban, but this one was not going to be imposed upon, hence he had come to me to see fair play. What I have recorded in this one sentence was not exactly what he said to me, for it took much questioning and answer and puzzlement on my part and ten minutes of my time to get as far as this. Eventually it turned out that he had gone to the post office to send a letter to someone and the postal clerk had said that the stamp would cost ten cents. The Iban had offered five cents, but the clerk had insisted that a ten cent stamp was necessary and he wouldn't even come down eight cents! I called in the Dayak Native Officer to help me explain that stamps were much like money and I was sorry but the postal clerk had behaved correctly. Eventually the Iban went off looking very unconvinced and, I fear, had, lost his faith in the fairness of British justice and impartiality.

An elderly Iban Tuai Rumah came into the Kapit office carrying \$25 with him. This was the Head Tax of \$1 paid annually by every head of a longhouse bilek and he had to inform the clerk of the name of each payer, so that the amount paid could be entered against each person's name in his ledger. The T.R. got mixed up with the names and decided to list them a second time. This time he used his fingers to reel off the first 10 names, then he climbed up and sat on the barrier and laid one broad, horny, very wrinkled and none too clean foot on the clerk's table and then carried on using the other foot, by which time he had recorded 20 names. By this time a little crowd of idle spectators was waiting to see how the T.R. would cope with the remaining 5 names. He took his feet off the table, got down from the barrier, leaned over and grabbed hold of the startled Chinese clerk's right hand, thus enabling him to complete his task with a look on his face of a job well done.

Incidentally, contrary to most Europeans, who count on fingers with the hand remaining open, a Sarawakian will start with his hand open and facing upwards and then pull over each finger, as he uses it, one after another, into the closed position on the palm of his hand.

Again, contrary to most Europeans, a Sarawakian will beckon a person to approach him by holding his outstretched hand facing downwards and then closing the fingers on to the palm of the hand, while he brings his hand towards his body.

### **Dedication of the New Song Sub-District Office**

Old Song, with its dilapidated fort and dirty bazaar, had been mercifully burnt out by Allied bombs in 1945. The new Government offices were put into use in January 1948 and the Chinese moved into the new bazaar in December 1948 and were waiting for the War Damage Claims Assessors to fulfil their hopes of compensation. Resident Barcroft arrived at the new government office in the evening and the Song Sub-District Penghulus welcomed the guests with a bedarah (a plate ceremony to propitiate the spirits), after which the ladies in all their finery sang to the visitors. In the ceremony, each guest is supposed to throw some tuak (rice wine) through the interstices of the floor for the spirits left outside. This is quite feasible in an Iban house but the architects of the Song office had not allowed for this when they tongued and grooved the floorboards, so we guests had to do our best in adverse circumstances.

There was a great crowd in Song as people of all races from up and down river had come for the occasion. It was a mystery where they all slept, especially as one of the two shelters built for visitors had had to be set apart for the fighting cocks in their cages. The dedication ceremony took place at 8 a.m. on 1<sup>st</sup> April. The Resident and honoured guests partook of an early morning cup of tuak and performed another bedarah, then Barcroft shoved a spear through the neck of a shrieking pig tied firmly to one side of the flagpole and Penghulu Grinang (the oldest Iban chief) slew the other one. A lot more tuak went the rounds.

Now that the Song office had been properly dedicated, the happy events (including the first ever regatta at Song) could now take place. The regatta lasted all the morning. Although it was agreed that the paddlers from downriver Kanowit District were the best, nevertheless Song won all the first prizes, three going to Iban boats and one to a Malay boat. The final race was for a one man boat (not to be over 3 fathoms long) with the one man paddling from the bows across the strongly flowing river. It was won by a Malay. There was a good crowd round the tote and coffee shops and food stalls did a roaring trade.

In the afternoon there were land sports. Few of the natives had ever had such an experience before, but their enthusiasm was intense. The high jump was won by Bujang bin Mos of Kapit. A large and largely uncontrollable crowd enjoyed watching the flat races. At first the crowd behaved well and stayed behind the rattan railings, then they lifted up the railings and carried them forward with them, after which those behind pressed forward to see better and then so did those in front, till there was next to no track left for anyone to race in. Of course the crowd took no notice of the instructions issued over the loudspeaker.

The final event was the tug o' war. No rules had been announced for this as it was obvious that none would be obeyed. The only rule that was insisted on was that no more than ten men each side should pull (the rule carefully did not specify that it must be the same ten men for each of the three pulls). The first mistake that came to light was that the event had been organized on the ground in front of the office. This meant that each side could prepare itself well to win, for each man used his parang to make a noticeably deep dent in the earth into which he could put his heel and most of his foot and then he leaned back nearly horizontally. Thus each side was immovable and the red rag on the rope never moved away from the centre line! Eventually it was decided to leave the now much damaged ground and restart the tug o' war on the planked verandah of the bazaar. There was so much noise going on that neither side could hear the order to start, and several teams had an easy win by watching the starter's mouth and pulling when they saw his lips move. One team had an easy win by being helped by the crowd and, to avoid bad feeling, had to be told most tactfully that they had been disqualified. The winning team after each pull was so elated that it would gallop off excitedly taking the rope with it, and a lot of time was wasted retrieving the rope and getting ten more men to represent the side that had galloped off and then arranging for them to change ends for the next pull. The judge decided that Penghulu Jantieng's team had won, though how he reached this decision was a mystery.

The land sports were immediately followed by a dancing competition and each Penghulu had to produce his best traditional dancer. There was also a badminton competition which Song won against Kanowit and had to face Kapit next day. At 7 p.m. a Chinese lantern procession beat the bounds, followed by prize giving and then a Malay type opera. The next day, the cash sweep took place and also cock fighting, which lasted from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Only one spectator required medical attention when he was viciously attacked by a victorious cock and his leg gashed. Undoubtedly, apart from the solemn ceremony of dedication, the most popular event over the two days and enjoyed by Chinese and Ibans alike was the cock fighting. The profits from the festivities went to the Sibuh Benevolent Society.

It was during an evening at Song that I regretted not having my camera with me, when a team of kra (long tailed macaque monkeys) appeared from the undergrowth and climbed to the top of a very high lone tree where they frisked and played. The only way out for them was to descend the tree to the ground, but the leader had other ideas and took off from a high branch, flew through the air using his tail as a rudder and landed on a small tree with not very robust branches some 8 feet away and at least 20 feet below. He obviously knew what he was doing as although the branch he landed on bent ominously, it did not break. Then the whole team, including mothers with children clinging to them, followed their leader. The only ones who hung back, for a bit, were some of the younger teenagers.

John Barcroft accompanied me on a day return trip to a longhouse. Everything was normal, except that one elderly, wrinkled Iban kept on saying to him in an ingratiating voice "I remember you came to this longhouse several years ago and do you recall that I killed a chicken for you to eat?" This question went unanswered. After the third time that the man had repeated his sentence, John said loudly "Yes, I remember it very well. It was thin, old and tough!" The whole longhouse showed by the laughter how much his answer was appreciated.

John bought a Great Dane, which caused mayhem in the streets around the residency when it went out for a walk, and pedestrians and cyclists shrieked with terror at seeing such an animal. It once stood on John's bare foot and broke a toe. It was an affectionate animal, though I must say I couldn't get very fond of it when it stood on its hind legs with muddy paws on one's shoulder to show its affection by licking one's face. Anyway, John brought it to Kapit with him when he visited a longhouse. Needless to say it caused a great stir and the local dogs disappeared quickly at the sight of it. What interested me was that it is not only European men that find difficulty in going elegantly up a tangga. This dog couldn't manage it at all on its own - either up or down!

While I was always very happy to return to the comforts and privacy of my own house after a long trip to the ulu, I must admit that too long a stay in Kapit doing the necessary routine office work was somewhat monotonous. I was always delighted when I felt it was my duty to go and call on some of the people in the ulu who had not seen their D.O. for some time. There now follows a description of one such trip. Since towns, villages and longhouses are often built near the mouth of a river it is for anyone dealing with Sarawak to know what 'river mouth' is in the local languages. In Malay it is 'kuala', in Iban 'nanga' and in Orang Ulu languages 'long' - thus 'Long Kajang' means 'situated at the mouth of the Kajang river'.

### **Travelling to Long Kajang**

Downstream of Kapit it is usual to work to some sort of a timetable, but the further upstream one goes, the less feasible does this become. The object of my trip was to pay a visit to the nomadic Penan Lusong and the Punan Busang tribes, who though they were supposed to pay door tax (i.e. \$1 per family per year) had no cash and had not been visited by a European since the start of the Japanese war, and I doubt whether they had ever met up with more than a dozen white men. Though also nomadic, the Punan Busang were a quite different tribe from the Penan Lusong.

When I enquired as to how one meets up with the nomadic tribes in the Linau River, I was told that it was easy so long as I gave everyone concerned two months' warning of my proposed trip and then left everything to the Penghulu. When I suggested that to go so far upriver might require more than the usual preparations, I was told to take enough food for a ten day round trip from Belaga, otherwise my trip would be no different from any other. Mind you, I could not find many people who knew anything much about the trip as there was no-one in Kapit at that time who had actually done it.

Song and Kapit Sub-Districts are entirely Iban with a small Chinese and Malay population. Belaga Sub-District is entirely non-Iban, has a multiplicity of tribes (conveniently known to those downriver as Orang Ulu or Upriver People) including Kenyahs, Kayans, Punan Bah (settled), Kajangs, Lahanans and the nomadic Penans and nomadic Punan Busang. Within Belaga Sub-District the Rejang River changes its name to Baloi. Looking at the map, one finds Belaga Sub-District has various longhouses shown alongside the Baloi for a certain distance above Belaga and a few longhouses alongside the Belaga River, otherwise this huge area is largely empty. This means that the map makers have seen little point in spending time and money in surveying an area of steep jungle covered mountains that is largely uninhabited, despite having an odd plateau of fairly level land here and there. On the best map I had there was a guesswork river, shown by dotted lines, called the Linau with its biggest tributary

the Kajang, which apparently had their sources on the Indonesian frontier. My latest edition of the map of this area was of little use to me or anyone else beyond Long Linau.

In August I wired Belaga (the mail only goes there about twice a quarter, that is provided the river is at a reasonable level) to warn Penghulu Hang Nyipa, who lived upriver of Belaga on the Baloi, that he should prepare the necessary arrangements for me to do the round trip of 10 days. He thereupon went up the Linau River into what he well knew was not an empty space as shown on our maps, and sent messages to the Penan Lusong and the Punan Busang tribes to go to Long Kajang in six weeks' time and wait there at least a month to meet me, so that the census could be taken and matters of mutual interest discussed.

On 26<sup>th</sup> October the water was unsuitable for going to Belaga. It had not abated its high level by 4<sup>th</sup> November and as the time for the meeting of the Divisional Council was drawing near (and because such meetings are held upriver of Kapit, they are therefore not unduly timetable conscious), I had to wire Belaga to send a message to the nomads by the Village Constable, Agriculture Assistant or Forest Guard (thus saving the Administration travelling vote from getting further into debt!) to tell them not to disperse as I would meet them in a month's time.

On 18<sup>th</sup> November I had an 'inexplicable feeling' that the Government Auditor (whose visits are meant to be a complete surprise) might make a 'surprise' and unheralded visit to Kapit to audit the accounts at the end of that month, and I felt I should then be present to administer a pink gin to him after he had looked at the local accounts. I accordingly warned Belaga that I would leave Kapit on 1<sup>st</sup> December and I wondered whether I wouldn't be spending Christmas in the ulu. My message was not sent on to the nomads, though I was not told this fact. Not altogether to my surprise the Auditor did arrive at the month's end.

On 1<sup>st</sup> December the waters of the Rejang were raging again as they swept down from those mountains not shown on the map, and it was not until 5<sup>th</sup> December that I was able to set off. As I reckoned it, I needed two days to go to Belaga by longboat and two days back; two days in Belaga and two days there on the way back from the ulu, and ten days above Belaga, and even if nothing went awry, I would have to be pretty nippy to be in Sibu in time for Christmas, which for the last three years had always been held there on 25<sup>th</sup> December. Despite what the Punans thought such a high and mighty person as the D.O. Kapit might achieve, I was quite unable to postpone it.

For the last two months the spirits of travel had not been exactly encouraging me to do this trip and now, after a speedy journey to the Pila River, near which I spent the night, and after an early morning start, a ball bearing on my 22 h.p. outboard broke near the Bah River and I had to hire a 9 h.p. from the B.C.L. logging area there. This delay meant that I arrived in Belaga at 7 p.m. instead of 2 p.m., when I found that no-one there had believed a telegram from Kapit saying that I wished to start immediately after reaching Belaga to go on to the ulu. A disconsolate Penghulu Hang Nyipa was sent upriver at once to fix up coolies to get me up the rapids between Belaga and Long linau.

Next day, accompanied by the Belaga Chinese dresser (a hospital assistant) and a Penan Batu woman from the Mujong River and all the usual followers, I set off using the Belaga 22 h.p. engine. At 4.30 p.m., we reached Rumah (Longhouse) Lateng, a little

way up the Linau River, having safely negotiated the various rapids, though my waterproof tin had received a wave over it, and the subsequent state of the papers inside it made me doubt its staunchness. The outboard engine could not be used beyond this point and it was now intimated to me that that this big Kayan longhouse was nearly deserted as most of the men had gone to look for panto (wild hill sago), because the house was nearly starving, and it was impossible to raise the necessary 10 men to take me up the Linau River. The aristocratic but negative Penghulu politely and legitimately criticised me by pointing out that in October and again in November he had arranged porters for me. Anyhow, a boat was paddled overnight to a house in the Baloi so that next day I could have porters, and on 8<sup>th</sup> December my party set off in only two perahus. When I compared the way these Kayans now paddled and poled upriver with the way they had done five months before I became aware of how debilitating is a diet of a little panto as compared with that of plenty of rice. We spent the night in a sulap (small low temporary shelter) quickly erected by the Kayans from materials in the neighbourhood. The Linau so far had been a broad but fast flowing river winding through gorges and with a lot of rapids and kerangans (shingle banks that are covered when the river floods), and it turned out that for us it was rare that the boats could be paddled more than 100 yards at a stretch before having to get out and push the boats. High jungle covered hills rose up steeply from the water's edge.

The next day was spent travelling in a similar manner through similar country, and again the night was spent in a small sulap erected by the Kayans. The weather hitherto had been fine with periodic 'April' showers. The evenings were spent pleasantly enough talking about Punans, the exploits of past Kayans and of what happened when the Japanese were in Belaga and the allies chased them out again.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> day from Belaga, which was 10<sup>th</sup> December, we reached the Jaka River at midday and, despite some rain, everybody was happy for Kepu had shot a rather skinny wild pig and the Kayans were looking forward to their first meat meal for a long time. At this point the boats were hauled up to the top of the bank, as further upstream was a series of deep gorges, swift rapids and two big waterfalls, one being about 100 ft high and the other about 80 ft high at low water, though the height would be reduced at high water. In a langkau (a farming hut, rather more substantial than a sulap) at the Jaka was left some of our food, my camp bed and chair and other luxuries. It was tacitly assumed that no-one would be brave enough to remove the tuan's possessions in our absence.

In single file, with each porter carrying a heavy and bulky load, we set off as the rain ended. It always surprises me to note how short is the time the rain takes to penetrate the foliage of the jungle, while long after the sun has been shining from a cloudless sky the same jungle foliage continues to drip steadily. We set off on what the Kayans called a bad path. It was in fact a rarely used leech-infested animal track that followed the river along the very steep and slippery hill sides that formed the river bank and the river could be heard roaring through its gorges a long way below. This path was dangerous in places where the hills had an average slope of one in one and stones, that had long been lying there moss covered, immediately started to roll when they felt my feet on them (no stone appeared to do so when the Kayans walked on them),. The general conditions of the walk continually caused shocks to my sense of equilibrium, not to mention to my ankle and shin bones. The night was again spent in the usual small sulap and we dined off our usual rice and salt fish and the left-overs of the pig (the Kayans

had panto instead of rice). For the first time on the trip I began to think of the comforts of my Kapit house and the Kayans admitted that they could not survive in such a countryside unless they had brought food with them. However I was cheered by being told that the next day the path would improve and there was a langkau, where we could spend the night, instead of the usual sulap, where I was cooped up in the small cubic space of my travelling mosquito net, contorting myself into unnatural positions to avoid the odd trickles of rain water that always seemed to come through the leaf roof on to where I was after I had gone to sleep.

Next day began, however unbelievably, with the path getting worse. In fact as I stumbled over stones and caught my feet in tangles of tree roots and skidded down the hillsides (grabbing at the nearest branch, which often turned out to be thorny) and pulled leeches off my legs, I was unable to think kindly of the Penans, who two months before had 'improved' this path for my benefit. After about 1½ hours of this we reached a broad tributary of the Linau called the Bera-an and crossed it with water up to our hips. Just before crossing it the Penghulu had watched me during a rest period covering my legs in tobacco juice and some of my scarce anti-mosquito ointment to discourage leeches and it had never occurred to him to warn me that it would all be washed off five minutes later. When we had waded across the Bera-an, the Penghulu reminisced and with schadenfreude pointed out to me the place where once he had had to stay for two days on his way home, because he was unable to cross the river due to high water.

After the crossing, I began really to enjoy myself as we now entered a big, broad, flat-bottomed valley and, instead of virgin jungle around us, the vegetation was secondary jungle. Though now uninhabited except by a few Penans, this area had been the home a long time ago of many Kayans, some of whom had moved to the Baram River in Fourth Division, and in fact the Penghulu's father had been born here. The valley turned out to be several miles long and in places about four miles wide. After 2½ hours of pleasant walking, the roaring of the Linau could be heard getting ever louder and we suddenly came to the edge of the jungle and there was the magnificent Laku waterfall, 80 yards across with a drop of 80 feet. The contrast was most impressive and beautiful, as above, the waterfall the river could be seen flowing quietly but majestically about 6 feet below the green jungle covered banks, and below it the river writhed and swirled as it found itself compressed in its gorge and had begun its turbulent career of rapids, whirlpools and waterfalls. A little way from the waterfall was a well built langkau and we settled down there gratefully for the rest of that day. There was even room for me to stand upright in it and, when lying down, to stretch my legs and there was a lime tree nearby. However the spirits still wished to annoy me, as the seven fathom perahu, which the Penghulu had fixed up for our onward journey was nowhere to be seen and had presumably been taken by a party of Kayans that had been ahead of me by two days. There were only two small, badly damaged and nearly useless perahus for our party. This place was known as Lusong Laku.

I had been brought up never to refuse offerings of food at meals (except on medical or religious grounds) as this causes offence and, so far as I can recall, I have never done so in all the countries that I have visited. I was also told that if the locals survived on their diet, there should be no reason why I too shouldn't survive. In many cases, the local diet, in a climate very different from Britain's, is a much more suitable one than the average British diet. I admit that I have never been offered sheep's eyes by an Arab. I can see nothing diet-wise wrong with eating them. I hope that I will never be asked to

taste this delicacy, but, if faced with it, I hope I could manage to consume it without showing distaste and (who knows?) it might be delicious. Meanwhile, while we had been advancing through the jungle and I had been enjoying looking at the exquisite beauties of some of the leaves and shrubs, my eyes distastefully picked up a long dead and very maggoty fruit bat (flying fox) lying on our path. What was now my horror to find that a Penan had picked it up and was proposing to put it in our common cooking pot. He seemed quite pleased to find I did not want any of it and added that such meat made men strong. I presume that these people would not eat meat that was well beyond their sell-by date if it gave them stomach pains and, indeed, I remember once being given by Tim Dix, a friendly upriver logger, some noticeably ripe and smelly wild boar, which it seemed impolite to refuse, and I hoped that this meat would have no worse effect than a well hung hare. I then waited for painful internal results but they never materialised! That evening the outboard driver killed three rusa (sambhur deer), which added variety to our larder. However, they also brought out the serious schism that was then dividing Belaga Sub-District, as the Penghulu and three other Kayan chiefs had thrown off all their pantangs and had been enjoying rusa for four months, while it was anathema to T.R. Lateng and the other four traditional Kayans even to have rusa cooked in their house, and they kept on reminding the modernists how eating rusa made one ever weaker to the point of death.

Next day, 12<sup>th</sup> December, was spent repairing the larger and least damaged of the two perahus. This consisted of putting bits of wood over the holes and tying them down with bits of rattan threaded through smaller holes made in the hull, and then sticking wedges between the bits of wood and the rattans. The gaping hole at the stern was mended, to my concern, with mud, which in some inexplicable way stayed there and proved effective. The perahu still leaked but almost continual baling rendered it navigable. The Penghulu put a stick 1½ inches wide across the breadth of the boat for me to sit on, but I exchanged this with the dresser for the greater comfort of a stick 3 inches wide. Thus instead of being paddled comfortably in state up the Linau, the dresser, the Penghulu, T.R. Lateng and I (with the very minimum of kit) proceeded precariously upriver, leaving Kepu, the Penan Batu woman and all the porters to enjoy the amenities of the Laku valley. Pre-war the D.O. Kapit had persuaded some nomadic Penans to settle down here as cultivators, but they had returned to their nomadic ways with the arrival of the Japanese.

Despite the undoubted beauties of the scene and the fine weather, my journey up the valley was far from enjoyable. I was quite unused to paddling and I now suddenly found myself doing so for 7½ hours in the blazing sun, added to which the boat was so small that I could not stretch out my legs at all. In some ways it was a mercy that the perahu leaked, as I was able to relieve the aches in my arms, back and legs by justifiably altering my posture and volunteering to bale out, and it was with unconcealed relief on my part when the time came to build a sulap, cook the evening meal and retire to bed.

The scene certainly was very pleasing. As we paddled through the fertile valley there were traces of many rusa and pig. In contrast to the extreme quiet of the unpleasant walk, there were now lots of birds singing happily and never before in Sarawak had I seen so many or such variegated butterflies (and never before either had I been bitten by so many mosquitoes and sandflies). From the boat we could often see over the low banks of the river and I was surprised to see in some places beautifully mowed lawns, on the river bank, apparently caused by grazing deer in the quiet of the evening. There

had been but little rain recently and the Linau flowed gently and peacefully. In one area, at right angles to the jungle covered river bank and disappearing into the distance, there was a straight swathe, about 25 yards wide, of fallen trees mixed with three year old trees. This had been caused by the original growth having all been uprooted by a whirlwind three years previously, and in another area I saw that all the leaves of the trees had been eaten off, apparently by a small plague of locusts. The following day, 13<sup>th</sup> December, was the seventh since leaving Belaga. We had got up early and, so far as I was concerned very stiffly I was just about to get into our boat with the painful vision of another whole day's paddling (when, according to the Penghulu, we might with luck reach Long Kajang) when a small boat with some Penans in it appeared round the corner. We paddled with them about half a mile upstream and came to the sulap beside the river, which they had kindly prepared for our arrival. Their own huts were about a quarter of a mile inland. It was now for the first time that the Penghulu mentioned to me that the Penan Lusong were not all in one group (as had been the case pre-war when they had last been visited) but were now scattered all over the valley and some of them were in the neighbouring Keluan Valley!

Throughout the trip Penghulu Hang Nyipa kept on producing bits of information, which I would have preferred to have known before I set out. He was also unreliable in the matter of the time taken to cover distances, as sometimes he would be very accurate and sometimes there would be an error of five hours in a three hours journey, and there was no way of knowing which sort of prognostication he had made until the destination had been reached.

After an hour giving out medicines (and I give full credit for the way Chinese dresser Tiong Chung Tiu fitted in with what to most Chinese would have been a totally fearsome trip), eating panto cake and chatting, we collected the head of this group of people, called Boeng, and carried on upriver. A message was also sent to the Penans in the ulu Keluan to meet me in this valley. The Penghulu asked me if five days' time would be convenient for this, but on my protestations that I expected to be back in Belaga by then, he said he had doubts whether the Punan Busang would be at Long Kajang, and it would probably be necessary to call them down from ulu Kajang. I pointed out to the penghulu that the round trip of ten days he had promised me was turning out rather differently from what I had expected. So it was arranged that the Punan Lusong in the Keluan valley, under their head Keju, should be met in four days' time. I also found out that the Kayans, who had removed my boat, were in a sidestream downriver, so a Punan was despatched to tell them to take the boat to Lusong Laku, so that the rest of my party could catch up with me.

The boat was now fuller than ever and my job was to bale out continually. After what the Penghulu had said, I was very surprised when after only 4½ hours paddling from where we had spent the night we reached our goal of Long Kajang. A superior sulap had been built there, and there were a group of Penan shelters about half a mile up the Kajang River. To their surprise, I elected to settle down in one of their houses, so that I could converse with them more relaxedly and get to know them. These Penans included Taman Sigi who was the leader of all the Penan Lusong, but there were only seven huts in this area.

It seemed that the Penghulu's premonition about the Punan Busang tribe was right. These people had come down to Long Kajang in October but, as there was not enough

food locally for everyone and as they did not get on too well with the Penan Lusong, not unreasonably they had returned to ulu Kajang. It was too late to send a message for them that evening, so a message went off next day, but it was not expected that they could reach Long Kajang before the 16<sup>th</sup>. As it cost a lot of Government money to visit what was after all only a very tiny part of the population of Kapit District and it was highly unlikely that a Government officer would come this way again for many years, I decided to wait for them until 16<sup>th</sup>, although I would have preferred to return downriver earlier than that. Also I could not very well regulate door tax, relations between the Penans and the Kayans or Ibans, trading matters, census, etc. without hearing the views of the Punan Busang. I had to leave early on the 17<sup>th</sup> if those of us who were Christian were to spend Christmas at home. During the night I came to the conclusion that I could see quite enough of the Penans from the shelter at the river mouth, which they had built for me, especially as by so doing I would avoid their mangy dogs leaping on to my mosquito net during the night and snuggling up to me to keep warm, the rain coming in, and the generally unsanitary conditions surrounding them.

So on the next day, 14<sup>th</sup> December, the four of us removed thither and then proceeded to visit some other Penan Lusong. We paddled about an hour up the Linau and then walked through a jungle swamp slipping and slithering until we suddenly came upon a group of about ten huts under Ageh who was head of that group of Penan Lusong. Medicine was dispensed (some of it would do good, but obviously one visit was quite inappropriate for curing most ills), the census taken, we conversed and then I was treated to my first dish of gelatinous pantu. Sago cake is not unpleasant, being like tasteless unleavened bread burnt to a cinder, but, cooked into a glutinous mess, while it is nearly tasteless its consistency feels and looks unpleasant and is slightly gritty. It was with the greatest difficulty that I did not regurgitate after every mouthful, while at the same time I was contorting my face to put on an act, which I hope was convincing, of smiling happily and enjoying the offering. Mercifully there was rusa as well. Clearly pantu must have some goodness in it as most of the Penans I saw thrived on it. I did not see many ill Penans but perhaps this is, because of their way of life, whereby the really ill must rely on fate involving a fairly quick recovery or expiring. Once the group has used up all the available food in the neighbourhood, they are forced to move and, though they try to take any weak and ill people with them on the move, it is a frightful handicap to have to carry incapable and unproductive bodies with them. With their diet, it is most astonishing that the Penans seem able to survive without salt, except for what is naturally in pantu (and personally I couldn't obtain the slightest taste of salt when eating it) or what is naturally contained in the meat of the wild life that they hunt. There are no salt licks in their areas. Their ability to manage without salt is all the more surprising when, to keep alive, they lead such an active life in a hot sweat-making atmosphere, and I myself have seen evidence of how they can carry loads of 110 lbs (50 kg) up and down high steep mountains for several days when bringing their jungle produce to areas fixed by Government for their trade meetings. I found it difficult to work out the age of Penans and certainly I did not see any evidence, as one would with other races, of the existence of really old people, whose lives by then were entirely sedentary.

On our return through the jungle we came upon one of the Belaga village constables who presented me with a batch of immediate telegrams, giving news of what, at that stage, was the attempted murder of the Governor and so instructions to me not to leave Kapit and, if I had left to return there at once. After so many days without me at Kapit, I felt that Sarawak could manage without me at my H.Q. and I carried on with my plans. It

may seem amazing, but it turned out that when I eventually reached Kapit, Sarawak had, somehow or other, managed to carry on perfectly well without my presence there!! This policeman had reached Lusong Laku and was wondering how to proceed further, when the Penans brought my boat there, so he had come upriver in it, and the rest of my party were therefore still boatless near the waterfall. As he and the two Kayans with him had brought next to no food and no kit, they returned straightaway, but this time in the leaking boat that had brought me. The ninth day of my trip from Belaga (15<sup>th</sup> December) was spent calling on Taman Sigi, doing the census and learning as much as I could about the way of life of these people, through Kayan interpreters, who did not attempt to hide their disdain and contempt for their nomadic neighbours. The April shower type of weather had continued and, though the total rainfall could not have been more than a few millimetres, the Kajang River had risen a lot, though the Linau had not. However the Kajang went down again as fast as it had gone up. Both of these rivers are about 40 metres across just above their junction.

In our shelter at sunset and for a good hour thereafter, we had the choice of living in a dense smoke screen with streaming eyes or of being vexed by hordes of painful sand flies, such as I have never experienced before or since. It is humiliating how sand flies can turn the sweetest tempered of us into irritated maniacs, and so I bore with sitting close to the heat of the fire with its smoke screen and trying not to think of the damage being done to one's lungs and eyes. On 16<sup>th</sup> December the Penan Lusong messengers arrived back to say they had reached the Punan Busang dwelling shelters, but they had all been pulled down and burnt (which meant that a recent death had taken place there, an action, which the Punans had perhaps learnt by experience was a method of reducing the spread of contagious and infectious diseases). As is their habit, they had moved off without leaving any trace of whither they had gone. This was most disappointing, as by all reports the Punan Busang differ in many respects from all other nomadic Penans, and after the expenditure of much time, energy and money I was now unable to complete my work properly. When staying with the various tribes, I had been compiling a comparative vocabulary of each tribe's language and it distressed me that I missed out adding Punan Busang to my comparative vocabulary, when, so far as I can tell, no-one had recorded a single word of their language. I had hoped to confirm or not whether they called themselves 'Punan' or 'Penan' and whether their vocabulary gave a clue as to whether they were linguistically connected to any other group in Sarawak.

Expensively no doubt, I had learnt a lesson, namely that if an original appointment with these people cannot be kept, then one should allow for a whole month away from Belaga and not a ten day return trip, and to hell with the work awaiting my return to Kapit and the inconvenience caused to those members of the public who were unable to get their problems settled due to my absence in the ulu.

So we had a quick lunch of the usual boiled rice (the salt fish had all been eaten long ago) augmented by local fern tops and set off downriver. The night was spent with Boeng and his crowd. The Kayans, who had taken the boat intended for me, were there and I now found out that Keju had told them that I was not coming so there was no harm in taking it. During the night 16/17<sup>th</sup> December there had been only a limited amount of rain, so what was my surprise to find that the Linau had risen by at least 12 feet and the former peaceful river was now a surging mass of muddy water, with that specially powerful aspect that rivers have when pushed by high water in the ulu. Pushed water means that the river is rising. This appearance of the water is quite different from a river

with high water that is being pulled by gravity from downstream because there its level has already begun to go down. We paddled downriver and then went a little way up the Beletti River to where we were to meet Keju and the remainder of the Penan Lusong. However they were not there and I was not prepared to wait longer than the day I had appointed, so we set off downriver and reached Lusong Laku in time for a late lunch. The party there were gratifyingly pleased to see us, which no doubt was partly due to the fact that we had unwittingly taken nearly all the rice with us to Long Kajang. As they had had no boat and no lamp light (until the village constable had left them with a boat on his return journey), they had not been able to shoot or fish and for two days had lived on fern tops, a few ginger biscuits, a tin of brussel sprouts and a tin of corned beef, which I had left there and to which luxuries I had long been looking forward. The evening before I had arrived they had however killed three rusa (though this was not of much use to those Kayans, who followed their traditional customs).

The waterfall as a result of the recent high water was about 30 feet less high than I had first seen it about five days before, but the volume and speed of the dirty water hurling itself over the edge was most impressive.

We set off on our return walk after lunch and were apprehensive lest the Bera-an River should be in flood. It was higher than before and so we had some difficulty crossing it, but this was achieved with the loss of only one kajang (a panel of woven leaves for roofing). As so often in the ulu I was ashamed of my performance as compared with that of the locals when crossing rivers, even when the water was only knee high and the Bera-an was now navel high - I was the only person whose feet kept on being swept away from under me and I had to be supported by the men in front of and behind me, while I wildly tried to regain my footing, stay upright and not be swept away downstream. What a mercy it was that those two men had the competence and strength not only to look after themselves but cope with me as well!

The Bera-an is a typical mountain stream that hurtles swiftly down a steep slope. It can rise or fall considerably in a very short time. The night was spent near where we re-crossed. On 18<sup>th</sup> December (the 12<sup>th</sup> day of the trip) we set off along the unpleasant so-called path once more, and I was sweating the cold sweat of anxiety the whole time as I concentrated on not falling and breaking a limb. There was another anxiety, as, if the Linau was reasonable, it would take us only four hours from Long Jaka to paddle downriver to Lateng's house (compared with the 2½ days of paddling, poling and dragging the boat that it had taken us to do the reverse journey), but if the Linau was too high for safety, we would be held up. The Penghulu showed me the Sureng waterfall. It was not so impressive as the Laku one in high water, and it was unfortunate that he had omitted to show it to me at low water, when it is supposed to be much more spectacular.

We reached Long Jaka only to find the Linau roaring down at close on an estimated 55+ km/h judging by the speed of the floating timber and forcing its way between the cliff sides and producing big whirlpools and waves 4 feet high which tumbled backwards over themselves in masses of foam (and who could know how ferocious was the undertow in such areas?), all of which made it difficult to see where the water was shallow and where deep or where were the hidden rocks. It was also clear, that close to certain obstacles, the speed of the river was noticeably greater still. On the way upriver I had noticed that there were rocks of all sizes sticking out of the water; some of them

were massive and all seemed to have razor sharp tops to them. When considering personal safety, we had to take into account that, as the journey we were doing was one that was rarely carried out, our crew did not have the intimate knowledge of the position of rocks and their effects on the water at different river levels that they had of the rocks in their home areas. The picture before us was magnificent but dis-heartening as our perahu only had a freeboard of one foot and we were all unanimous that it was out of the question to launch the boat. There was another perturbing factor as the rice that we had taken to Lusong Laku was now finished and on arrival at Long Jaka we found that someone, presumably the village constable and his two hungry Kayans who had travelled so swiftly because they had travelled lightly laden, had removed over two gantangs of our rice (1 gantang = 1.14 l), leaving the seven rice eating members of our party, including my dog Eustace, who also had a healthy appetite, with four gantangs. We would soon have to divide this small amount with the Kayans who had practically exhausted their panto.

With a mixture of skill and luck, Lateng cast his net and brought in at the first throw two big fishes and seven small ones. Such hauls were a thing of the past in the over fished waters downriver. There was nothing to do but watch the river, which showed no signs of going down.

It did not rain during the night, but next day, 19<sup>th</sup> December, I was hardly cheered to see that the water had gone down only about 1½ metres. After a long discussion, the foolhardy present won and the Kayans put extra bark sides on to the perahus, tied on at intervals to the existing side with rattans. These sides were not fitted in a watertight manner, so water could trickle in where the original side and the extension joined. Nevertheless, they would give us some protection against breaking waves, and so we set off. It was a most exciting journey as we careered down rapids with waves breaking all around us and over us. At one stage I thought we had had it as at an especially narrow stretch, where vertical rock cliffs forced the river into a bottle neck with concomitant increase of water speed. Our boat (at that point going at an estimated 65 Kph), scraped the side of the rocky cliff, and so the paddlers on that side could not use their paddles to control the boat (apart from trying, ineffectively, to push it away from the cliff side). From where I sat I was alarmed to see that the recently built up extra bark side of the boat, that was now touching the cliff, started bending ever further inwards until it was nearly horizontal and pressing hard against my body. I could not move sideways on my plank away from the cliff, as the boat, while rubbing against the cliff face, had tilted, to an ominous extent, away from it as we careered downriver out of control. I did not want to worsen this tilt by moving my body and causing the boat's side to go under the water surface. Before my journey had started, I had worked out a contingency plan for dealing with a boat capsizing in the rapids. It now seemed unpleasantly likely that at any moment I would have the chance of finding out how practical and effective (or not) was my plan. Meanwhile, I was apprehensively praying that the rattans that had tied the additional freeboard to the boat would cope with this very great strain on them. Thank God, they held. The boat stayed in this undesirable position for what seemed a long time but was probably less than two minutes, when the paddlers regained control. I was impressed that while we were scraping the cliff face, no-one said anything. The man in front continued to point his paddle in the direction he wanted us to go and each person in the boat was doing his best to comply with his instruction, or was engaged in baling out the water that kept on coming in increased quantities over the sides.

After these excitements, twice we turned up side streams to give the crew a rest and T.R. Lateng was as lucky (or knowledgeable) as at that first time that he had cast his net into the calm back water (a calmness presumably much appreciated by the fish), for he brought in a four kati (a kati = approx 600gr) semah fish and the second time he caught 32 fishes, none of which was less than four inches long. There was one lot of rapids that had too steep a drop for us to be able to shoot them, especially as having shot them, it would have been necessary to turn the swiftly moving perahu diagonally across its previous line of direction so as to avoid a boulder a little further down the river. Here the boat had to be unladen, the goods carried round the rapid and the empty boat was then manhandled down the waterfall with the crew perilously perched on steep sided slippery rocks nearby. At such a time, my contribution has always been (wisely, I feel) not to offer to help and, in fact, I cannot recall a single time when anyone asked for my help! It is not only sailing down rapids that is dangerous.

While we were scrambling over the rocks skirting the rapids, I (mercifully unladen) grasped a boulder and was disconcerted to find that a piece of rock as big as myself with me on it had become detached and was moving steadily towards the waters. The Kayans were most helpful by shouting "Be careful. Look out!" I managed to extricate myself by doing a kind of splits on either side of the rock and was lucky to escape with a few grazes and bruises. I presume that the ulu natives of Sarawak understand their local geology better than I do, for I have never seen one of them perched on a moving rock or boulder.

The whole journey downstream from Long Jaka to Rumah Lateng, including the twice we went up sidestreams and the time taken to unload and reload the boat, took only 4 hours and 15 minutes, when the reverse journey had taken us 2½ days of paddling, poling and dragging the boat against the current!

We found that we couldn't go into the main part of the longhouse as there was a harvest pantang on, but we had lunch in another part of it, and then went downriver in my outboard, having paid off the porters from Lateng's house. We reached the Baloi River and stopped at Penghulu Hang Nyipa's house to collect porters to take us down the Bakun Rapids, which are normally too fierce to be sailed down. This house turned out to be empty as all the women were watching the nearly ripe padi and the men were in the jungle looking for panto. With great difficulty we found three men and a boy, got down the rapids all right and were all set to arrive at Belaga before dusk when, about a mile away from there, we hit a half submerged log and a blade of our propeller came off. We floated on down to Belaga and the estimated 10 day trip from there and back had only taken three days more than that

Three Kayan girls coming up path to Penghulu Hang Nyipa's house from Sungei Belupeh and, in background, rapids of Sungei Murum, June 1949



The journey on to Kapit was uneventful, but when I saw the pile of bump that had accumulated on my desk, I began to wish myself back in the ulu again. The matters of state that had long sat in my in-tray awaiting my arrival in my Kapit office for me to deal with them included many, which appeared to the senders of the letters to be so vitally important as to require my immediate priority attention. I now had to switch my mind to act according to the exigencies of bureaucracy, though I couldn't help my thoughts turning at times to the far more attractive visions of the beauties of nature and the peacefulness of Lusong Laku. Incidentally, I found that the attempted murder of the Governor had now become his murder, as he had died in hospital in Singapore.

### **Surviving Going Down Rapids**

I greatly disliked, to put it mildly, being put in that situation mentioned above, when I found myself travelling down the swollen Linau River rapids and our boat seemed highly likely to hurl us all into the turbulent waters around and beneath us.

It is helpful, when going down rapids, if the guide or paddlers in front and the driver or paddlers at the stern can agree as to what to do and when to do it, as it is essential to time their actions to a split second. On such occasions, as I sat helplessly in the middle of the boat, my contribution was firstly not to move at all and upset the balance and secondly to bale out when necessary. I was not impressed by hearing people at the back all emitting different cries, advice and exhortations (at the tops of their voices) from each other and from those in front. As I have survived to be able to write this all down, it is obvious that the locals knew what they were doing, when it appeared to me that those in front had decided to go left round a rock and those behind to its right or when they ignored an obviously inviting patch of fairly smooth water and with loud cheers of encouragement made for some unusually high waves that were breaking at a bend of the river. Unlike the sea, these waves break in all directions of the compass and in

places the pressure of the water below building up against some unseen rock will suddenly and unexpectedly erupt causing a big and dangerous new wave to appear in what had hitherto been smooth water. Apart from the jarring at the very sharp thud every time the lifted up bowsprit smacked down hard on to a wave, there were also periodic unexpected and far from pleasant jars as the boat grated over unseen rocks. On such occasions the paddlers had to exert all their strength and skill to prevent the boat slewing round sideways and then being rolled over and over by the current. Waves could break over any part of the boat and sometimes would go on breaking in turn over each part of one side while that side was passing through a wave and some of the crew had to stop paddling to bale out at great speed.

When chit-chatting socially with people in Kapit, the conversation often turned to disasters that had befallen long boats trading between Belaga and Kapit or to small perahus crewed by one or two paddlers, and I always took the opportunity to enquire what was the best way of saving one's life when thrown into the water. The answers varied considerably and I would have valued the advice given me better, if any of the people talking to me had, in fact, survived such an accident.

Many said that the first thing to do was to attempt to hang on to the boat but to be ready to detach oneself from it if it seemed likely that the body would be crushed between it and a rock. A clear message I got was that if a body was dragged down under the surface, the water would, in due course, push it up again. The problem here was that one had no control over how long the submersion would last, which was not very comforting information, as also was the information that when bodies had been recovered, it was apparent that they had been hurled against rocks and various bones had been shattered. At all costs one should attempt to prevent one's legs leaving the horizontal position and dangling down vertically.

### **The Murder of the Governor and the Decline of the Anti-Cession Movement**

Mr Duncan Stewart had been appointed Governor of Sarawak to succeed Sir Charles Arden-Clarke, who had been promoted to the governorship of Ghana and to prepare that country for independence.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1949, Mr. Stewart arrived in Sibü on his first outstation visit since arriving in Kuching. Of course, I had known nothing of this visit (for I had left such civilisation as there was in Kapit and was far away in the 'uncivilised' ulu), but officials and distinguished civilians from all over Third Division had been called to Sibü to meet him.

A large cheering crowd of all races lined both sides of the road along which the Governor, in full dress uniform, would proceed accompanied by senior government officers, in Colonial Service dress uniform and with the regulation sword at their sides. Suddenly, two Malay youths stepped out of the crowd. One of them asked the Governor if he might photograph him. The Governor stood still as the photographer crouched in front of him for the photograph. His accomplice, a teenager school boy, rushed out producing his keris and sliced downwards through Mr. Stewart's abdomen. He was rushed to the Lau King Howe Hospital, Sibü, where the Divisional Medical Officer – Dr. Wallace – gave him as much expert medical help as was possible in Sibü and he was flown to Singapore, where he eventually succumbed to his wounds.

It is interesting that as some of the nearby Government officers grappled with and held the two youths, it did not occur to a single one of the many officers present, wearing the old fashioned Colonial Service uniform with sheathed swords (who, admittedly, had all been born and bred in the twentieth century rather than in the eighteenth), to draw their swords and use them to defend their Governor!

The two youths were arrested and steadily maintained that they had assaulted the Governor because they were strongly against the cession of Sarawak from the Brookes to the Crown. They hoped by their actions to restore Mr. Anthony Brooke (the nephew of Sir Charles Vyner Brooke, who had ceded Sarawak to the Crown and was still alive) as Head of State. They said that this was their own idea and that no-one else was involved in the murder.

On hearing of the murder, the Rajah wrote a letter to the London Times pointing out that "I was more anxious for Cession than were the British Government to entertain it"! He also wrote that neither Anthony Brooke nor himself knew of any plans to restore Brooke rule. Anthony Brooke expressed horror at the thought of resorting to murder to further his cause.

John Barcroft (who had joined the Rajah's service in 1930) was Resident Third Division at the time of the attack. A long time later, when staying with me in Kapit and after he had relaxed comfortably after a whisky or two, I asked him why it had taken so long for the real instigator of the murder to be found. He told me the background of the story.

After the attack, Morshidi bin Sidek, who had held the camera, and Rosli bin Dhoby, who had knifed the Governor, were being held in Sibu gaol. The Sibu police told Barcroft that, despite all their questioning, they could find no evidence that there was someone else behind the two boys who had incited them to carry out the murder. With his knowledge of Malay life and customs, Barcroft knew that Malay young men were only interested in women and dancing and certainly had none in politics and, indeed, that if they had expressed in public a view point on general affairs affecting the community, the elders would have slapped down such whippersnappers. He knew that, amongst the Malays, it was only the older men who took important decisions.

He therefore decided to order that the parents of the two boys should be brought to his office on the first floor of the building. He took them to his window, having arranged that an ostensible firing squad should be on parade outside on the parade ground and that the two youths should be held available nearby. The parents still insisted that it was the boys' own idea to kill the Governor. Barcroft then said in fluent Malay that it was all very sad but as it was quite clear that between them they had caused the Governor's death, the boys would have to be shot. With the parents watching, he opened the window and shouted to the police below to bring on the boys, tie them to the posts and blindfold them. Not unnaturally, the mothers, especially, showed great signs of distress but carried on maintaining that there was no-one else behind the murder. Barcroft had told them and repeated again that if he was given the name or names of anyone who had ordered them to commit the murder, he would send away the firing squad. He was now becoming very worried that his bluff would be called. He ordered the firing squad to load their rifles. The firing squad went through the motion of doing this, though in fact there were no bullets in the magazines of their rifles. Still the parents did not speak. He then said "Prepare to shoot". The firing squad raised their rifles to their shoulders and he said

“Take aim” and added “When I say “fire” you must aim to kill”. At that one of the mothers said “Stop. I will reveal all” and the other mother agreed. They then disclosed that Awang Rambli was behind the conspiracy. The Malay community in Sarawak had been split down the middle between the mildly pro-cession and fiercely anti-cession protagonists. It must be remembered that the Rajahs had always ruled through the upper class Malays, who therefore held a number of Government posts wholly out of proportion to their 18% or so of the population, and who well knew that under a Crown Colony Government, posts would in future be allocated to the best person regardless of race. This also explains why the anti-cession movement included so few non-Malays. To make matters more difficult, after a lot of dickerdackering, the colonial Government had decided to demand of all Government servants that they should sign a document stating that they were loyal servants of the Crown, failing which they would be dismissed from Government service. As a result of this decision, many anti-cession government servants refused to sign and were therefore dismissed.

After the Japanese occupation there were no judges other than the Chief Justice and very few magistrates (and not all of these had passed any law exam). The Attorney-General’s Department was tiny and the Sarawak Constabulary had next to no-one trained in public prosecution. Awang Rambli was virulently anti-cession and had on two occasions been convicted in Court in connection with his anti-cession activities. On each occasion he had appealed and in each case the Chief Justice (R.Y. Hedges) threw out the conviction purely on the grounds of technical mistakes made by the magistrate or prosecutor concerned. Awang Rambli then went round telling everyone (and most people naturally presumed that “Not Guilty” meant just that) that he was invincible and invulnerable, though many knew that the accusations against him had been true. Later, when he and some friends were organising the two youths to carry out the murder, their alarm at being singled out to take this action was overcome by Awang Rambli telling them that they had nothing to fear as he could ensure that, just as had happened in his two cases, British justice would be unable to convict them. Of those now brought to Court, Awang Rambli, the older murderer and two of his accomplices were condemned to be hanged and the youngest murderer was sent to prison.

A bizarre aspect of this execution is that it had only recently been decided to alter the method of execution from shooting to hanging, and the boat that brought Mr. Duncan Stewart to Kuching also brought the gallows. The first time these were used was on the Governor’s murderers!

The Governor’s murder caused much horror amongst all communities of the population and the anti-cession movement thereafter steadily declined and ceased to be of any importance.

A sidelight to the Governor’s murder was that, when investigating the conspiracy led by Awang Rambli, Bujang bin Suntong gave the names of 13 conspirators (all Malay) and, in addition, the anti-cessionists’ ‘Thirteen Essential Ingredients’ came to light. This document included a list of 13 police officers or senior native civilians, who were listed for death, while others were merely marked for a beating. Amongst those to be killed was the name of my brother-in-law, R.W. Large, M.C., Acting Commissioner of the Sarawak Constabulary.

As a result of Mr. Stewart's murder, Mr. Dawson once again became Officer Administering the Government, and he must have regretted how his previous bickering with Malcolm Macdonald would certainly have put paid (on this his second chance) to his being considered for the post of Governor. On 4<sup>th</sup> April, 1950, Mr. (later Sir) Anthony Abell arrived from Nigeria to take up the position of Governor.

### **On Food and Diet**

I had been told to be very careful about not causing offence in matters of the Moslem religion. So, I was cautious when the Tuan Imam of Kapit, a reverend Malay gentleman and head of the Moslems there, came to see me to reveal that my gardener, Anggau, a pagan Iban, had fallen in love with a Malay (and therefore Moslem girl) and would I please ensure that he became converted to Islam. The Imam was disappointed when I pointed out that our relationship was one of employer to employee and I could do no such thing. I also enquired whether the Imam really thought that a pork loving Dayak could be a true convert to Islam. The Imam wisely answered that it was his job to see that Moslem girls did not marry infidels and that if the conversion was not genuine, then that was a problem Anggau would have to face with Allah in the hereafter. I spoke to Anggau on these matters, who grinned at me and said that he had no conscience but lusted for this girl. The marriage date was fixed and then Anggau came to me and asked for a day off as he had to be circumcised before the marriage. I, very generously I think, gave him the afternoon off. When I came home at 4.30 p.m., what was my surprise to see Anggau playing football and I expostulated, saying that I had not given him time off for this. He then said that, as a matter of fact, he had been circumcised as a baby and so there was nothing for the Imam to remove, and all he had done was to prick him where the foreskin should have been and draw a drop or two of blood and the ceremony was over! Incidentally, in due course Anggau, who had changed his name to Mohammad Jaya (a Moslem one), later fell out of love, divorced the maiden and reverted to his old name and habits.

While Kepu went on leave, Anggau took over as houseboy and I engaged a Malay as my gardener. Rather annoyingly, Anggau chose this time to go sick and so I called in the Malay gardener and said to him that, for the time being, I wished him to cook my meals and would he please, on no account, touch any of my tinned food, but I would be happy if he would give me traditional Malay food, which I always enjoyed. When I came home at lunch time, I found placed before me a large soup bowl of unusually looking rather purple-y coloured, syrupy hot mixture, such as I had never seen before. I called my gardener/cook and asked him what it was. Instead of answering me directly, he said that he had been unable to find any meat or fish in the bazaar. This led to the next question "Well, what did you do?" He shuffled uneasily from foot to foot. I might mention here that the mixture had an unusual, sweet taste and a flavour which I had met before but could not place. He said he had opened two tins. So I said "What of?" and as he did not know what they were, he went to the dustbin and retrieved them - it turned out that one was beef stew and the other black currants in syrup! When I asked him what he had done with them, he said that he had fried the contents together in fat. I have not seen this recipe anywhere before. It was not an unpleasant taste in a place like Kapit.

The Kapit Government gardener's job was to scythe the grass - in my opinion a job for the boys - as the stony red laterite soil was so infertile that, away from the shade of a tree, grass could get only the faintest foothold in that climate of hot sun alternating with heavy rain. Anyway, I happened to be watching the gardener as he arrived to do his job.

He had taken off his jacket, which was rather a fine one, laid it on the ground, and started off scything. The weather suddenly changed, clouds raced overhead and, without warning, a heavy shower of rain came down. The gardener darted over to his jacket, draped it over the rain gauge, put his large brimmed hat on top to protect it, the jacket (not the rain gauge) and went on scything. I idly wondered how often before Kapit's rain gauge readings had been unknowingly falsified when the periodic rainfall readings had been forwarded for compiling the national records!

To those with a discerning palate, the food provided by the Malays and Chinese en famille in their homes is perfectly acceptable and wholesome, and the food produced for guests and parties is delightful. I regret to say that the food produced in the homes of Ibans and Orang Ulu is enough to keep body and soul together but it can rarely be called enjoyable by the European. Provided the locals had a glass per meal of tuak or borak, they would thereby also get their necessary Vitamin C. Unfortunately, they don't limit themselves to one glass per meal, but either go for long periods without alcohol or have an excess if a special occasion warrants it. To make matters worse the meals are eaten with the fingers, and rice, being the main part of the meal, holds its heat. The fingers of the locals were used to picking up some very hot rice, straight from the kitchen, moulding it into a suitable mouthful and conveying it into their mouths. I did not use my fingertips often enough for them to have adjusted with coping with scalding hot rice. What happened to me was, that, after having tentatively tried to pick up some such rice and quickly shaken my fingers free of it, I would have to wait until it eventually became cold enough for me to obtain a mouthful and then find that, so far as my mouth was concerned, it was nearly cold. To diverge a bit - I remember bathing happily in the ulu Tutoh River area in Baram District in a pool of water gushing out of the earth, at what I would call the temperature of a nicely hot bath, and the local Kenyahs (whose baths were cold ones and who had never bathed in this pool wondered how my body (and more especially my private parts) could stand such heat!

Due to over fishing of the rivers near the longhouses, helped by the illegal poisoning of the rivers at times to bring the fish to the surface, the Dayaks had little fish, but when they had it in surplus, they smoked some and served it up cold and dry and it could then be very acceptable, provided the eater made sure that when taking a mouthful he did not pierce his palate with a hidden fish bone. Because pigs, chickens and dogs roamed around the houses, the Dayaks could not grow any vegetables. Such oddments as bamboo shoots (very rare) and fern tops (if properly cooked reminiscent of asparagus) were collected from further away. Meat was a luxury unless they had the luck to kill a rusa, wild boar, monkey, snake etc. Killing a chicken or pig was usually limited to celebrations. The meat was chopped up in the most unscientific manner so as to include fat, bones and gristle, and the food was often served up cooked soon after the animal had been killed and its muscles were still vibrating and tense. I remember one occasion when I had had more than my fair share of borak (Orang Ulu type rice beer) to drink and was feeling queasy, when a maiden beside me selected for me with her very own betel nut stained fingers a specially delectable large lump of semi cooked, greasy, congealed, tepid pork fat and popped it into my mouth. While struggling to control myself from vomiting and putting on a false smile of pleasure, I retaliated by viciously placing an even more revolting piece of pig into her mouth, and the look on her face was one of genuine pleasure.

Occasionally if there was a surplus of meat it was placed in a bamboo to mature. I don't remember what the process was, but when served up the meat had largely disintegrated, stank to high heaven and was much appreciated by the locals. I must admit that the first time I had this I was very suspicious of the effect it would have on me. However, to my surprise, I enjoyed the flavour and to my even greater surprise I had no adverse after effects! I also rather complacently wondered how many of my fellow countrymen would have caused offence to their hosts by refusing such a delicacy. I have noted that various Europeans, Americans, Indians, Chinese and others have produced books on the cuisine of the Far East, but not one of them have I read that mentions any delicacies from the interior of Borneo.

I once went with Eustace to see the Methodist missionary at Kapit. The approach path went up and down along the top then the valley bottom of a series of small, fairly steep sided hills, perhaps 15 metres high. As we came along the top of the hill, there were some hens on the path and they seemed alarmed at the sight of Eustace and, to my great amazement, with tiny wings outstretched and much cackling, they decided to run, as though they were airplanes taking off on an airstrip. Though I know perfectly well that hens can't fly, these hens actually took off and flew from one side of the valley to the other. I would not go so far as to say that they rose higher than their take off point, but neither did they lose more than a foot or so in height, desperately cackling as they flew. The hens were probably Iban ones, which meant automatically that they were skinny, had had plenty of exercise and so had become muscly, all of which may help to explain how they could do what British hens could not and also why they were so tough to eat.

### **Jungle, Leeches and Footwear**

Before I tell the story of my trip to the Belaga River, this seems a good point to discourse on jungle, leeches and suitable footwear for travelling in the ulu of Sarawak.

The British word 'jungle' comes from the Hindi word 'jangal' merely meaning 'forest' or 'wilderness'. In Britain, walking in most woods or forests is usually a pleasant pastime, though in places they can be 'impenetrable', and it is often difficult to maintain one's sense of direction. Just as some people love deserts and some, including me hate treeless areas, so others, including me, love the Sarawak jungle, while many hate it. Jungles are not of only one type but naturally vary according to such factors as the type of soil and height above sea level, and their distance from the Equator. I have walked in mangroves on the coastline and admit that doing so is most uncomfortable and close to being impenetrable both at low tide and at high tide. It can be difficult to progress there even if one is swimming (a thing I would not like to do because of crocodiles) or in a canoe. In flat jungle covered country, when rain or flood water has not drained away, walking there can be very uncomfortable and, in such conditions, progress can be slow but it is not impenetrable; while, in dry weather, they can be delightful to wander through. In hill country below about 4,500 feet (1,370 metres) a lot of the jungle consists of huge trees which have survived by speedily pushing high up before allowing themselves to have side branches, and have then produced such a canopy that it discourages growth under it, so the jungle there is no more impenetrable than in a British forest. For those like me, who get so much pleasure from trees, the jungle is pleasant and, contrary to what many people think, is rarely impenetrable, and, because the sun scarcely penetrates through the leafy canopy high above, the temperature is obviously cooler than it would be if one was out in the open. This leafy cover also keeps the atmosphere where we mortals walk – that is down below – damp and airless, so that

there is nothing, except for one's sleeve perhaps, to remove the sweat dripping from one's brow. So, after an activity such as climbing a jungle covered hill, I used to find trickles of sweat running down my back, my clothes stuck to me, and my northern European eyebrows would suddenly prove quite incapable of damming the flow any longer, which would suddenly flood into my eyes. At such times the jungle does seem a tribulation. It is when one comes to a rest period that the jungle does come into its own, as, if on the one hand it does nothing towards evaporating the sweat, on the other hand the relatively cool atmosphere does not encourage further activity of the sweat glands, as would be the case during a rest in the direct rays of the midday sun.

One of the great pleasures of the jungle in hilly country is the frequency of clear limpid cool streams or rushing torrents. Pausing for a rest at the bottom of a valley and, as there is no bilharzia in Sarawak, I could then plunge into a pool without the likelihood of a farm or longhouse upstream polluting it. It was a great pleasure for me sometimes to lie in a pool or sit under a mini waterfall and, while cooling off, put my head under the cool water and gulp down water. Under such circumstances, the world can change from a place of much bodily heat to one of great contentment.

In some of Sarawak's jungles there is a tree called 'Rengas', whose sap is poisonous. One should not rest under it or touch it as the leaves are also poisonous and, if wet and dripping on you, can cause a very nasty allergic effect. The locals know perfectly well what these trees look like and, unless they dislike you, will warn you to move away from them.

Though Sarawak vegetation can vary at certain times of the year, very few trees are deciduous and there is a great variety of colours if one has time to stop and look. Most of the time that I was travelling, I was on a timed programme going from one longhouse to another and hence I missed seeing the colourful plants, mostly in fact near the tree tops, and the accompanying butterflies and birds. This was sad and it seems unlikely that I will now have a chance to wander slowly with my binoculars through virgin jungle - a far from uncomfortable process and one I would love to do looking upwards.

As most British seem to have a horror of LEECHES, let us try to get these blood-sucking worms into perspective. Doubtless to those who study them, they are fascinating creatures. I admit that I have not studied the habits of leeches, but it seems that in moist conditions such as under leaves, they can survive for very long periods without any food. The most common sort are darning needle thick when unfed and about an inch long with a great ability to sense when a warm-blooded animal is near them. Most of the leeches are on the ground close to animal tracks, though some prefer to cling to the underside of leaves that are hanging over a path. When a deer, a herd of pigs, or a single file of humans come along the path, those on the leaves prepare to drop on to the creature below or transfer to it as it brushes past them, or they get on to the animal's feet as it brushes past their ambush position. They are very clever at sensing where is the right spot to wait for their prey. In the case of a file of animals, the one in front is likely to escape with only one or two leeches on it or perhaps even none, but the longer the file, the more the leeches have the opportunity to manoeuvre themselves into the right position to latch on to their prey. Usually, I could not lead the file as I did not know the way, but I made sure that I was No.2 in it. Leeches have the ability to move on the skin and pierce the flesh without the victim being aware that this is happening – they are in fact very efficient creatures indeed at

preserving themselves. They also inject an anti-coagulant, so that the blood flows easily. When they have had enough, by which time they have increased in length and in girth considerably and are bloated with blood, they allow themselves to fall off and crawl away to digest their meal. The places they seem to like are, in humans, the inside of the ankles, between the toes, in the crotch or on the neck, indeed anywhere with a good supply of blood near the surface of the skin. Their feeding does no harm to human beings. The place where they have fed eventually itches a bit, so that, consciously or sub-consciously, one rubs or scratches the source of the irritation, often with sweaty hands or dirty finger nails or even one foot against the other, so that the slight wound begins to fester - but surely one should not blame the leech for this, but the person who does the rubbing?

What one must NOT do if one sees a leech on oneself, is to pull it off, as if one does that it holds on hard by its mouth and the body comes away leaving its head attached to the point of contact with the victim's flesh where it will rot and fester. The best way to remove a leech is to put a hot cigarette end on its tail - it will immediately then let go. I was a non-smoker and so used to borrow a cigarette from a local. Another good way is to take a sharp edge such as a knife or even a parang and, without telling the leech what you are about to do, you suddenly shave along your skin with the sharp edge and the surprised leech leaves go, but if you are slow about this, then the leech will hold on to you and leave its head with you. In some areas, people going into the jungle carry a small bottle of a mixture of salt, chillies and tobacco, which causes a leech on which a drop has been put, not surprisingly, to release its hold at once.

If a person is barefoot, and with few clothes on, he can look down at his ankles or between his toes at intervals and at once dispose of any leeches he sees, and others in the party will warn him if they see leeches on his body. People wearing shoes are just what leeches like, as these clever beasts will find a way into the shoe and suck at the ankle through the sock or worm themselves down between the toes and suck there, and it is not until that person has reached his destination that he realises how many leeches have been feeding off him. They are also adept at entering through the eyelets of lace up shoes. I found that wearing long woollen socks and canvas ankle boots was not a bad answer to the problem, as I turned the socks down over and over several times to form a thick layer of sock turned over the top of the ankle boots. Leeches getting on to my shoes would worm their way up the boot and at the top try to slide on under the looped over socks and there they got lost amidst the several thicknesses of sock that were too much for them to bite through. Tobacco water rubbed on to the skin or anti-mosquito repellent will deter leeches, but this is only of use if one is not going to wade through streams, where it will all be washed off.

When I reached a halt, I would unroll my socks and while sometimes I found that my defences had been penetrated, often I had got off scot free and as I unrolled my socks I could pick off the waving leeches from my socks and ankle boots and, with a knife borrowed from a porter and with great satisfaction, cut them in two on a stone. I rarely found leeches on my body but poor Eustace did not come off so lightly, and on his small body, I might find four or five leeches, especially between his pads.

## My Belaga Trip

Most of my time in Kapit District was spent in my office doing routine work, which would be of little interest to any reader. My trips to the far ulu were memorable but not typical of a D.O.'s usual life. In my time in Kapit I only managed this twice, for it is a moot point how far the D.O., including the staff that accompanies him, is justified in leaving the greater part of his flock untended, while he floats off into the blue, unable to be reached by his superiors and away from the precise beauties of Secretariat Circulars.

For my second trip to meet the nomadic tribes, this time the Penan Gang, I decided that I would first of all do a routine tour of all the Orang Ulu longhouses in the Belaga River. To avoid the troubles encountered on my last ulu trip, I decided not to seek the Penan in their home area, but instructed the Penghulu a month before the trip to call the Penan to meet me at Batu Belalang, about a day's journey by perahu upriver of the last longhouse. This was a traditional place of assembly where Government can meet these people, who lived in a group of about 150, wandering around the unmapped area of the headwaters of the Belaga River. This river enters the Rejang (here known as the Baloi) and originates somewhere near the Indonesian border.

I was accompanied by Native Officer Michael Toyad, a Christian Melanau from the swamps of coastal Sarawak at Mukah, from where he had been posted to Belaga two days before my arrival there. He was soon to have nostalgic memories of his own flat countryside interspersed with small hills. His leg muscles were not developed as were the legs of those who lived in mountainous areas. As regards language problems in Belaga District, Melanau is not too different from Kenyah or Penan but he could not cope with Kayan. Dresser Tiong Chung Tiu, a policeman, Penghulu Puso B.E.M., and various attendants also came with me. We reckoned on being away from Belaga for about 11 days, and we had organised provisions for a little longer than that.

The Belaga River is one of the prettiest I know and has a lot of good timber along its banks, and in parts of it the valley is wide and ought to be able to produce plenty of swamp padi. The river is easily navigable for long distances by perahus where there are no rapids, but most annoyingly, to make up for all these blessings, it has four completely unnavigable sets of rapids a short distance above where it joins the Rejang/Baloi. This means that it is difficult to float out felled timber and the only practical way round these rapids is to go by boat to a point about half an hour's travel upriver of Belaga, and then walk up a sidestream (Sg. Teping), struggle up and down two very steep sided high mountains, fording a stream in the valley between them, so as to arrive once again beside the smooth flowing Belaga River hot, tired and sweaty above the four groups of rapids.

The land journey started off inauspiciously as, on arrival at our start point where the small Teping River joined the Belaga River, we found that the porters from our destination longhouse (on the far side of our overland journey) had not arrived. They eventually came in two parties, one being merely late and the other very late. Leaving the policeman and some of our kit at the mouth of the Teping River to follow on later, the rest of us set off with the first group of porters, walking in water above our knees. At one point I stepped out of the water on to a big rock, when suddenly both my feet shot away from under me and I found myself lying flat on my back on top of my valued Rolleicorde camera in the muddy water. Just as I was beginning to dry out, I repeated the performance in two inches of water. At the first opportunity I poured oil into the

camera, but for the rest of that trip I took photographs not knowing whether they would come out or not - those that came out looked as though I had been photographing in the late gloaming without the help of flash. In a vile temper I began to climb Bukit Jayong and soon my wet clothes were steaming in the hot morning sunshine. About a third of the way up the cultivated (and so shadeless) area ended, and with great thankfulness the party carried on in the relatively cool dim light of virgin jungle as we climbed in single file to the top and then descended the equally steep other side to arrive about midday at the stream between the two mountains, which was later than I had intended.

For the first time in his life, the elderly Penghulu (addicted to opium) apparently felt his age and hobbled slowly to the sidestream between the two mountains, arriving there hot and sweaty and with swollen legs after the rest of us had bathed in the cool mountain water, had our lunch and generally felt fresher. There was no sign of the policeman catching up with us. The second mountain was rather less strenuous than Bukit Jayong and we arrived at our destination beside the Belaga River above the rapids at about 4.30 p.m. and attended to our bodily comforts, while the indefatigable Kenyah and Kayan porters, who had carried very heavy loads, set off to improve the existing small shelters, find firewood and cook. The Penghulu arrived before nightfall, but it was distressing that the policeman and his porters had not caught up with us, especially as his party had our lamp, the dresser's food, medicines and bedding, and the Penghulu's bedding and opium pipe. When it came on to rain during the night I found out that my cape cum groundsheet had been left at Kapit, and I was made unpleasantly aware of this at every subsequent rainstorm. When it came on to rain too, the occupants of one of the shelters suddenly became very active, shouting out at each other as they hastily evacuated the shelter. It appeared that a column of red fire ants had decided to share it with them. However, it was a relief that one piece of planning had worked, as there were two long boats tied up by the shelters and ready to take us on up the Belaga River.

Next day we got all our kit together and then sat down to wait for the policeman's party to catch up with us. At 9 a.m. I suggested that we should send a party back to look for them. This suggestion met with surprising opposition and it was only then that I was told that six porters had gone back at daybreak, before I had got up, to tell the policeman's party that we would go on and leave one boat for them. We therefore immediately set off upriver having wasted two hours doing nothing.

After about six hours paddling (in my case, being paddled) through scenery of great beauty with more orchids than usual to be seen, we reached the first longhouse in the Belaga River, a Kenyah one. The policeman's party arrived at dusk and, as surmised, their lateness had been due to the very late arrival of the second group of porters at the starting point. The party were all very disgruntled as, firstly they had not troubled to make proper shelters for the night. It appeared that we had taken all the kajangs (woven waterproof matting used for roofing), and so they had been caught without protection against the rain. Secondly, though they had rice, all the cooking pots had come with us. I found it funnier than did Chung Tiu, when we heard that unfortunately a tin of kerosine had leaked all over his bedding and rice. This incident kept the party, apart from Chung Tiu, in a joking mood for some time.

Next day, the third, we paddled on, passing the turning off point for the trail leading over the mountains to Bintulu District in Fourth Division. After several hours paddling, we

arrived at a first class house in the late afternoon, Uma Kenyah Sambup. It was even clean! If we had to be held up by unacceptably high water, this was the best place in which to be detained. It rained hard during the night, and next day the current was too strong for the boats to be paddled up the middle of the stream. In any case there were a great many logs and rubbish floating down. Beside the river bank the current was less but the water was now so high that it would have meant us paddling amongst the trees leaning over the river bank. It ended with us spending three nights at this house, occupying our time as best we could, after which we managed to struggle on with the boats as close as possible to the river bank, against what was still very high water and again in the late afternoon we reached the next house.

Umah ('uma' is the Orang Ulu version of 'rumah') Bah Malei was by far the worst longhouse I had ever seen, for most of them are relatively clean, and it was a long time before I ever picked up a bug, flea or louse in a longhouse. This house was so indescribably filthy and badly built that I requested Michael Toyad to ask the tua rumah to build a special room for our party. But wisely, on the advice of the gentle Michael, I abandoned such a rude and humiliating suggestion. I had not been made any happier to hear that on a previous visit, a senior native officer had become contaminated with mange on his backside in this house, which was a prime example of how careful Governments must be when trying to improve health matters, for, in this case, some three generations back, a group of nomadic Penans had been persuaded to settle down and were doing a very poor best at imitating living in a Kenyah longhouse. I noticed that all the dogs were badly affected by mange, dog foulings were all over the floor; and there was a general atmosphere of filth, added to which most of the inhabitants seemed to have yaws, an infectious non-venereal skin disease, with early symptoms like syphilis, characterised by red skin eruptions and later pains in the joints.

In this unusually dirty longhouse, out of a filthy bottle with some screwed up newspaper as a cork, the headman offered me his best borak. Never before or since have I seen such an opaque thick pus like mixture with solids floating in it. Having accepted the headman's hospitality, I couldn't very well refuse his drink. As though he were decanting vintage wine, he carefully filled a large, filthy tumbler and, as he handed the glass to me, I saw a cockroach floating in my drink. I felt, not unreasonably I thought, justified in handing the tumbler back to my host. This was a mistake. He peered into the glass and said "Ah, yes, truly a cockroach, but it is dead". As I refused to accept the glass back from him, he said "Don't you like it?" I assured him that I disliked cockroaches in my glass. I had hoped he would produce another bottle and another glass but instead of this happening, he gave me a long look of contempt at my feebleness and then prepared himself to concentrate on removing the corpse by first of all putting his noticeably unclean thumb and finger into his mouth to remove the betel nut and lime mixture, which he had been chewing. He then put the same thumb into my tumbler to hook out the cockroach, but it slipped back in again. On his second attempt he managed to remove the corpse and then handed back the glass to me with a look on his face of "Why couldn't you yourself have done that?" With hindsight, I myself wondered why I had not removed the cockroach or, perhaps better, drunk the liquid between clenched teeth so that it could not enter my mouth. Through much use of disinfectant, I left this house outwardly unscathed and, to my surprise, with no adverse internal effects. In the late afternoon we reached a rather less disgusting house, Uma Speng, a tribe akin to the Bah Malei.

On the eighth day at 3 p.m. we reached the next house, Uma Kenyah Pawa, the last house on the river apart from two or three doors of Uma Kenya Badang Belaga, who had not yet moved with the rest of their longhouse, which had gone to the Baram River. The Kenyah Pawa also had a big clean house, and from its back windows one could look upon Bukit (hill) Dulit, 4,300 feet high.

For this journey, I had a map which showed the supposed course of the Belaga River based on guesswork or on information from non-cartographers, like me, who had had no compass or altimeter. In some cases the course of the river seemed similar to what the map showed, but at times the map was far from accurate. I added my observations to those of my predecessors, but I did not have the time or inclination frequently to interrupt our journey to climb mountains so as to get a more rounded view. In any case, I was always quite satisfied with a riverside view, as, from previous experience, I could now persuade myself that it was unlikely that any view would be obtained from the top of a jungle covered hill unless one also climbed to the top of the tallest tree on it, and that even then one would merely find out that there was a nearby higher hill which was the one I ought to have climbed.

On entering Uma Pawa I found a depressed, pale looking man, who was seated mournfully all alone in the house. To be left behind, alone like this he must be very seedy, I thought, especially as he did not answer my enquiries in Malay as to his health. It turned out that he knew next to no Malay and was not ill but, on the contrary, was very strong and fit and was the Tua Rumah of the nomadic Penan Gang Belaga, Akam Japi. Being a jungle Penan, he abhorred the sun – hence his pallid appearance. He had a friend with him but no more Penans and he told us that there were none at Batu Belalang! It seemed that the Penghulu's message had not told them to come down in a month's time but to do so immediately, apparently on the good old army principle that but little harm is done if people are called unnecessarily early and have to hang around thereafter – and in any case they probably won't come early. Well, the whole Penan group had arrived, found no-one at the meeting place, waited there a few days, were beginning to run out of food and then returned home, not unnaturally in a bad temper.

My party was in no way prepared for a trip in the jungle, even a short one, to look for Penans. The Penghulu was altogether most discouraging and said that if I insisted against his well-meant advice on going, he could not accompany me as his legs were not up to standard and he would only hold the party back. On the other hand, I felt that it was most unlikely that the Belaga River would be toured during the next eighteen months at least and it was a very long time indeed since a D.O. or N.O. had met up with these Penans. There was also a long list of Government matters to fix up, apart from the issue of medicine for the sick. I therefore decided to split the party into two and, accompanied by Michael and Chung Tiu and, of course, Eustace, and with the minimum of kit, I went on, taking all the available food with me and leaving instructions for those left behind to fend for themselves as best they might. We hoped to reach Batu Belalang, the limit of navigation, in one day.

So, on the ninth day we left the Kenyah Pawa house. It had again rained and the water had risen enough to make the journey a very slow one. We spent the night at a deserted camp at Long Ma-au, about two thirds of the way to Batu Belalang, where there starts one of the trails from the Belaga to the Tinjar River in Baram District. Indeed the few ramshackle shelters at Long Ma-au had been built by the majority of the Uma

Badang Kenyahs, who had stopped there on their migration to Baram District a few weeks before. As I began to tuck into my usual evening meal of rice and salt fish, supplemented with some locally picked fern tops, I immediately became aware of an unpleasant flavour of kerosine in my food. Unbeknown to me, Kepu had been feeding the dresser on my rice, in the hope that with time the kerosine taste would disappear from the latter's contaminated stock. My rice was now finished and, as I was reminded at every meal and after every meal when I burped up kerosine fumes, it is as difficult to get the taste of kerosine out of rice as it is to get ink out of blotting paper. Until we got back to Uma Pawa, we all had the flavour of kerosine continually in our mouths, which is not a desirable thing to happen to anyone. I now thought back with bitterness to the schadenfreude I had shown on that evening of the second day when I had laughed at the unfortunate dresser's plight. The porters were on a diet of pantu, but we disliked kerosiny rice less than we did pantu.

On 10<sup>th</sup> March at 10.30 a.m. (the tenth day after leaving Belaga) we arrived at Batu Belalang having gone through two small lots of rapids, and left there on foot at noon. The Penans, who had arrived there a month earlier, had built themselves temporary huts, whose roofs were no longer of much use. The Belaga River is still quite wide at this point but there are so many rapids from here to its source that it is impractical to use boats. The two Penans acted as porters and so did some Kenyahs and, as it turned out that we had brought too much kit with us, we left one big container at Batu Belalang with a small amount of food in it.

Carrying on with my trip, we set off at right angles from the river at Batu Belalang and climbed up a jungle covered hill to about 1,000 feet, where we were on part of the watershed between the Belaga and the Tinjar, south-east of Dulit Mountain. To my surprise, we did not follow the crest of the hills, which, further upriver, were higher than the one we were on, but started to go gently down into the Tinjar valley. I was now therefore unexpectedly no longer in my own district but in Baram District. We didn't go down far, then we followed along the side of the hill fording many small streams rushing down to the Tinjar far below. In places the path was clear and unmistakeable and as pleasant to walk on as in an English woodland, then suddenly the path would fade out completely and one was left struggling along trying not to slide down the steep hillside by clutching on to branches and removing any visible leeches at the same time. All the joys of travelling in ulu Sarawak were there. I used to get exasperated, however, when nearly every time we climbed a small hill or a big one and arrived panting and sweating at the top of it, we would then have to go stumbling and tripping (in my case often to some extent out of control) down the other side, often for just as far as we had just climbed.

At intervals along our trail we would come across the remains of Penan shelters. It was at one such establishment, suitable for about forty Penans, that we stopped for the night. The roof naturally needed extensive repairs, but otherwise the structures were such that no-one had to go to the trouble of cutting down small trees to make posts, floors etc. Our kajangs, which we carried with us, were used by day to cover up our belongings in case we were caught in the rain, and by night were spread out over the skeleton framework that was left above the floor of most of the Penan huts that we came across. Our kajangs were not enough to provide enough shelter for all of the party, and so some porters would have to go off to bring back broad leaves and grasses to be used as well. Inefficient or slack packing often resulted in the kajangs acting

rather as a channel for the rainwater while on the march, and at the end of the day someone was sure to find that his bedding had been sitting for much of the day in a pool of water that had been guided in during a rainstorm and the kajang had acted most efficiently to prevent the water from trickling out again, while some other object in a water tight container had been effectively protected by the kajang from getting wet. Chung Tiu, had some excellent home ground coffee, which helped to mitigate the taste of kerosine. He also had some dried Chinese cabbage which he kindly shared out and which made excellent soup.

Next day, the 11<sup>th</sup>, I was awoken by a shot to find that the dresser's assistant had killed a not very large hornbill. There were about three guns in the party and, during the trip, people were always rushing off hither and thither to shoot game, but this hornbill was the sum total of our efforts. It was hung by the feet on the back of a porter's load and we went on. We climbed up and down as we proceeded roughly along the watershed between the Tinjar and Belaga Rivers – it did seem to me that we always did more upward climbing than down. Very unexpectedly on one hillside we came to an area of a small plateau with hills all around and gently flowing streams instead of the usual rushing torrents and there was even a hint of swamp in places. It was pleasant indeed to walk along the flat and we went along quicker. The vegetation had changed too and we were now high enough to be in moss forest, where most of the trees were stunted and were covered in hanging strands of moss. The soil here was poor and so there were a great variety of beautifully coloured pitcher plants to glance at with pleasure as we walked. I found it peculiar too how in some areas there would appear to be no life at all, while a little further on insects would chirrup and birds sing.

For lunch we had divided amongst us some of the scraggy hornbill, which after its morning hanging was both tender and tasty and I wished that there had been more of it. The name of the mountain (or rather mountain mass) on which we had been travelling was Bukit Batu Mabun, so called, so I was told, because at its highest point (higher than Dulit) is a white stone or a stone of cloud, but my native informants were vague about this matter. The plateau was now narrowing and we kept on climbing and coming to small flat shelves. We seemed to be following round the foot of the massive peak of Bukit Batu Mabun, which could be glimpsed at times towering above us. I tried to persuade various members of my party to go to the top, from which assuredly there would be an extensive view and also to report on what was the 'Batu' (stone/rock), but, like myself, they preferred to economise their energies. One of the clear streams, which we crossed during the day, turned out to be the Belaga River not far from its source.

At about 4.30 p.m. black, rain impregnated clouds formed round the peak of the mountain and spread outwards. The air was very still and we could practically feel the water in the atmosphere unwillingly holding back until it received the command to deluge us. We hurried on to where we were told there was an encampment and, to avoid the rain, we even started, rather dangerously galloping along the uneven path and (in this area of high rainfall) slimy batangs and jumping over boulders, while Eustace got between our legs, but at about 100 yards from our objective the clouds opened, the temperature went rushing down and, in that short distance, we were thoroughly soaked. Shivering, we reached the two miserable Penan resthouses and tried to shelter our kit and ourselves under those few remains of roofing that kept out a modicum of rain. Attempts were made to light fires and brew up coffee and cook some rice but rain had got into everything and we went to bed cold, damp and miserable. The

contrast between our sweaty ascent and our arrival at close to the top of a high cold Bornean mountain in rainy weather was marked indeed. The rain had stopped just before dusk, allowing us time to make ourselves more comfortable, but it soon started up again and it was most annoying how, during the night, some part of our roofing, which had held out the water till then, would suddenly give up the unequal struggle and allow the victorious water to come streaming through on to some unfortunate individual curled up in his sheet below. None of us had come prepared with blankets for this trip and we were all shivering with cold. In the light of my electric torch I found a centipede sharing my mosquito net with me, and at that moment my torch went out and refused to come on again. In the ensuing commotion and in my efforts to avoid the creepy crawly, which can give a nasty bite, I made the fatal mistake of standing with all my weight on only one branch of our floor, which broke and let me through. Until then, as always, I sensibly spread my weight over as many branches or slats as possible. I slept on my lilo, but it had been much used and misused and needed re-pumping about every three hours. Since we all had only the clothes we stood in, apart from a sarong or so for the evening, our clothes were beginning to appear somewhat unsocial, and in the early morning mine would very nearly stand up by themselves, so impregnated were they with congealed sweat. Anyhow, even if one did feel miserable that evening, it was amusing to joke with the others at one another's misfortunes. The only one who couldn't join in was Eustace, but he made up for this by worming himself on to the driest, most comfortable bit of bed he could find, and then put on an appealing look such as only a dog can do if anyone made a move to oust him. When the roof let down a shower on to him, he could always be counted to shake himself dry in such a way as to wet the maximum amount of people. The porters appeared impervious to all discomforts and I had nothing but admiration for them.

The area of the hutments where we spent this unpleasant night at the foot of the main limestone peak of Bukit Batu Mabun was the highest spot we reached. I should imagine that we were over 5,200 feet. Occasionally, tantalising glimpses could be obtained through the trees far out over the Belaga or Tinjar valleys as we wandered along the watershed of the Third and Fourth Divisions, but good views from jungle covered hills are a rarity. In the Belaga River, sitting in open boats, we had all grown sunburnt, lazy and slack, especially as the kind people en route had plied us with plenty of borak. Since we had left Batu Belalang however, we had not felt the sun or experienced any wind. Our clothes absorbed the sweat generated by our exertions but the air never evaporated it. There were frequent mists and clouds, especially in the morning. The trees were often dripping and it never ceased to astonish me how long a tree could go on dripping after the rain had ceased. We were continually having to wade through streams and those who wore shoes had permanently wet feet. Some of us from downriver were beginning to find this everlasting jungle gloom rather depressing, though there was no denying the strangeness of its vegetation, its beauty, grandeur and interest. We usually decided to stop between 4.30 and 5 p.m., cook the evening meal, eat our inadequate diet, wash, change out of our disgusting day clothes into our relatively clean sarongs, and most of us were tired enough to want to go straight to sleep. It was often chilly at night at that height and, if it rained, downright cold.

Another matter that plagued us was small and big cockroaches. They lived in the woodwork of the Penan huts and the small ones could fly, so nothing was out of their reach. I would wake up in the morning, knowing that I would find them everywhere in large numbers: in my bed; in my pack; about twenty hiding in every nook and cranny of

my camera; they had to be shaken out of my boots, out of my shirt; they were most persistent, unavoidable and definitely not a pleasure, and they plagued us all. We had picked the first ones up at Uma Bah Malei and we would pick up reinforcements wherever and whenever we came to a halt. I have the greatest admiration for the survival ability of this horrid species.

It was not pleasant every morning getting into damp clothes – in my case smelling of ammonia. We rarely saw the sun, and drying clothes over a smoky fire makes them more unpleasant. But after even only a short, sharp climb up or down, the body would be sweating nicely and the clothes would once more be one with you. By now Chung Tiu was kept busy every morning splashing medicines on to our leech bites and helping to prevent them going septic. My canvas ankle boots were worryingly beginning to show signs of wear and tear, and, as I had not visualised our cross country journey when I left Kapit, I had not brought a spare pair with me. Also, I had only a total of two pairs of woollen socks, and I found the prospect of being forced to go barefoot unappealing, as the tender soles of my feet would only allow me to do this on floor boards or occasionally limping for the short distance from a longhouse to a nearby bathing area.

Next day, the 12<sup>th</sup>, we left the encampment and, to my surprise, nearly at once started going down. Of course I had had no say over the direction of our travels, as this was in the competent hands of Akam Japi, but this time I was puzzled, as it didn't appear that we were going into the Tinjar Valley, which was far away to our left, nor into the Belaga valley, which had been left behind on our right rear, so we must be advancing into a new valley. Needless to say, though we mostly went steeply downhill, it would not be representative of travel in Sarawak, if our route didn't offer us several steep ascents. In general we seemed to be stepping briskly down the middle of a rushing torrent with slippery moss-covered rocks and plenty of waterfalls. The ascents were often when we had to leave the stream to clamber up a high bank and then go across country till we hit the same stream again, having avoided some impassable gorge or having cut across the neck of a large oxbow. Unlike me, the natives did not consider the bed of a stream as an obstacle. I could not usually see where I was putting my feet, and scrambling over weed and water covered rocks in shoes, I was at a disadvantage compared with those used to going barefoot, and the natives never seemed to knock their shins or ankle bones painfully or slip uncontrollably as I do. Doubtless, I had had more schooling than they had had, but at times like this, I would gladly have given up a lot of my academic superiority to be able to traverse the Sarawak ulu as gracefully and easily as the locals did. Suddenly, we left the moss forest just as abruptly as when we had entered it, so I suppose that we were now below 4,000 feet. The glimpses we caught of the valley far below showed us two distant peaks, on the other side, which we had not hitherto come across. At midday we crossed, what I was told was the Dapoi River, by one of two imposing looking tree trunks stretched across it about thirty yards apart far upriver of its junction with the Tinjar River. In some cases these tree trunk bridges have been made by felling accurately suitably placed trees. But Penans are not allowed by their customs to fell trees any bigger than, roughly, the circumference of their upper arms, so this probably meant that these trees had been floating in the river during some extremely high flood and had got wedged in their present positions. We now found ourselves in an area of rolling hillocks at the bottom of the strange broad valley we had seen from above. There were both hill (pantu) and swamp sago in this fertile valley. At 3.30 p.m. we at last reached the camp of the jungle Penan Gang Belaga beside the Parrer River (Sungai Parrer), which is a big tributary of the Dapoi. The people I had been taken to

were therefore, on this occasion, in Baram District not in mine, though I doubt that they either knew this or cared!

We had stopped for lunch at a hut big enough for two and I was very interested when a member of the party picked up out of the cinders of a long extinct fire, what appeared to be the engraving of a man done on sago bark by the Penans. Though I was fascinated by this, I must admit not a single other person in the party was interested in it in the very least, even though I told them that I knew of no Penan artifact in the Sarawak Museum. This perhaps explains why, when I gave instructions for it to be carried carefully with us, when I reached Belaga it had disappeared.

The Penan Gang had a big camp and had cleared all the creepers from the surrounding trees so that the sun could filter through. Our clothes were laundered and at long last hung out to dry, and much activity reigned and a peace of mind and body descended upon each of us. Government's business was done, the Penans aired their views, medicines were dispensed, and in the evening there was a party. As regards Government business, one learnt a lot about a group of people when doing the census. In this case, I found that whereas Penans are normally monogamous, the headman had four wives. I asked him to point them out to me in order of marriage. Unsurprisingly, No.1 was old, No.2 was passé, No.3 was youngish and No.4 was old! It took quite a time for them to explain to me that No. 4 was his brother's widow and he felt that since he had to look after her, he might as well marry her.

Our main problem was food. Our kerosiny rice was running out. The Kenyah porters had next to no food, and the Penans had no stock in hand. For us rice eaters, it was essential to get back to Uma Pawa as fast as possible, and I decided to try and do the journey back to Batu Belalang in two days. Apart from anything else, I had a whole host of fixtures in Kapit, Song and Sibu coming off in the near future. The Penans sent out a party to find sago for our Kenyahs and provided fresh porters for our return journey. This was begun on 13th March. The Penan porters were paid in tobacco not in cash.

Arranging a forced march was one thing – carrying it out, another. Most of us were beginning to feel the strain and showed signs of being out of condition. This included Eustace, who had often been pushed out of the boat in the Belaga River and got his exercise galloping along the river bank to keep up with us, just as the native dogs did, but he used to swim the river at every bend instead of keeping to the dry land. Now that we were going overland, he never learnt to keep to what little path there was, but wandered happily and busily all over the place and so I would only catch glimpses of him at intervals. He could always be counted upon to come rushing up from the rear whenever there was a bottle neck, such as a long batang or some slippery stepping stones and, as he was always in a hurry, he would squeeze past our feet and thereby knock several of us town dwellers off our precarious balances. Being black, it was difficult to see the leeches in his coat even if he had stopped to allow me to remove them. I should guess that the poor animal would be host to about fifty leeches a day, of which probably about thirty would get their full fill of blood. The monotonous food was not satisfying enough and it was noticeable how we were all losing weight. I was a bit alarmed to find myself feeling feverish, and, though I doubt whether I ever had a temperature above 100, I was unable to throw off this debilitating fever properly until I returned home.

We spent the night at the same camp at the foot of Bukit Batu Mabun, and were lucky enough to arrive in time to cook and fix up the roof before the evening downpour.

The next day, 14<sup>th</sup> March, we expected to be the worst, and so it was. We had to reach Batu Belalang before dark, because food was so scarce. This, we managed, reaching there in one day from the Penan camp at Sg. Parrer, as compared with the two we had taken over the reverse journey. On this, the 14<sup>th</sup> day, we started off by walking four hours at a good speed with one ten minute halt, had lunch, and then completed the journey in another two hours, but every muscle and nerve was protesting as loudly as it could at this treatment. We all noticed that towards the end of this journey, our tiredness showed itself in increased bad temper and inability to overcome obstacles as efficiently as before. In my case, while my mind was dwelling on pleasant things far away, my eyes and brain did not co-ordinate well, my body temperature rose, small matters irritated me out of all proportion, and my feet stepped even less accurately than previously from root to root. I noticed that the other members of my party were similarly affected and were slipping and sliding much more than hitherto. Even Eustace no longer wandered about, but pattered along near me and occasionally found an ideal resting place in which he would lie down and look imploringly at us, with a look of "please let us rest here or please pick me up". Even the effort of bending down to remove a leech became an intolerable burden. The Penan porters were not affected like us at all, and with their heavy loads they strode swiftly and buoyantly on and each time one of us asked "how much further is it?" would always answer in the usual inaccurate Sarawak manner with "only one more hill."

Thankfully, we eventually reached Batu Belalang and even became quite cheery and, after I had had a bathe, I felt relaxed enough to take some photos of my party amusing themselves aiming Penan blowpipes. I was pleased to meet up again with a small tin of steak and kidney pie and a very few potatoes and onions at Batu Belalang. My party had a good (relatively speaking) meal and finished everything, but the unfortunate porters had nothing except a cream cracker each and a little butter. However, next morning we had nothing except sugarless coffee, while the porters had a few potatoes and onions. With great relief we climbed into our boats and paddled away downriver.

The effects of the forced march, starting off journeys in damp clothes and often sleeping in a damp bed, and the agility needed by the body's thermostat to adjust to sudden considerable changes of temperature, all began to make themselves felt in pains and aches, and I know that, so far as I was concerned, I would much rather that we had not been treated to large quantities of borak at the Badang house en route. I regretted even more that the Uma Pawa people had decided to put on a party for us, and so I felt that it was not until midnight at the earliest that I could decently indulge in my real wish, which was to creep away from the drinking, dancing and singing. Still, it was a real pleasure to be reunited with the kit I had left there, including a change of clothing, and there was proper food for ourselves and the porters.

Next day, the 16<sup>th</sup>, I woke feeling like nothing on earth. This was possibly a reaction from the life I had been leading, but, if so, it was aided by the hospitality of my hosts. I could face no breakfast and told them so, but they wouldn't let me leave until another bottle of borak had been drunk. Kepu had malaria, was laid out in the boat, given pills and we set off. When we had been going upstream, the water had usually been too high for easy transport and now it was too low for swift travel downstream. What was

my annoyance to find myself forced to spend another night at that repugnant hovel of a house – Uma Bah Malei! The house seemed dirtier and more repulsive than ever, Eustace was covered in ticks and I found some on me, and the flies were many and exasperatingly persistent as they usually are as a storm starts brewing up. I couldn't help wondering from what dirt these flies that deposited themselves in my glass of borak, on my food or on my leech bites had come from. Normally flies are not a menace in Sarawak, as they do not breed well in a climate where their eggs can be washed away by tropical downpours. I was somewhat sourly amused at picking up my nailbrush from my pack and finding many tiny cockroaches had found a home from home between every group of bristles. I am glad to say that Kepu's malaria had been suppressed and the rest of the party was fit.

We set off with no regrets from Uma Bah Malei and reached Uma Sambup a little before midday. I drank a whole coconut (one of the most satisfactory drinks for quenching thirst and reviving a tired body) and wanted to press on, but as the house had made all the arrangements for us to spend the night there and have a party, I compromised and we had the party there and then, although many of the Kenyahs had not returned yet from the fields. I have never drunk such an excellent concoction of borak – it was a real pleasure to drink it and right up to the very end this house did its best to make me change my mind and spend the night there. The people were very friendly, the house clean, and I regretted our inability to accept the pressing invitation. The result of this pleasant delay was that we set off far later than I had intended, in an aura of good will and a haze of well-being, and I felt far better than I had felt for some time past as I settled down to snooze in the cramped space of the perahu.

About 4.30 p.m. we were caught in our open boats in a tropical storm and our spirits sank, as did the temperature with cold driving rain until 5.45 p.m. when we at last reached the lowest downriver house in the Belaga River valley. Stiff and chattering with cold, we rushed into the house and got out of our wet clothes. Mercifully, the kajang covering had been sufficient to keep most of our kit dry. That evening I heard two short court cases, and I was thankful that this house showed little inclination to have a party and so I was able to retire to bed early. One or two of us were finding that the bowels were beginning to object to the cavalier treatment of constant exercise on a sparse diet followed suddenly by no exercise as we sat in a boat and then a diet of rice beer, with frequent cold drenchings in both cases. The Penghulu told me that if we wished to reach Belaga next day, the 18<sup>th</sup>, we ought to get up at break of dawn, and he looked at me severely as though I was the only doubtful factor in achieving an early departure.

However, when a little after dawn my party had breakfasted, I found that none of our kit had been carried down to the boats nor for that matter had the Penghulu or the porters breakfasted. Even so we managed to reach the top of the group of impassable rapids well before lunch time, had an early lunch and once more prepared ourselves to force protesting muscles to lift the weight of our bodies up and down the two steep and high mountains before we reached the mouth of Sg. Teping. It was interesting that we all found that, as a result of our training on Bukit Batu Mabun, we were able to climb these mountains and ford the stream between them in quicker time than we did when we had set out on 1<sup>st</sup> March from Belaga. Perhaps the fact that we were all much thinner and lighter was a relevant factor. Even the Penghulu's legs did not swell up. My shoes had at last given up, and I was thankful that Michael Toyad still preferred to go barefoot so I could borrow his canvas boots even if they were a bit on the small side.

This seems as good a place as any other to mention that in all my time in Sarawak and leading the sort of life described in these pages, I managed never to suffer from foot rot nor dysentery – my worst tummy troubles were an occasional oscillation between short periods of constipation and diarrhoea.

I have seldom seen photographs or cine films that have successfully conveyed the atmosphere of the tropical jungle in the daytime. If looked at carefully, most 'successful' photographs taken in jungle have been taken at specially selected places – often close to clearings or even in rubber gardens. This is because the camera lens cannot cope at the same time as can the eye with, on the one hand, the large dimly lit areas around one and, on the other, slashes of extremely bright light where the sun's rays have managed to pierce the tree cover. If one exposes for the darker areas, those areas that are in sunlight will be so over-exposed as to show nothing at all except blankness. If the camera has been exposed to suit the bright areas, the darker ones will look as though it is night time.

The fastest porter had been sent quickly ahead to warn Belaga of our arrival and to send my outboard to meet us at the mouth of the Teping, which we reached at 3.30 p.m. I reckoned that our messenger should have reached Long Teping about an hour before us and that it would take him about 40 minutes to borrow a boat and paddle to Belaga. Any minute now we might expect a rescue party to heave in sight, so we settled down on the river bank to wait with our kit beside us. At 4.15 the rain came and, as before, we had enough kajangs to shelter our kit but not ourselves. We sat miserably hunched up in the wet, heaping curses on all the Belaga officials who were apparently so incompetent that they couldn't even organise an outboard, and we looked up hopefully as a clearing in the clouds hove into sight – but after a pause the rain came down again. We had been most unlucky with the rain because we had never gone 24 hours without a good rainstorm, while it turned out that Belaga had had none from the day we left until the day we returned! The same had been the case with each of the houses at which we had stayed in the Belaga River.

At 5.15 a very heavy longboat with a small crew arrived from Belaga and took us off our shingle beach and we reached Belaga at dusk. I mentally withdrew my curses on Belaga's officials when they pointed out that the lack of rain locally and apparently up the main river had meant that the Belaga River was too low for my outboard to go up as far as Long Teping and they themselves had welcomed this day's rain as they were short of drinking water in Belaga.

A day was spent in Belaga and then I set off for Kapit, spending a night at the coolie lines of the Borneo Company at the mouth of the Bah River, where I met the Forest Manager, the Divisional Forest officer and various local chiefs and we settled all local forestry problems, as we thought, for all time.

Next day, 21<sup>st</sup> March, I arrived back in Kapit at about 4 p.m., walked barefoot across the small gangway of my landing stage, and most foolishly went into the Government office, just as it was closing. I picked up my mail and stupidly instead of going straight home with it, I glanced at my in-tray, thereby causing myself a cultural shock as I switched my mind to matters that had been far away from my thoughts for the past 24 days, such as the auditor's urgent requests for explanations, the Song Regatta, getting out the agenda for the forthcoming District Advisory Council, police reports on escaped murderers and

such like. After a quick perusal of the horrifying complexities of the new concise Pensions and Widows and Orphans Ordinances, I got up to leave my room for home and found myself besieged by Ibans who had long waited for my appearance to sanction the purchase of guns and by Chinese wanting immediate bazaar loans, and all expecting instantaneous attention.

The Curator of the Museum, Tom Harrisson, had chosen this moment to write me a letter suggesting that I might like to accompany him up the Baram and Tinjar Rivers to the ulu Belaga. Despite the fact that my memories of uncomfortable soakings and protesting muscles were still fresh in my mind, when I considered the problems of explaining the latest version of the Pensions Ordinance to my staff, I almost agreed to his suggestion.

I had collected various lumps of rock from Bukit Batu Mabun, but when I asked to see them, it was most peculiar how the porters had lost them all en route except for the smallest (about the size of a biggish pebble). I sent this off and in due course received a letter of appreciation from the Geological Survey Department, informing me that it was "weathered andesite porphyry. This is of considerable interest as previously no igneous rocks had been recorded from this District". To my pleasure, one of my clerks always referred to the Geological Dept. as the Giglical Dept.

In due course I received a copy of the Belaga dresser's report to the Divisional Medical Officer. This is perhaps the place to mention how Tiong Chung Tiu came to be on the trip. A few months before this trip I had received a letter from the D.M.O. telling me that Chung Tiu had fairly recently qualified, had never been away from Sibu or Kuching in his life and so it had been decided to throw him in at the deep end and send him to Belaga to learn about ulu life. I arranged for him to accompany me on what was supposed to be a routine ulu trip. I also learnt that he had been recently married. When I got into my longboat at Kapit to go upriver there were two Chinese who were, I presumed, Chung Tiu and his wife, though I was surprised that the latter looked so much older and experienced than the former. In due course I chatted to him about his past and enquired about his marriage and then he poured out his heart to me. He and his family would have been appalled had he been posted even to such a back-of-beyond place as Kapit. It had never occurred to him that, when he joined the Medical Department, he might be posted anywhere other than to Chinese areas. The thought of the dangers of ulu tribes and the isolation of Belaga were very frightening, so much so indeed, that it had been arranged that he would leave his recently married wife behind and his mother-in-law (who had heard of goings on between young men left alone in the ulu and local girls) had bravely decided to accompany him to Belaga, and there chaperone him and act as his housekeeper. I gathered from all this that Chung Tiu was not looking forward to the challenges of life in the ulu of Sarawak but I later developed an admiration for his adaptability, keenness, kindness and thorough way he had gone about his job in the ulu and the way that he had not shown any of the fears and distaste for ulu life, which he must have felt. In his own words to his boss he wrote "I gave a good explanation to them (the Jungle Penans) that all the sicknesses are due to small pathogenic organisms, which invade our body, and not to devils" and "various explanations have been given to them concerning anti-malaria methods, simple nursing treatment of high fever, infectious diseases and the habit of sending down the patient to the dispensary immediately when she or he is taken sick." This last piece of advice is, doubtless, excellent, but when one thinks of the problems involved in carrying it out, I

doubt whether the Penans would often implement it. Also I do regret that I wasn't present when the enthusiastic dresser was waxing forth to the Jungle Penan on the subject of pathogenic organisms, and of how effectively the interpreter coped with translating such a technical medical message to the Penans.

### **Life in Kapit**

I called all the Kapit staff together and announced that the Divisional Medical Officer recommended for the good of us all that we should each be inoculated with T.A.B. (a typhid imunisation). I noticed no enthusiasm amongst my audience, who quite clearly did not like the idea of a needle being stuck into them. I waxed forth lyrically about the painlessness of the whole procedure and of the benefits that would accrue, but it was obvious to me that I had not convinced a single person. I therefore made an appointment with the Kapit dresser to meet me in the office next morning at 9 a.m. and I would be injected in front of anyone who cared to watch. I prepared myself to show not the slightest sign that I had incurred any pain, and returned to my office and carried on as usual. As I went home to lunch I felt an unpleasant stiffening in my upper arm and by the time I was due to return to the office, I had a temperature of 102<sup>0</sup>F and retired to bed for the rest of the day. I was far from happy at returning to work the following morning. The returns for Kapit District showed that one person only (i.e. me) had been given a TAB injection.

Some may have wondered how messages are sent to ulu peoples to be at a certain place on a certain day. The recognised method of doing this is that the originator of the message, requesting, say, a band of Penans to meet him in 30 days' time at a certain place, will prepare a piece of string with 30 knots on it. This is taken by the messenger and each day that he has it, he unties one knot, and so does any other person to whom it is passed until the string reaches its destination and the Penan headman can, by untying one knot a day, calculate when his group ought to set out to reach the meeting place on the day that the last knot would be due to be untied.

All the ulu peoples of Sarawak rely on dogs to help in hunting. I used to find that when I took Eustace travelling with me, some person in each house would sooner or later turn him upside down and count his teats. It turned out that a dog with a large number of teats was meant to be a better hunter than one with only a few, and that an odd number was better than even the next even higher number. Having never had occasion to consider dogs' teats in the past, it was a surprise to me to find what a great variation in the number a dog can have.

Some may wonder how Eustace coped with the Iban dogs while we were in a longhouse. He couldn't on his own. I instilled in each of my dogs, as a first lesson, the importance of instantly obeying the word 'sit'. On entering a longhouse, all the dogs in it immediately noticed Eustace and galloped en masse towards him, looking anything but friendly towards him. Eustace, who had stuck near me, would look miserable and as he showed signs of running away, I shouted 'sit' and he did! This greatly surprised the longhouse dogs, who, snarling, surrounded him. Eustace looked ever more miserable as he tried to look all around him at once. I kept on saying 'sit' and as he sat the local dogs could not sniff at his anus. Eustace's sitting position puzzled them. Keeping very close to Eustace I allowed him to get up and he, of course, kept very close to me but was not attacked. He sat close to me while I sat on the mat apportioned to me and by then he was more or less accepted by them, although Eustace never chanced his luck

too much by straying far from me. The Ibans were fascinated by all this, they looked at his tits and decided he was a good hunter and asked me to sell them the 'talking dog'.

Penghulu Puso, O.B.E., whose longhouse was a little downriver of Belaga, had been made an opium addict by the Japanese. They then provided him with opium and in return he provided them with all the local information they needed. When the Allies under Bill Sochon and Tom Harrisson parachuted into the ulu, Puso had helped them, hence the O.B.E. awarded to him. After the war, he had to pay for his opium and so became involved in various nefarious actions. Incidentally, in 1946 he, amongst others, had been invited to Kuching to meet Lord Louis and Lady Mountbatten. Looking at her many medal ribbons he had exclaimed "What a brave woman. She must have taken many heads." It was a remark that pleased her greatly.

It was in about 1949 that the B.C.L., who were successfully extracting timber in Thailand with the help of elephants, decided to experiment with them in Sarawak and, perhaps foolishly, decided to start in the area of Penghulu Puso's longhouse. When he heard what was about to happen, the Penghulu immediately started objecting on any grounds that he could think of, but pointed out that his objections could be overcome with the help of largesse – no bribery mind you, but as the B.C.L. imported shotguns into Sarawak, a gift of an extra fine gun to the Penghulu himself and of lesser guns to some of his cronies might work wonders.

Eventually, some elephants arrived at a riverside camp and were then released to go and forage for themselves. It was now that the Penghulu realised that he was on to a good thing, for by chance the elephants wandered into an ancient graveyard and the Penghulu expressed his extreme horror at the dreadful desecration, and that considerable monetary compensation from the B.C.L. would be needed to rectify matters. To the outsider, it was often difficult to know where were ancient and no longer used graveyards but it seemed almost everywhere that the elephants foraged turned out to be such a graveyard! At this rate, the extraction of timber by elephant in Sarawak was going to be far less profitable than was the case in Thailand. The B.C.L. asked for all graveyards in their concession to be surveyed, but this proved expensive and difficult to carry out. Eventually, the B.C.L. decided to withdraw their elephants and poor Penghulu Puso lost a lot of revenue.

I gave a lift in my boat to one of the B.C.L. forestry managers to Belaga and so he landed at the Government wharf instead of at the commercial one, which he would otherwise have done. It was a new wharf and the senior native officer Belaga had paid Penghulu Puso for some of his men to go into the jungle, fell the necessary timber and build a floating raft that acted as a wharf. What was my embarrassment when the B.C.L. manager drew my attention to three of the logs, which had the B.C.L. chop on them and which quite clearly the Penghulu had purloined at some time or other as they floated downstream.

Penghulu Puso had a tapang table-cum-throne, which had been brought to his house by his grandfather. The tapang tree (*Koompassia Excelsa*) is one of the most magnificent of the jungle trees. It has a silver birch coloured trunk that rises straight up, without any side branches, until it is level with the crown of the highest neighbouring tree, when it develops a large umbrella of branches and small bright green leaves. The timber is so hard that even creepers cannot get a grip on it, hence bees often make their nests in

the crown, as they know that bears and other honey lovers cannot reach them. This tall tree is helped to keep upright by being supported at its base by huge flying buttresses. It is from these that are obtained single pieces of thick wood, which are so hard that a nail will bend rather than enter them and a chisel would be blunted in no time.

The Astana had a round table, made out of one piece of tapang wood, that could seat twelve people. The wood is too heavy to float. Penghulu Pusos's piece of wood was about 6' x 5'6" and 3" thick and he had it on the ruai outside his bilek. It was rough-hewn and tilted at an angle, as it rested somewhere near its middle on a one inch loop of original wood, which stuck out below the rest of the underside of the table, and whose hole was large enough to take a piece of rope, which was useful if anyone wished to let the piece down to the ground or haul it up again, as, for instance, when the house was being rebuilt. It took four strong men to lift this piece of furniture. The Penghulu sat on it when he was out on his part of the veranda and his throne gave him an extra aura of authority. As he needed money to buy opium, he sold it to me and my problem was how to get it to Kapit. 5'6" was wider than my boat and between the Penghulu's house and Kapit there were several small and a few large rapids. Should a rope be placed round the floating boat to hold the table in place as it lay across the sides of the boat at its widest point, it would be quickly cut in two when the hull scraped as it went over sharp rocks. Anyway, I was unmarried without any responsibilities, and so I had the table placed across the boat and I then sat on it and hoped that its weight would hold it in place as the boat rocked in rough waves. This in fact is what happened, though I must say I had some nasty moments when I found the boat tilting sideways and I wondered what would happen if the whole table top, with me on it, slid off or worse still if it partly slid off and partly slid into the bottom of the boat, when its weight to one side of the boat would assuredly cause it to capsize.

In due course the table top was handed over to a Malay carpenter, who smoothed the top most beautifully using glass – a very slow process. I asked some of the orang ulu to carve some traditional style dogs for it to act as its legs. They did this with great verve, providing me with what were clearly two very sexually excited dogs and two bitches. Many years later, when the table was being moved by the prisoners on my transfer from one station to another, they dropped it. At this stage, when I am recounting this story to people in Britain, they often ask "What prisoners?" and seem surprised that I took it for granted that when a D.O. moved, Government money was saved by using the prisoners to transport his belongings away from his house to his boat or lorry. Tapang wood, though extremely hard, is very brittle and the fall caused a corner to snap off my huge table top and so I had the remaining piece made into a rectangular dining room table and a rectangular coffee table. The dining room part of the table was a worry to me, as it was not all that steady on its dog legs and should it fall on anyone's foot, the damage would have been considerable. When I brought it back to U.K., I found a further disadvantage – namely that whenever I wished to move my table, I had to organise three fit neighbours to help me!

To the upriver people, their parangs are virtually an extension of their arms and they use them most expertly for all kinds of purposes, from felling trees to carving small pieces of wood or cutting up an animal for food. It is rare to see ulu people out of doors without a parang tied around the waist.

On one occasion, I was seated cross legged in a small perahu and was being paddled upriver and therefore the boat was close to the river bank, where the current is less strong. As the banks were covered in jungle, the river near the bank was covered by overhanging branches reaching out to the light. In front of me in the perahu was a small pack and in front of that, with his back to me, was an Iban paddler with his parang in its scabbard, hanging down from his left hand side. As the boat was so narrow it was difficult for anyone in it to change his position to any great extent. Suddenly, there was a plop in front of me and a beautiful green and yellow lizard about six inches long, and with a dragon like crest on its back and head, had landed on the pack and was looking at me. I was fascinated by it and was wondering whether to pick it up and try and keep it for the Sarawak Museum, when the Iban, without moving his body, twisted his head round through nearly 180° and, with an instantaneous reaction and using his right hand, reached over, drew out his parang from the scabbard on his left side, held the parang raised with his right arm as far as it would reach around behind his left shoulder and then suddenly with a deft flick of his wrist brought the blade down on the unfortunate lizard narrowly missing my nose en route. To produce at great speed such an accurate blow, when in such a disadvantageous position was remarkable. I was upset about the lizard until he told me that it was a very poisonous beast.

The Kapit bazaar Chinese traded in various materials brought in from the ulu. Some of them were highly prized, as I was told by the Kapitan China, as medicines for men of willing spirit but whose flesh was weak. Good prices were paid for gall stones of monkeys or honey bears, wild pepper roots, something that might have been the Achilles tendon of a rusa, various unmentionable looking articles and, of course, rhinoceros horn. Though long a protected beast, the rhinoceros was virtually an extinct animal in Sarawak because of its horn and Government's inability to protect it.

Other unusual items included damar, a tree resin used as torches during and after the war until kerosine became available again for lamps in longhouses. This resin was used in making bakelite. Jelutong was a type of rubber that eventually found its way to the Chicle Development Company for use in chewing gum. Rattans and canes were another useful source of cash to the ulu people. The Penans made most beautiful sleeping mats out of very fine canes. A very supple closely woven Penan mat would hold water for an appreciable time. At very irregular intervals, sometimes as long as seven years, the illipe trees in the jungle would produce their nuts – this was a real cash bonus to the ulu people, as good prices were paid for these nuts, used in the making of chocolate. Durians in season would be sent downriver. These highly prized large luscious fruits with prickly skins hang down out of normal human reach from very high trees. If a sudden plop of falling fruit is heard, all close by rush forward, even in the middle of the night, to get the fallen durian. A fruit as fresh as this has virtually no smell but it doesn't take long for the odour to increase to what is a horrible stink to some and a delight to others. To those who can stand the smell, the durian is one of the most delectable fruits there is. Most Europeans, whose first acquaintance with a durian is one of the stinking kind, quickly distance themselves from the range of the smell and refuse to try it. They are missing what is one of the great pleasures of this world.

Because of the disruption of trade during the Japanese occupation, when I first travelled in Kapit District, the ulu natives had no kerosine for their lights. In Sarawak, the gloaming lasts no longer than half an hour and I have a lovely photo of the inside of the ruai taken with a very slow exposure as full darkness was approaching. Very little of the

ruai can be seen, but it does show some damar lights already lit stationary on the floor of the sitting down part of the ruai, one light about a metre above floor level as a woman (who lit the torch in her bilek) stands still outside her bilek as she surveys the scene. Two women, carrying lights, show up as long streaks of light about a metre above the floor level as they came out of their bileks, carrying their damar lights and the streak then dips as they deposit the torch on the floor in the sitting down area. A flickering damar light was enough for normal purposes, but one had to be right next to the flame if one wanted to read (I took a pressure lamp with me when travelling, as otherwise I could not have carried out my work by damar light). A damar torch emitted a not unattractive perfume and was said to discourage flying insects.

I particularly remember the sight, when darkness had completely descended, of a beautiful teen-age, bare breasted Iban girl not far away from where I was engaged in carrying out a pirieng ceremony. She was standing up as she leaned slightly backwards against a pillar as she watched the proceedings. The flickering of a damar light near her produced alternate light and shadow on her breasts in a way that would not have been nearly so fascinating had the light source been electric light.

I was accompanying the Governor, Sir Anthony Abell, who was sitting on a longhouse floor in my district. He got to his feet, picked up a toilet roll and said "I'm off. Please ensure no-one follows me." When he returned he was laughing and told me what had happened. He had found a nice little area of bushes close to one another that gave him some privacy and was squatting down and starting to commune happily with nature, when, to his annoyance, he heard the unmistakeable grunting of a pig that had realised that a choice meal might soon be available. The pig came indecently close so as to catch His Excellency's droppings before any rival pig could do so. This, H.E. found inhibiting. He looked around for a suitable stick within reach with which to whack the pig on its snout, but to his annoyance could not find one. At that moment, a nearby bush quivered, and a length of arm emerged with a suitable stick for His Excellency. It was the arm of the Special Branch man, whose instructions had been always to keep within sight of the Governor but to do so inconspicuously. Until that moment the Governor had not realised that each time previously that he had left a longhouse with his toilet roll, the Special Branch man had also been there.

There was no privacy in a longhouse, except when a person was inside his mosquito net. Most mosquito nets had never been washed and were nearly opaque. In longhouses, maidens slept in the same room as their parents and the unmarried men and male guests slept on the ruai. This did not mean that the young men and maidens had nowhere to canoodle, for a custom existed called 'ngayap', whereby, after everyone was asleep, a young man would creep into the room of his beloved, raise her mosie net and whisper to her. If he was wise, he would have found out beforehand what her reaction was likely to be if he came to her on a 'ngayap' mission. If she was in the right mood, she would allow him to whisper sweet nothings into her ear and, who knows, might even allow him actually to creep into her bed and lower the side of the mosie net. On the other hand, if his attentions became unwelcome, he would be dismayed by her saying in such a loud clear voice, as to awaken all in the longhouse, "please rekindle the fire".

On one occasion, it was quite clear to all in a longhouse that a visiting touring Malay Native Officer had become infatuated with and was lusting for a very attractive Dayak

girl, for his eyes followed her wherever she went. He had carefully noted the door that led to her room and he soon found it necessary, during the course of his administrative duties, to visit that room and chit chat with the girl's parents about the harvest that year, during which time his roving eyes had identified which was the girl's bed. That night, when all was quiet, he got up, entered the room, gently lifted up the mosquito net and was then appalled as the lights were lit in the room and he was greeted by an old crone croaking out loudly "Come in grandchild. Come in. Come in. It is a long, long time since a young man has 'ngayaped' me". She had exchanged beds with her granddaughter.

The story is told of a portly District Officer, who, after having imbibed a lot of rice beer, had enquired if there was any maiden that enjoyed being ngayaped. It appeared that there was one, and a couple of Iban bachelors agreed to wake up the D.O., whose bed was on the ruai, after the whole longhouse had gone to sleep. This they did and then led him to the door of the room where the maiden slept, only to find it locked. One of the young men went first, showing the D.O. where to put his feet as they climbed up the wall. The young man then lowered himself into the room. The D.O. was far from agile or indeed sober, teetered at the top of the wall and fell into the room or rather on to the bed of his Malay houseboy, who had gone in there to escape from the drunken party outside. The houseboy shouted out for help because he thought he was about to be decapitated by the headhunters. Lights went on in the room and the locals in the room didn't look very convinced when the discomfited D.O. said he had been sleep walking.

After the report of the anthropologist, Dr. Leach, had been received, Government decided that anthropologists should be recruited to study some of the Sarawak 'ulu' races. On the surface, this was welcomed by Tom Harrison, who had recently been appointed Curator of the Sarawak Museum. As I progressed through my Sarawak career, I enjoyed Tom's company and certainly he always had interesting information to pass on and, sometimes, outrageous views to propound. I have a suspicion that he genuinely liked my company, though at certain times his liking was clearly less than at others when, for instance, I publicly questioned some of his statements. He was a complex character. Outwardly a successfully assured extrovert and an amusing and entertaining personality, he was often insubordinate and impatient of control. I suspect that he had an inferiority complex. His father had gained a title and he himself felt that, in due course, he must exceed him. Be that as it may, some years later I went to see the Cambridge University ethnographic exhibits and had occasion to tell the Curator there that what was labelled as 'hornbill belt buckles' were in fact earrings. They were not prepared to believe me until I had sent them some photographs I happened to have taken, which showed that their 'buckles' were in fact male 'earrings'. After this, I presume that I had a small amount of kudos there as being someone who knew about the interior tribes of Sarawak. Then I mentioned Tom and, judging by their reticence, I had a strong feeling that, while he could not be ignored and his views must be given due and fair consideration, nevertheless in university circles he was considered to have a certain expertise in many subjects (birds, ceramics, zoology, and anthropology, etc.) but to be a master of none and, so far as they were concerned, his behaviour was that of a bounder. I certainly know that there were, amongst the Government officers of Sarawak, one or two, who knew as much as or more than Tom on several of his favourite subjects, and who could see through the jargon that he used to impress his audiences. His displeasure was made manifest, when having, initially, heartily welcomed such experts as worthy colleagues, he soon became jealous of them, decided that they were disagreeable competitors because they knew as much as or

more than he did. This was sad, because in a small country such as Sarawak, which had a remarkable, but small museum, a curator was needed who would have a respectable general knowledge on several subjects rather than one who was given the job because of an out of proportion expertise in a certain subject.

During my time as D.O. Kapit, the New Zealand anthropologist Derek Freeman, later joined by his wife Monica, arrived and looked around for a suitable longhouse where he could settle down using it as a base from which to study the Iban. He eventually chose a longhouse in the Baleh. To me, he was a breath of fresh air. His conversation was erudite and stimulating. I was fascinated by the way he took his time to move around all the Iban areas before settling on a longhouse in the Baleh in my District rather than another one in my District or even one in another District. While he hoped to co-operate with me, he made it clear to me that it was essential that the local people did not consider him to be a Government servant. I had read plenty of books on the people of Sarawak, but it is thanks to talking to Derek and watching him, when we travelled together, that I started to have some inkling about what to look for and how to extract information from the locals and so eventually, during my later travels, I enjoyed doing elementary work of an anthropological nature. Very wisely, Derek Freeman rarely gave me his views on Government's administration or on the people in general or of the Kapit Ibans in particular, even when I asked him for advice on tackling certain aspects of my job.

Freeman wished to do everything that the Iban did. But there was one thing that he valued and which the Iban had no concept of, and that was privacy. For the whole of an Iban's 24 hours, there was no privacy except (and that only partially) when in a mosquito net. The concept of the necessity of at least some privacy never enters into the head of anyone of any age amongst the ulu tribes of Sarawak. Newly born babies, toddlers, children, men, women, old, young, at home, in their farms, day and night were hugger mugger together. When I came to a longhouse and after my evening bathe and wash (watched by an interested public), I might settle down on the ruai and hear a court case or have a meal or experience long periods of singing and loud playing of gongs, accompanied by traditional dancing by day or late into the night. No-one wished to miss what was going on: grandmothers holding children, mothers suckling babes, everyone congregated round the centre of the fun. This was very different from most British homes where grown-ups like to have a period of quiet together after the children have been put to bed. The babies and children of the Sarawak tribes either slept soundly through the noise of gongs, singing, including with loud choruses, and dancing or, according to their feelings and needs, they didn't sleep and nobody worried about whether they were awake or asleep.

At Derek's request, the Ibans had built Monica and him a room on stilts attached to the tanju. Thus Derek could leave the ruai, cross the tanju and enter his room without ever touching the ground. He had noticed that the time when a longhouse is at its quietest, was after breakfast, when people tended to leave home to get on with farming, hunting or whatever. He had also noticed that matters of public interest (which he didn't wish to miss) were usually discussed after dark. He therefore issued an edict that no-one should call on him in his room after he had gone to bed until 10 a.m. next day and in each period of 24 hours, this was the only time that the Freemans could be assured of privacy. I don't remember how long Derek and then with Monica lived right next door to

this longhouse but it was over a year. If anyone wishes to be a thorough anthropologist, let him think of being hugger-mugger with no privacy for that length of time.

Naturally, as an anthropologist, Derek was especially interested in rare happenings and great was his pleasure when he heard that a prosperous farmer, by Iban standards, living in another longhouse in the Baleh had had a particularly good harvest and this was conveniently followed by him having a dream that he should hold a Gawai Kenyalang. These words may be loosely translated as 'Hornbill Religious Festival', i.e. a festival to placate evil spirits and encourage friendly ones.

The Ibans had various religious ceremonies to propitiate the spirits. One of them, the Gawai Kenyalang, was extremely rarely performed because of its expense and the amount of organisation involved. Planning for the Gawai ceremonies would start at least six months before the suggested date of the party, which would take place after the harvest had been brought in and last several days. The cost would often be more than one person or even one longhouse could afford but it gave the originator of the party great kudos.

Once the decision had been made to hold this Gawai, the headman of the longhouse and others went straight away to longhouses as far as two days paddling away and invited people to attend the Gawai to be held on a date a long time ahead. To help out, people in other longhouses who were attending the Gawai were told to start collecting materials to help make a great success of this rare occasion and to bring these materials with them. What were required were large numbers of eggs, chickens, pigs, rice, tuak, smoked fish and meat and anything else that would please the gods as well as the guests.

Derek and Monica arrived at the longhouse well before the start of the Gawai, and a small area of the ruai was curtained off with blankets for them to have a tiny bit of privacy. I arrived about midday three days after the start of the Gawai and placed my camp bed near the Freemans' curtained off area, with the pillow end against the wall dividing the ruai from the bileks. The scene that met me was astonishing. Everyone was happy, all were drunk. Pigs and chickens galore had been slaughtered and consumed, and blood had bespattered the ruai and dripped through the slats to the ground below. Vast quantities of tuak had been drunk and vast quantities remained for the days ahead. The dogs were lolling around incapacitated due to all that they had scavenged. Piriengs in large quantities had been made up and the plates placed reverently near the smoked heads or in other suitable situations out of reach of the dogs. A lot of the people were in a drunken stupor or sleeping off the effects of the previous night's entertainment, though here and there along the ruai there were still tiny groups singing making yet another offering to the spirits. I could have described the scene as disgusting had it not been for the fact that it was quite obvious to me that all concerned considered that this Gawai Kenyalang was proving a huge success. From an anthropological point of view, Derek was in second heaven as he recorded all he had had the good chance to experience.

After supper people had recovered enough for me to be unable to avoid going through the usual pirieng ceremonies that, for the good of the longhouse, had to be carried out by honoured guests, who would then place the heaped up plates in strategic positions, as directed by their hosts. There was the usual singing of welcoming songs for me as a

male by the women while the whole longhouse watched and listened and, at the end, joined in a deep sounding chorus as I began to drink. Later, with accompanying drinking of course, there followed the gongs and percussion bands, starting up as a prelude to dancing. Sometime after midnight I slipped away, got into my mosquito net and was soon asleep. Later on I was abruptly and unpleasantly awoken by my mosquito net shaking violently as something scrabbled on the edge of it and then there was a blow on top of the net, which brought it down on to my head. The scrabbling was due to a large dog standing on its hind legs on the edge of my mosquito net and reaching for a heaped up plate that I had not noticed had been placed for the spirits on the wall just above my net. The dog had succeeded in dislodging the plate, which turned upside down as it fell depositing tuak, exploding 6 month old eggs and rice, etc on to my hair, face and pillow. My feeling of nausea was not helped by Derek's voice from the other side of the curtain saying "Ian! What are you doing?" Derek gave me some cheap eau-de-cologne and I took my pillow case and some soap down to the river in the dark. I washed and washed myself and the pillow and pillow case but to no avail. The mixed smells of hydrogen sulphide and tuak were too ingrained to be removed as easily as all that and now, in concert with those odours, there were added in my hair, on my clothes and my pillow the smell of Dettol/cheap perfume! I don't know what the spirits thought about my getting their offering. I have never forgotten how lucky I was to experience a real Gawai Kenyalang but I doubt whether I will jump at the chance of attending another one!

A dramatic and very sad event occurred when I reached a certain longhouse and, after the usual imbibing of tuak I had just settled down on the ruai, when the body of a middle aged Dayak was brought in. As he had not returned home the previous night, a search party had gone to look for him and found him on the bank of a river with his fishing net close beside him. He was lying on the ground and the tail of a fish was sticking out of his mouth. The fish was one that had a spine on its back. It was presumed that he had used one hand to raise his net with the fish in it, then, while grasping the fish with the other, he had decided to kill it by putting it head first in his mouth to bite it. The slippery fish must have struggled and slid down his throat and, because of the spine and the slipperiness of the fish, the fisherman was unable to extract it from his mouth before he lost strength due to suffocation.

From the Rajah's time the Treasury liked to have a state wide annual picture of the cash situation as at 31<sup>st</sup> December each year, and so a general post took place as D.Os. and other administration officers moved to a neighbouring district's headquarters and sub-stations to check the cash and stamps and on no account could they leave until the cash and stamps had been reconciled with the books to the last cent – missing the New Year's Eve festivities if necessary!

The first time I went to Belaga Sub-District, the officer-in-charge was an elderly, old fashioned, dignified, aristocratic Malay Native Officer, who had joined the Government service a great many years ago in the Rajah's time. He couldn't even write romanised script so all his paper work was done in Jawi (Arabic) script), which I had had to learn but rarely had to use. He was a wonderful and much respected administrator; as he had been in Belaga for so many years, and in such an ulu place, he was the right man for the job (which would scarcely have been said of him had he been posted to somewhere like Kuching). He spoke all the local dialects, knew most of the locals personally, knew who was related to whom and who had quarrelled with whom and understood all the local customs. On this occasion I asked to check the cash and

stamps. As regards the cash everything appeared to be in order – presumably his clerk was an honest man, as the N.O. could not have understood the entries in Roman script in the account books. When it came to the stamps, I was startled to see that no-one had checked them for many years. I was even more surprised to find that the totals of the Post Office cash and stamps were exactly the same as they had been at the time of the previous 31<sup>st</sup> December audit and the one 12 months before that! When I asked for an explanation the N.O. admitted "As I don't understand stamps, I have not sold any since I have been here!". It seemed that it was relatively infrequent for anyone in Belaga to wish to post a letter and in any case those who did knew that it was pointless to go to the Post Office counter to ask for a stamp. Those, who wished to 'post' a letter, gave it and the necessary cash for a stamp to someone going downriver to Kapit for the letter to be posted there! I regretted that this wonderful N.O. i/c Belaga was so uneducated, but I valued him more than any of his cleverer successors posted to be in charge at Belaga. It is also interesting that no auditor and no-one from the Post Office had twigged that for years Belaga had neither sold nor received stamps. I guess that a letter, postmarked with a Belaga chop around this time, would now be very valuable.

Some of the Divisional officers welcomed the chance to come travelling with me, and thereby to see what ulu life was like and to find out first hand what were the typical problems that their representatives in the ulu districts had to cope with. I myself was delighted to have their company on such trips. I once persuaded the Divisional Medical Officer Sibu (Dr. E.H.Wallace) that Sibu hospital could dispense with his presence for a few days while he accompanied me to Belaga. One of our stops going upriver was at a Punan Bah longhouse a couple of hours downriver of the Belaga fort. After the usual welcoming ceremonies, an old woman asked the doctor for help with her toothache. He looked at the two fangs she still had in her mouth and, decided one needed to come out. As he had no dental equipment with him, he tried to pull the tooth out with the outboard driver's pliers – to no effect except for the unholy screams of the patient. Although it would interfere with our time programme for our return trip downriver, we agreed to make an unscheduled stop at the Punan Bah house, that would be just long enough for Doctor Wallace to do the extraction, and would the headman please arrange for the woman to be ready for us as we had no time to waste. We arrived with the doctor carrying in his hand the extractors from the Belaga dispensary, only to find that no-one knew where the old woman was. We felt that something fishy was going on and insisted that she be produced quickly. Eventually, she was dragged screaming to the doctor, who told her to open her mouth, which she refused to do. Suddenly, she did open it and her tooth fell out and the crisis was over. We quickly carried on downriver while the extractors made their way back to Belaga.

The Iban and Orang Ulu men were often tattooed. Their tattooing varied according to where they came from. In general, the Iban tattooing patterns were much coarser but stood out more than did the fine and spidery lines of the Orang Ulu – having said which, the subject is too vast to mention in detail here. Suffice it to say that most tattooing was for decorative purposes, except that no tattooing could be put on the back of the hand or fingers of a man until he had taken a head, though later it was allowed to be put on by those who had killed in battle, as, for instance, the Ibans who joined the Sarawak Rangers against the Communists in Malaya. The most amazing tattooing to be seen was on the hands, arms and thighs of aristocratic Orang Ulu ladies. It was done in such a large number of fine lines and in so closely concentrated a pattern, as to give the impression that these ladies were wearing black lace long gloves as worn at formal

dinner parties by society ladies pre-war. Most Iban women did not tattoo themselves, but uniquely to the Ulu Ai, many of the women tattooed their throats. In fact, this showed off their heads very effectively as does a bow tie and butterfly collar in European circles.

Once, while up the Baleh River in Kapit District, I asked that my left shoulder should be tattooed. It was done by an elderly Iban lady, who produced something rather like a flower but was called the sun. I have not heard of any white man being tattooed by upriver natives in Sarawak, unless he was a bachelor, except for John Seal, the Civil Aviation Operations Officer in Kuching, who had had it done to annoy his mother-in-law.

Later, up the Baloi I had Orang Ulu traditional tattoos put, one on my right shoulder and one on the inside of my forearm, which was called a running dog and could easily be attributed to Picasso. The method of carrying out the tattooing was for me to lie on my back and bare the area to be tattooed. The work was carried out by a grandmother. In the case of my forearm, she told me to lie on my back and stretch my arm out. She then squatted close to it and kept the skin taught by putting the ball of her feet and toes either side of the area to receive the design. She then drew the outline of the dog with pot black. Next she put near her a mixture of



Being tattooed in Belaga, June 1949

cooking oil and pot black and picked up her small hammer with what looked like a gramophone needle in it, dipped this into the pot black at frequent intervals and, with her wrist balanced on my arm, tapped along the outside of the design, wiping away the blood at intervals with an old rag so that she could see where the design was. Then with another hammer with two gramophone needles in it, she filled in the background where necessary while always removing the blood with her rag if she could not see where to hammer. Finally – and all were adamant on the advisability of this – for as long as possible and at least two days, I was not to cover the picture nor put any white man's medicine on it, failing which she could not be held responsible if the resultant picture was patchy. I did eventually put a bit of plaster on one part of the design that seemed to be going septic and that is the only part where the picture looks faded. My mixture of Iban, Kayan and Kenyah designs certainly caused much comment when I travelled in the ulu. It caused comment of a different nature amongst the wives of my British colleagues. Many have asked me if it was a painful procedure. In my case, the pain was that of a pin prick and the pain of 2, 12, 102 or more pin pricks was scarcely more than for one. Indeed, after my initial interest in the procedure, I found myself getting hypnotised with the monotony of the procedure and almost snoozed off. I don't remember how long the dog took - perhaps half an hour.

For the sake of giving their women an extra amount of sexual pleasure, a very few Ibans still (but much less than in the old days) transfixed the glans of the penis with a 'palang', a cylindrical crosspiece usually made of bone or horn. To lessen the pain of puncturing the glans, the young man went up the nearest high mountain and sat in a

cold stream and then a friend hammered the object through the glans so that it stuck out a bit at each end. The palang was then rounded off at each end. Problems with a palang are that, like pierced ears, you must keep something in the hole or it will fill up; yet, to avoid septicaemia or the palang seizing up, it must be taken out frequently and cleaned. One of the Rajah's officers had (presumably under anaesthetic) two palangs, at right angles to each other, put in. Going on leave to Sydney, he visited a brothel and the lady concerned was so astonished at these palangs that she called Madame and the other ladies, who crowded round to look at this unusual disfiguration. The officer was gratified when Madam said "In future, you can have free service here for your first visit each year". There is a palang on display in the Sarawak Museum and I am amused that whereas all items displayed are accompanied with labels in English, Romanised Malay and, occasionally, in Jawi Malay, this object's label is coyly written only in Jawi!

The foods forbidden to be eaten on religious grounds can cause trouble and disregard of the rules can cause the holder immense revulsion. The Malays, being Muslims, cannot eat or even touch pork. Furthermore they should not eat an animal unless it has been killed by having its throat cut and, preferably this should be carried out by a Muslim. The Ibans and nomadic Penans can eat anything. Most of the Orang Ulu, who follow their old customs, cannot eat deer because this would make them weak. During my travels in the ulu, I often had venison. Later on, when I had a Malay houseboy, he told me he had never eaten venison because each time someone had shot a deer, the animal had died before he could reach it and cut its throat!

We were travelling up the Baleh once with Suhaili, my Malay outboard driver at the stern, some Iban paddlers amidships and an Iban lookout at the prow. The latter suddenly saw a large herd of wild boar way ahead beginning to swim across the river. There was great excitement in the boat. Suhaili knew how the Ibans liked their pork and so did not follow his inclination, which was to distance the boat from the swimming pigs. Instead he steered for the herd, led by its leader which had by now reached the middle of the river. At this stage the herd split with the leader carrying on while its deputy with half the herd turned back. We reached the front herd and as we passed the Ibans hit any pig nearby with a spear or a parang while Kepu smote them with a paddle. Suhaili then turned the boat and we went downstream to assault those pigs that had decided to return to their starting point. After this, Suhaili, once again, turned the boat upstream and went close to the first lot of pigs that were by now nearing the far bank. The Iban in front of the boat stuck his spear into the neck of a pig and suddenly a jet of blood like the spout of a whale shot upwards and then came down again soaking the unfortunate Suhaili and his engine in blood. I have never seen before or since, not even during the War, such a look of absolute horror and revulsion as was to be seen on Suhaili's face. Despite the entreaties of the Ibans to carry on with the slaughter or at least let them pick up the dying pigs, he did not utter a word but, with a set desperate look on his face, he carried on upstream until we reached the longhouse, and so the Ibans had no wild boar for supper. I felt very sorry indeed for the unfortunate Suhaili. When we reached the longhouse, he turned to the Ibans and told them to clean and clean the boat, the engine and his equipment so that no trace of blood was left, failing which he would not take them any further. He himself went into the river and washed and scrubbed himself over and over again.

On one occasion in the Baloi, as the boat was beached on arrival at a longhouse, I stepped out of my boat and went up towards the house, toying with the drinks the

damsels offered en route, and then noted that, of all my party, only the N.O., the Hospital Assistant and I had gone into the house. Usually, by this time, there was a busy to and fro as my kit, the medicines and ammunition for the locals, etc were being unloaded in suitable areas of the longhouse but on this occasion this was not so. On inquiry I found that the Malays had shot a deer and the locals had killed a pig during the journey and, just as they were beginning to unload the perahu, they noticed that the blood of the two animals had run together in the bottom of the boat. Only Kepu, the Chinese Dresser and I were not religiously involved, so it was us who had to empty the boat and place the goods on the shore, wash off any blood that might be on them, after which the porters could carry these articles up to the longhouse. Meanwhile the boat was filled with water and then turned over so that next day we could safely proceed with our journey in it without in any way being contaminated.

The Ibans too caused problems at times. I have mentioned how once we could not enter a longhouse because there had been a death there. The Ibans were very conscious of antu (spirits), a few of which were good to them, but the majority were malevolent and on occasion these antu gave people warning of what lay ahead. It is too large a subject to go into detail here. Suffice it to say that apart from dreams or peering into a pig's liver and drawing conclusions from that, there were a whole lot of other clues to the future, which could act as a warning of some evil happening if you disregarded the message and carried on with your programme. One of the most common warning signs came from the movement of certain birds. The first time this affected me was when we were about to leave an Iban longhouse when a certain bird clearly flew from right to left. Dismay was shown on the faces of all and the Penghulu said that it would be far too risky to go on, and everyone turned round and returned to the ruai. I said that I appreciated all that they said but nevertheless I was on a timed programme and the people who had stayed in at the next longhouse purely to meet me would not be able to see me if I did not turn up. After much discussion, it was mooted that it was the Penghulu who should not go on. I guess that he wanted to go on but did not wish to risk a disaster. He therefore decided that if he left behind his penghulu's jacket and badge of office, we could safely go on and someone could send on his things next day. I was grateful for this solution to the problem and more than thankful that nothing untoward happened to the Penghulu, to those who accompanied us or to me!

Kepu was a Sea-Dayak or Iban and came from a house downriver of Sibu. He was not tattooed and the Dayak he spoke differed slightly from that spoken in Kapit District. I asked the people in a longhouse in the Baleh what was Kepu's race. They were puzzled and eventually decided that he must be a Malay – to me, his features were much closer to those of the upriver Ibans than to those of a Malay, but his accent and some of the Iban words he used were not found in upriver speech.

While I was in Binatang, Kepu had got married and in due course had a baby. This baby survived the dangerous crawling years into childhood and I attribute this to the fact that it was not in a longhouse, crawling amongst the cocks and dogs, while its mother's attention was wholly taken up with the latest arrival. In a longhouse, when a second baby was born, it was normal for a small child to be given milk out of a bottle that had not been properly sterilised and even wandering around with its bottle, leaving it on the floor and allowing dogs to lick it before taking it into use again. It is not surprising that after weaning many children died of diarrhoea and vomiting. Kepu's first baby spent its first two years in my kitchen area. In 1950 I went on leave and Kepu left my service and

returned home to his longhouse. When I last heard of him, he had had two more babies but they had not survived infancy. A few years later, the Resident Sibu visited Kepu's longhouse and, as a result of his service with me, the headman told him to lay on white man's food. After a pleasant supper, the Resident was mightily surprised at being asked if he would like a whisky soda and joyfully accepted. The only fly in his ointment was that Kepu had bought ice cream soda!

It was a custom in Sarawak that officers visiting the ulu would stay with the D.O. and would hand over to him the value of the travel allowance that they would later claim. Murray Dickson, Acting Director of Education, spent two nights with me in Kapit. He was virtually a teetotaller and watched with interest the evening arrival of various ulu people to whom I offered arrack, and the chit chat that went on between us. As he left my house, he admonished me for giving these alcoholic libations to my guests. He said that I ought to give them a good example of abstinence and thereby hope to wean them from their evil ways. I had no doubt at all that any attempt by me to make them teetotal would have no effect whatever on a single one of them and that an Iban, who had had a drink with me, was much more likely to be uninhibited about giving me his views than one who was cold stone sober. It appeared to me that Murray showed his disapprobation of my ways by getting into the waiting launch and going off downriver, having omitted to hand over the paltry sum of travel allowance due to me. Although, on the whole, I much enjoyed his company, this omission did not much endear him to me. What was my astonishment about a month later to receive from Murray Dickson a whole bottle of whisky – an item which, in those days, was almost unobtainable and in any case was much more valuable than the travel allowance due to me!

In June 1950 I went on long leave, during which I was sent on a Second Devonshire Course, lasting two university terms. It was a course that had recently been produced to prepare newly accepted candidates for the Colonial Service (later the Overseas Civil Service) into the problems of working in a colony. As such courses did not exist when I had joined the Colonial Service, I found that I got extra value from it due to my practical experience of working in Sarawak. I spent part of the time at the School of Oriental and African Studies and part at the London School of Economics.

I happened to be in Salisbury and looked into the window of a high class saddlery and leather shop. In the window I saw dog collars, mostly of the size to fit round the neck of a Great Dane and with nails sticking out of them. This recalled to my mind Eustace, who had been born under the police barracks in Sibu, was the size of a fox terrier and was of mixed ancestry – but then, one has to be born somewhere and not all of us have inherited pedigree blood. I went into the shop and the following conversation took place between me and a very superior employee:-

Me. "I would like a dog collar for a dog about this size round the neck" and I indicated the size with my thumbs and fore fingers outstretched.

Him – very superciliously. "What breed, Sir?"

Me: "About this around the neck".

Him (In a very condescending voice) "Here we only deal in breeds, Sir".

Me: "As a matter of fact he is a Borneo Pi-dog".

Him: "A what Sir?"

Me: "A Borneo Pi-dog" and I hoped my tone indicated my surprise that he had not heard of such a breed.

Him: "How much did you say around the neck?"

## 9 – DISTRICT OFFICER SIMANGGANG AND LUBOK ANTU – 1951-1952

On my return from leave in May 1951, owing to a shortage of staff, I was appointed District Officer of two districts in Second Division, Simanggang, where was the Resident's H.Q., and Lubok Antu. These two districts covered the length of the Batang Lupar from its source near the Indonesian border to the sea. There were sub-districts at Lingga downriver of Simanggang and at Engkilili between Simanggang and Lubok Antu. The population was about 90% Iban. 'Ai' in Iban means 'water' and upriver of Lubok Antu the river was known as 'Ulu Ai'. There was an overland telephone line from Engkilili office to that at Lubok Antu. Before leaving Engkilili for Lubok Antu by outboard, I happened one day to note with interest that there was a steady stream of black ants rising up the telephone pole and running along the telephone line towards Lubok Antu. I followed it for several hundred yards and they were still going strong and none had returned to earth. I arrived at Lubok Antu and saw ants coming from the direction of Engkilili some 15 miles away. I walked along the line a mile or so and saw none coming up from the earth! I don't know what to deduce about that. Had the ants done a 15 mile walk?



Eustace in the Simanggang office, February 1952

Shallow draft launches could get to Engkilili. The Batang Lupar had a bar at its mouth and was tidal to above Simanggang. Downriver the current was swift and indeed at spring tides there was an impressive and dangerous bore that started its wave just upriver of Lingga and carried on to upriver of Simanggang. I once stood at Simanggang on a wharf on purpose to watch the effect of the bore. I could hear and see the wave coming upriver; however at this stage I did not allow myself to look at the advancing bore but kept my eyes looking straight down below me watching the water running out to sea. Suddenly, just downriver of me there came into view a wave about 6 feet high falling over itself and advancing rapidly, while immediately below me the tide was still

flowing out quietly but fast. Almost immediately the picture changed; suddenly, there was a great commotion below me, and then I saw that the river had ceased to flow towards the sea and now was about 5 feet higher than before; it was extremely agitated as three or four waves with deep troughs between them followed the first, and the river was by now flowing rapidly upstream. There is a great difference in height of the river at Simanggang between low and high water at the neap tides (between 9 and 13 feet) and the spring tides (between 2 and 20 feet), though these figures will be distorted if there is an unusual amount of flood water coming down from the ulu or during an unusually long period of drought. All this means that the person in charge of a Chinese or Government launch, or indeed a perahu, must be well aware of the tide tables if he is to avoid being grounded or being overturned.

In hilly country, the Ibans did not plant swamp padi but hill padi. Here I will mention that the British, who do not grow rice, only have the one word 'Rice' to cover the product from the seed that is planted, the growing plant, the harvested plant, the seed that is in store, and seed when packed, sold, cooked and produced in a dish at the table. The Sarawakians need to be more explicit and have a different name for each of these stages. 'Rice' cannot be translated by one word into Malay, Iban, etc. 'Padi', 'Nasi' etc. cannot be translated into English by one word, but need a sentence. The traditional system of hill planting was to fell an area of jungle, let it dry out on the hillside, set fire to it and plant the rice amongst the ash. This gave a very satisfying high yield of excellent tasting rice. The disadvantage of the system was the initial very hard work of felling the jungle and, after three or more annual plantings in the same area, the amount of rice harvested became very much less. The ideal situation would have been that at that stage, for at least 11 years, the felled area would be abandoned, which would give a chance for the seeds, fallen from the felled jungle trees, to regenerate the forest while the Ibans started the process all over again with the felling of another jungle area within convenient reach of their longhouse. With this shifting system of planting, eventually they would have to move their longhouse several miles away and re-erect it in the centre of an area of virgin jungle and start using it for rice planting, but doing so in such way that lalang grass could never get hold. After 30 or more years, they would have to move house again or could consider returning to the original area. If, however, the original area had been over cropped and the trees did not re-seed, the top soil would be washed away and the result was disastrous. Instead of the forest regenerating, lalang grass would flourish, where there was only a minimum amount of soil. Don't ask me where the lalang grass seed had been sneakily waiting during perhaps thousands of years but there it was, waiting and able to take over when the opportunity occurred. It liked full sun and hated shade, but with over cropped jungle there would not be any shade to impede its growth. Occasionally, indeed rarely, the Ibans, using the hill method, would plant black rice – this was the finest tasting rice of all and only about twice have I been offered any. I presume there must have been some economic reason for planting it so rarely, but I don't know what the reason was.

Lalang grass was tall, tough and had a serrated edge that tore one's skin. It spread remarkably quickly. It was not an economic proposition to eradicate it when it covered several large hillsides. A hill covered in lalang grass was quite useless to man or beast. Walking in the jungle, one was protected from the sun and, at any rate at first, from the rain. Walking across a lalang covered hillside in hot weather was most unpleasant as the lalang gave no shade but often cut off any cooling breeze, so the sun beat down on one unmercifully. Because of the lack of soil, the path, would be hard and, in wet

weather, slippery. Why did the Dayaks over crop? Firstly, because of increasingly effective health services, the population was increasing. Because of lack of foresight in the past, over cropping had taken place and so the amount of jungle at the disposal of the farmers was steadily reducing. For the hill people to a certain extent, rubber has come as a saviour, but rubber will not grow on land covered by lalang.

When in Kapit District from 1948 to 1950, I had seen lalang-covered hills along the Rejang, the lower Balleh and the lower Katibas River (whose mouth was at Song), but at that time there was still a reasonable amount of jungle upriver. In Lingga Sub-District, Simanggang, and Engkilili Sub-District there was next to no jungle left. Only in the swampy areas of the Batang Lupar and its tributaries could one still find jungle, which was mostly quite unsuitable for planting swamp rice, a crop the hill tribes knew little about. There was still some virgin jungle upriver of Lubok Antu – not for much longer! Simanggang was one of the places selected by Government to start the painful process of trying to persuade tribes to switch from planting shifting cultivation hill rice to staying put in one place and growing swamp padi once every year in the valleys – that is if the valleys were suitable for this. Be that as it may, I found that, though some of the Ibans of Simanggang, Lingga and Engkilili were better educated than those of Lubok Antu or of Kapit District, their morale was lower and I attributed this largely to their problems of getting good harvests in an increasingly lalang covered land.

For my first visit to Engkili and to Lubok Antu, I was accompanied by Tom Cromwell, Secretary for Chinese Affairs. He and Betty, his wife, were good friends of mine and later also of my wife and, rather than produce snippets about him at intervals in these Anecdotes, I will deviate a bit and finish him off now!

Tom Cromwell was a very erudite Yorkshireman, who spoke fluent French and German and pre-war had joined the Malayan Civil Service. Naturally, he learnt and passed his Malay exams and was then sent to Amoy (now known as Xiamen) to learn both Hokkien and Mandarin. In this lovely seaside town with its equable climate he also learnt a great deal about imperial China, about Chinese arts and crafts and, in great detail, about the Chinese way of life and customs. Subsequently he picked up some Cantonese. He returned to Malaya and married Betty, an excellent helpmate to him. He was sent to lonely Christmas Island, a wonderful honeymoon posting for them where they were caught by the Japanese and interned in Indonesia, where he added Dutch to his other languages. After the war they returned to Malaya and, in May 1947, he was posted to Sarawak as Secretary for Chinese Affairs and Protector of Women and Girls.

As an example of Tom's erudition, he had bought in Singapore a peculiarly shaped beautifully carved jade artifact going ridiculously cheaply because the Chinese seller didn't know what it was. Tom knew that several hundred years ago an emperor had been assassinated by a courtier. The successor emperor had ensured that courtiers in future could not hold a secret weapon by insisting that, in his presence they must hold an object in both hands. Naturally, courtiers vied with each other in the beauty of the object held by them.

While in Engkilili, Tom was enchanted to find on the outskirts of the bazaar an old wooden pillar with the Yin and the Yang signs on it, which had not previously been recorded there. When I was staying with him in Kuching, he pointed out to me how a temple had been built on one side of Carpenter Street and been so positioned that the

statue in it could see the theatre stage on the other side of the road and so be entertained by the performances taking place there. I learnt a lot from Tom about Chinese lore and about the Triad Society which existed in Sarawak.

One of Tom's jobs was The Protector of Women and Girls. Tom was, in some ways, an innocent. He had been told that in Kuching there was a brothel in Carpenter Street employing women and girls. In high dudgeon he turned up there at 7 p.m. to raid it but found the door locked. The following conversation took place:-

Tom (in Chinese) – "I am the Protector of Women and Girls. Open up."

Madam – "I don't care who you are. It is well known that we do not take customers in here till after 9 p.m."

Tom – "In the name of the law, I order you to open the door".

Madam " – I have had lots of distinguished Europeans here, such as the Chief Secretary (named in person, but as he may still be alive not repeated here) and ...". (She announced the name of a variety of distinguished gentlemen) "But I have never opened the door before 9 p.m. Go away".

Tom had no recourse except to be practical and raid the brothel at 9.10 p.m.

I do not remember the date, but a team of Indonesian Government Officers (mostly Moslems) from Kalimantan came over to discuss matters of common interest with their Sarawak counterparts. When they wished to talk confidentially amongst themselves, they rather rudely spoke in Dutch. Tom was a member of the Sarawak delegation and, while the Indonesians were talking, he appeared to be doodling but in fact was recording what they were saying.

The British High Commission in Kuala Lumpur had heard of this meeting and sent a Deputy High Commissioner to Kuching to give a party for the Indonesians and, as they left (ever mindful of the need to boost British products), presented each Indonesian official with a high class leather briefcase marked "Made in Britain". These were gratefully received till an Indonesian, who knew English, noted the words "Guaranteed best pig skin"!

Tom disagreed with the Sarawak Government about the great dangers posed by the Communist infiltration into Chinese schools and the gathering strength of the Triads. His stringent recommendations on how to cope with these problems would have been expensive and difficult to carry out and were unacceptable to Government and so he got a transfer to Singapore as, I think, Social Security Officer.

I will mention here that, while Tom was not tall, he had broad shoulders, was well built and above all was a patriotic Yorkshireman. His Singapore office was on the first floor of a building with his clerks all around him. Some racial riots had broken out and developed into Chinese versus (Moslem) Malays and to a certain extent became anti-British. There was a lot of noise outside the building and the clerks rushed to the window. Tom ordered the clerks to get on with their work. The clerks (probably many were Chinese) seemed uneasy. Then a clerk close to the window said "The Union Jack is being pulled down". Tom immediately rushed downstairs on to the square, while the clerks crowded round the windows. He emerged into the square, looking belligerent, and the Chinese crowd drew back as he hauled up the Union Jack and, without

interference from the crowd, stalked in a dignified manner back to his office. The clerks then said "They are again taking down the Union Jack". Once again Tom rushed out of the building mouthing the most rude words in various Chinese dialects. The crowd held firm as Tom approached them, then the centre gave way as Tom charged them. He collected the Union Jack, draped it round him and once again the crowd let him through and he went home with it!

The last time we saw Tom and Betty, before he died, was when Bunty and I were on leave and went to Sedbergh. He lived up a lane, where he was interested in following up Norse words still used by the locals. He wrote – "You will know my house because the Singapore flag will fly from it and I can safely say there isn't another in Sedbergh".

On the whole, the Chinese saw little point in learning the native languages of Sarawak and, indeed, rarely came across any natives. Such Chinese as boat hawkers, who traded up and down the rivers, naturally needed to speak the language of the local people, as did traders in the small bazaars. Lubok Antu bazaar was unique in that the Chinese (not a large group) had been established there for so long as a close community that they even spoke Iban amongst themselves rather than Chinese. The lingua franca in Sarawak was English or Malay and, during British rule, most Chinese found that English was the more useful language to learn.

Inland from Lingga was Gunong Lesong, a most noticeable, isolated, flat topped mountain (shaped rather like Ayers Rock) that was 2,700 feet (823m) high. In hot sunny weather, this mountain heated up more than did the surrounding country side and, between 12 noon and 3 p.m., often caused a most awesome natural phenomenon as it dragged in large quantities of damp air from the nearby sea, which produced massive white and almost black cloud formations swirling around and above it. Seen from Lingga, where the weather could be cloudless or just have scattered clouds, I have watched fascinated at the speed with which some of the clouds rose vertically – perhaps thousands of feet – above it while other clouds were equally swiftly rushing downwards. Eventually with much flashing of lightning – some of which was magnificent as it travelled from the topmost cloud to the ground – a terrific thunderstorm would occur with torrential rain and the temperature there would suddenly be lowered by several degrees.

Pigeon Orchids, often found on old trees in the open countryside, are remarkable for every plant over a limited area bursts into flower for a day. This happens at most irregular intervals and regardless of season. I admire the dedicated botanical detective work that must have gone into finding out what it was that triggered these orchids to flower in one area but not in another nearby. Eventually they found out that the trigger was a sudden fall of temperature, such as often occurs when a great storm suddenly breaks over part of the country, as it often does on a very hot day, and then the air temperature can fall as much as ten degrees in a very few minutes. Where this has occurred, the Pigeon Orchids will burst into flower nine days later!

In 1950 an unusual occurrence happened in Sarawak when three people called Malcolm McSporran arrived in Kuching on the same boat from Singapore. One hailed from Cheshire and was appointed to the administration and eventually became godfather to my son, Neil. One came from New Zealand, was appointed to the Agriculture Department, and we became great friends and with him was his small son,

also called Malcolm and wife Helen. To avoid mail delivery problems, it was decided that all three should be posted to Second Division. The Agricultural Malcolm lived in a pre-war wooden house on stilts. One day, during conversation, we were comparing notes on our electricity bills and he was miffed to find how vastly out of proportion his was when compared with mine. The electricity company agreed to check his meter and would refund the cost of so doing if the meter was found to be faulty. In fact it was working perfectly. Not long after this, Malcolm and his wife had gone to bed when there occurred right above Simanggang one of the father and mother of all thunder storms that Sarawak can produce. The couple were frozen in terror as they saw lightning rushing around their bedroom following the electricity wires attached to the walls. Malcolm then went to the other rooms, where the same alarming display was happening. He then looked at the meter and saw that the recorder on the meter was spinning round at a great rate and recording the use of vast amounts of electricity. The problem of the high bills had been solved and, not surprisingly, the house was rewired. I have not heard any satisfactory explanation why the house did not catch fire.

I am often asked in Britain "How do you cope with the climate in Sarawak when you are so close to the Equator?", the assumption being that life must have been unbearable for me in the tropics. I usually answered this by saying that the locals in Sarawak were amazed at how we from Britain managed to cope with the cold and lack of sunshine. Temperature by itself does not mean very much unless one also takes into account the humidity, the height above sea-level and whether there is a breeze to remove perspiration. As I described in my travels in Kapit District, clad in light clothing I have suffered from rivers of sweat on my body and cascading through my eyebrows, and I have also been chattering with cold when up a high mountain. When I feel like grumbling at the unpleasant effects of heat, I have only to recall my far greater misery when out in sleet in a piercing wind or when my fingers are so cold that they refuse to function properly, for me to be reconciled to accepting the less unpleasant effect of tropical heat.

Sarawak has a long coastline, which means a sea or land breeze, while further inland there may be little or no movement of air. Simanggang is a good example of a climate being not much above sea level but too far from the coast to be affected by its local breezes. It was rare for the variation here between the hottest day and the coldest night of the year to exceed more than 10°F and once one's body had got used to this lack of variation in temperature, a rise or fall of more than this amount was worryingly hot or shiveringly cold! There was a wet season and a wetter (the 'landas'). From April to October the wind blew from the south-west, but even so it was extremely rare to go three weeks without rain. From November to March the landas winds blew from the north-east across the South China Sea and the humidity was often above 90%. I remember the occasion in Miri, in a house that had no windows but that had slatted blinds to keep out the weather, when, during the landas, my wife had washed and spun our towels in the washing machine and then strung them more than half dry across the living room and when later she came to collect them they were nearly dripping. Cameras, binoculars, etc had to be kept in an airtight box with a drying agent to avoid a fungus developing on the lens. A lamp bulb would be kept alight in cupboards to prevent shoes and other leather articles going mouldy. Winter clothes would be put in cold storage or in airtight trunks but even so, when we came to unpack them in England, the damp smell that emerged was noticeable! I am glad to say that Sarawak was outside

the typhoon/hurricane zone, though, rarely, one could experience sudden local tornados/twisters.

Here let me mention that, for children and adults alike, the inconvenience and expense of wearing weighty clothes in the tropics were not problems; the considerable saving in not having to heat the house in winter was partly offset by the cost of air-conditioning – limited in the case of many people to just the bedroom. For babies in cots, being clad in merely a nappy and a thin pair of pants and occasionally a thin shirt, meant that they were in no way restricted in moving their arms and legs. In fact, a temperature of say 85°F in Sarawak was much more bearable than the same temperature in Britain, because the houses were built to cope with it and so were the streets with many pavements being under cover. Also there was a lot to be said for having daylight that lasted 12 hours throughout the year, give or take half an hour, instead of the great variation that occurs in Britain between mid-summer and mid-winter.

The average annual rainfall in Simanggang was 159", in Kuching 158", in Kapit 149". It was less on the coast, for example at Miri it was 126". Rain often interferes with one's pleasures, but Sarawak rain, even if usually 'more wetting' than in U.K., was at least warm and tended to deluge for a period and then the sun came out. There was no really cold weather anywhere in Sarawak, though up in the Kelabit plateau area, the climate was delightful. The cold that I experienced travelling in the ulu in Kapit was partly because of the height I was at but also because of the contrast between the heat before a storm and the cold after it. Many of those who disliked the discomforts of Sarawak were those who moaned "Oh to be in England, now that spring is here", having overlooked the fact that while a few springs have been lovely many, more have been beastly!

The first time I went to Lubok Antu, I went straight to the safe to count the cash, which I found to be \$60 short. The treasury clerk was not worried and said "You have not seen this envelope", which he took from the safe. In it was an I.O.U. for \$40 signed for by the clerk and on the reverse "Have taken another \$20!

This clerk, who was a Christian Chinese, invited me to have supper with him. At the appointed time I arrived at his nice modern quarter only to find it furnished but empty. I was told to go to the Native Officer's house, where I found the clerk had prepared a nice meal. It appeared that for some time he felt unwell and thought (but did not admit) that an evil spirit must be around, and so he told me that he felt that a temporary change of air was desirable, so he had temporarily moved in with the N.O. and his health had immediately improved!

At this time, there were no registers of births and deaths for the interior peoples of Sarawak. One of the most urgent problems of the new Colonial Government was how to bring education to these 90% illiterate people. The eventual objective was free education for all from the age of six. In a longhouse, I would ask how old children were and was often given the most unlikely answers. The lives of the Ibans were centred on the cycle of planting and harvesting rice once a year and they rarely thought further than one year ahead. Then I was told that the Education Department's way of deciding when a child was six years old was to tell him to put a hand straight over the top of his head and touch his ear on his other side. If he could manage this, he was six or more years old!

## Cock Fighting

While in Engkilili, I heard that a cock fight was due to take place on the outskirts of the bazaar. The Colonial Government was dead against cock fights but had to temper its wish to abolish them with the realistic fact that, to the Ibans, cock fighting was more than an entertainment – almost a religion. Cock fighting had been banned but as the Government did not want to stir a hornets' nest by enforcing the ban, the Government position was rather weakly announced that it disapproved of cock fights and, in any case, there should be no gambling during them. This was rather like saying that in the modern world the Grand National need not be abolished but betting would be forbidden. So far as I can tell, all the cocks belonged to Ibans. The spectators were a mixture of Ibans and Chinese and the Sarawak Constabulary had apparently not heard that a cock fight was due to take place and so no policemen were present – though doubtless many would have liked to be there and to bet.

I had never previously had the opportunity to watch cock fighting and, while I could not approve of it, this was a good opportunity to find out all about it. I suppose that it was at least a breach of etiquette for me to be there. I did observe sundry individuals apparently furtively counting paper money handed to them by another individual, but I saw nothing wrong in that as I felt sure that honourable Sarawak citizens would not indulge in betting!

The cocks destined for fighting belonging to individuals, were cosseted in the longhouses and tied to posts or put in cages hanging just under the floor boards. They were not allowed to have sex with hens. At daybreak, the noise they made was enough to awaken the dead drunk. At times in a longhouse, a couple of Ibans would produce a couple of cocks, rub their noses together to ensure that they disliked each other and then leave them to it. It soon became clear which cock was the stronger. It was a Chinese aficionado of cock fighting, who instructed me in the difference of competing cocks and turkey cocks. As opposed to turkeys, who, when feeling they are the inferior party in a fight, will make themselves as flat as possible and the victor will then strut around the loser but not harm him, cocks go on fighting until one runs away, the victor will chase the vanquished for a short distance and be satisfied with that. In each case, the vanquished is relatively unharmed. When a cock fights a turkey, the latter (though bigger) is not so agile and soon flattens himself. The cock gets ever more infuriated that the turkey does not run away and the turkey tries to cower ever closer to the ground until the cock has killed the turkey.

The ring is a circle of 20 feet or so on flat ground. Crowds are roaming around trying to assess which two cocks will take part in the next fight, while the two Iban teams quartered at opposite sides of the circle and quite a way away from the centre, are trying to hide their cocks from prying eyes and give no clue as to which is to be put to compete at the next fight. Each team hopes to pierce the screen and find out which is the choice of the opposing team's cock before finally having to decide which of their cocks will fight. At this stage, some money or promises are exchanged amongst those betting. As I wandered around and before proceedings had begun, I stumbled on the 'enclosure' where one of the teams was holding and organising its cocks and showed genuine interest in what was going on, and then I was told in clear terms that on no account should I go to the other team and tell them what I had seen!

In due course and at the same time, an Iban from each team will arrive at his end of the ring, carrying a cock. The betting gets really active, while the cock's owner ties a vicious, very sharp curved knife to his cock's leg so that the knife is in the area of the cock's spur but is much bigger than it and also much sharper. Then each owner takes his cock to the middle of the ring, rubs their two beaks together and then the owners run away to the edge of the ring. To the cheering and exhortation of the crowds, the cocks, usually, go confidently and in a temper at each other. Sometimes, they circle each other, waiting for a suitable opening, but eventually each tries to rise higher up than the other and bring its spur in a downwards stroke to cause damage to its enemy. The tied on spurs are such that terrible damage can be done. Everything happens so quickly that it is difficult to see what is happening, but usually it is not long before one cock decides to run away, although it may be so damaged that it collapses on the ground. There is usually no doubt as to which is the victor. At this stage an attempt is made by the owners to remove each cock from the ring and hope that his cock can survive to fight another day. Not infrequently both cocks die. There is considerable danger to the spectators and I made sure that I was in the second row as a victorious cock, before it is picked up, may be so imbued with adrenalin that it rushes on to show its strength by attacking the legs of a spectator.

The Residency, Simanggang was another delightful Rajah's building of character on stilts, built on top of a small hill. From the bedrooms the usual steps went down to the ground floor, where were the shower room cum loos. W.P.N.L. Ditmas, born 1908, was a plump gentleman with unusually thin legs who had a great fund of stories often revolving around himself. He was a bachelor and very much a Rajah's officer. When he was Resident Second Division, he was more than startled when faced with having a married D.O. He invited Desmond and Anne Bruen and a medley of bachelor officers to dinner. In the past,



My Simanggang House, July 1951

when he had a party, he dressed himself in a Malay type man's sarong as being the most comfortable garment to wear and relax in during a tropical evening (in this, I fully concurred with him), and he saw no reason to alter this custom just because a lady was present. After dinner, Anne went through his bedroom and downstairs to the loo. Meanwhile, upstairs, on the verandah he mentioned to the assembled guests how, if one stood in a doorway and pressed the palms of one's hands hard for an appreciable time against the doorjambs and then stepped forward, it was virtually impossible to stop one's arms rising till they were at right angles to the shoulders and parallel to the earth. Ditmas then demonstrated this by standing between his bedroom and the verandah to give a demonstration. Truly his arms went up and truly the sarong (the only garment that he had on him) started to slip down to his ankles, and he realised that his arms

would not descend so he was unable to hitch it up again. He turned round, rushed into his bedroom and closed the door only to find that Anne Bruen had come up the stairs from the loo and was looking startled at seeing a naked Ditmas between her and the door out of the bedroom!

One afternoon I was going up the Batang Lupar from Sebuyau at the mouth of the river and the launch's captain said that we had missed the tide and could not reach Simanggang. We went a short way up the Lingga River and anchored opposite the bazaar to await the next morning's incoming tide. It was a hot night, so I took my mattress up on to the deck. Later on, the tide turned and I was half awoken by the different motion of the boat as it swung round on the anchor. Then in my sleepy state, I registered that trees were moving past us. Reality took over and most urgently I shouted to the crew to start the engine as we were dragging the anchor. They became mobile and the engines were started in the nick of time to prevent the launch's mast and upper structure becoming entangled with the overhanging trees and probably causing the boat to capsize in the fast flowing water.

I watched as an Iban introduced a rhinoceros beetle and a scorpion to one another in a large cardboard box. The beetle was heavier than the scorpion and seemed to have an impenetrable carapace but was completely harmless. If it could not run away, it just tucked its legs underneath it and lay down flat on its abdomen. The scorpion had probably never come across such a beetle before. It watched the beetle for a bit then approached it with caution and with its tail up and ready to strike. Nothing happened. Then the scorpion came closer and struck the beetle's side – to no effect. The scorpion circled round the beetle, striking its carapace several times but never managing to pierce it. Then the beetle made a mistake and decided to run for it, the scorpion was able to strike its unprotected belly and the beetle went into convulsions and collapsed.

## 10 – DISTRICT OFFICER MUKAH – 1952

In June 1952 I was transferred to be D.O. Mukah at the mouth of the Mukah River. The District included two other rivers, the Balingian and the Oya, each with a Sub-District headquarters. In the case of the Oya River the Sub-District H.Q. was at Dalat, a few miles up the Oya River, and from here a tiny canal, called the Kut, had been dug in the Rajah's time to the Igan River, which was part of the Rejang delta in Sibu District. The Kut was tidal and at high tide had just enough water to be able to cope with the smallest and shallowest of Chinese launches. To get to my Divisional H.Q. at Sibu, I could either take my launch along the coast and up the Igan River, or drive along the beach to Oya at low tide, transfer to a perahu and go through the Kut and up the Igan.

Along the coast and a little way inland, the inhabitants were Melanaus - a relatively fair skinned people famed (and rightly so) for the beauty of their women. Their language was not too far removed from that of the far ulu Kenyahs and nomadic Penans. They used to be pagans, living in longhouses, but there were very few of these left when I was there as most of them had become Moslems (and thereafter often called themselves 'Malays', though their features were not the same as proper Malays). There were also a fair number of Roman Catholic Melanaus, especially at Mukah.

Most of the Chinese lived in the various bazaars. Several miles inland up each of the three rivers were Iban longhouses. The staple diet of the Melanaus is sago, though they did plant and eat rice and they were excellent sea fishermen.

### **Sago and the Melanaus**

If you are one of those people (and they are many) who is bored with sago and doesn't wish to start with an elementary manual on planting sago, skip quickly through what follows and only stop and read more thoroughly the parts that interest you. The one word 'Sago' in English covers a whole lot of stages from planting this palm, felling it, cutting it up, working on it so that it can be served up as a staple food and storing it, each of which stages has a different name in Melanau and only one of which will convey to the listener exactly what you are meaning. Having arrived in Mukah, knowing nothing about sago, it was essential that I learnt as much as possible about it if I was to be a good D.O. in this District. What would it have conveyed about my capability if I had used 'lemanta', the word for sago flour, when I was talking about sago plantations? Here are my notes. I hope that they are reasonably accurate.

Three versions of how to plant sago have been given to me:-

- a) During the dry season, an area of jungle will be cleared, suckers of an already mature palm are planted in a hole approximately 2 feet square by 2 feet deep.
- b) One informant said that the above method of planting will be an invitation to worms to attack the sago. He says, when planted, a diagonal cut must be made in the shoot so that the juices run out. The suckers must be planted in the morning and the cut must be made so that as the juice exudes and it follows the direction of the cut, it slides down the stem and is dried up by the sun before reaching the ground. If the cut is made in the other direction, where it is in the shade and the sun cannot dry the juices up, they will reach the ground and worms will attack the shoot. Suckers will not last 5 days without water. Some say they should be in water for at least 2 days before planting and will not come to harm if left longer in water.

c) My third informant said the jungle should be cleared in March and the vegetation allowed to dry thoroughly. It is burnt off in July or August onwards up to the beginning of the rainy season. A sucker is cut from a fairly mature tree. The sucker itself must not be too young and must include a certain amount of the broad brown stem that is seen immediately above the ground. This sucker is put in a wet place (I have seen them with the brown part in water and the green part above it) for 1 or 2 months, after which signs of roots at one end and leaves at the other end will have appeared. The ground that has been burnt off is prepared by clearing all foreign roots from an area 6 foot square. The earth is churned up, but not too deeply, and the shoot is planted in this.

Do you now feel confident that you can successfully plant sago?

Growth. Sago palms cannot be used until at least 9½ or 10 years old and, if the ground is poor and has been used up, it may be as long as 20 years. It is during these first 9 years that a tree is in danger of being damaged by various pests such as worms, wild pigs, monkeys, etc. The various stages of growth of the sago palm have many different names:-

- a) Trees of 8 years old are known in Mukah as 'Maloh' and in Dalat as 'Pelawai Sarawak'. These trees cannot be felled as they are too young, but if felled will give 6 to 7 logs or 'krats' (See 'extraction' below).
- b) Trees 9 years old consisting of 7 to 11 krats are known as 'Supang' in Mukah and 'Pelawai' in Dalat. These are medium sized palms and, if necessary, can be used.
- c) Trees 9½ years old have the same number of krats as (b) above and are known as 'Supang Mani'. They may be felled and used. The differences between (b) and (c) are the supang leaves which are very resistant and are used for many local purposes such as walling or roofing for houses, drinking vessels, bailers, etc. The shoots of the supang (known as 'Tajok') can be eaten as a vegetable but in Supang Mani this is not so.
- d) Those 9 year old trees known as 'Supang Sarawak' are slightly longer than 'Maloh' and may be felled but the 3 krats at the top contain only a little sago. These trees have 7 or 8 krats.
- e) 10 year old trees known as 'Bubul Balak' have 11 to 12 krats. These palms are in the budding stage. If used, the resulting flour is not very good.
- f) 10½ year old palms known as 'Angau Muda' are at the flowering stage and produce fairly good flour.
- g) 11 to 12 year old palms (fruit forming stage) are the best there is, producing a large amount of sago of good quality. Once the fruit begins to fall, the sago content of the palm goes down rapidly.
- h) 12 year old trees and over tend to produce less sago and are known as 'Angau Mugar'. At this stage the palms become liable to be attacked by sago worms and the shoots do not grow so well as those of trees felled younger.

The above ages are obviously rather arbitrary and, generally speaking, are the minimum and presume good soil and other good growth conditions and assume that the palms can produce the maximum number of krats.

Good growing conditions require that the trees are planted 75 to 80 an acre. The best ground is flat and reasonably dry known as 'tanah naboh' (swampy/peaty underneath

but hard on top) so that the roots are in water but not the trunk. With such conditions most of the sago will be at the bottom of the trunk. In 'tanah ngelai', where the ground is fairly swampy and the jungle does not grow well, there is little sago in the bottom of the trunk but more in the top. The total sago content of a tanah ngelai tree is usually less than from a tanah naboh one. A tanah naboh trunk can be recognised by the fact that it turns blackish when on the ground. It is not essential but a good policy to keep sago plantations well cleared of other vegetation. When the plant is young, an occasional quick burn will not kill it but do it good.

Extraction. On the tree being felled (by men) the outer thin covering is cut away with a parang. The trunk is then axed into krats about 4 feet long, which are then rolled along a prepared path to the river bank, where they are fastened together as a raft and floated to the place of working. In the old days, the bark was removed with a parang and then ground with a 'parut' (a board studded with small sharp nails about 1" long rather like a gramophone needle), but nowadays (thanks to a well intentioned Agricultural Department) these tough jobs are done much quicker by a machine.



Working the Sago. At this stage, the now sawdust-like sago (known as 'repo' is handed over to the women and placed on a special mat (ideh), which is resting on a sort of stage (sometimes in a hut), usually on stilts built over the river's edge and often connected by a plank walk with the housewife's house on stilts. The stage or hut is known as 'tayan'. The woman stands on the repo on the mat and has in her hand a conical bailer ('trusong') on a rope, which she periodically dips into the fresh, brackish or salt water, and pours it over the repo; she then stamps it through the mat with her feet. The result is that the hard pith remains on the mat, while the sago and water fall through on to a sieving cloth ('tapih') stretched on a frame ('trening') 2 yards long by 1½ feet wide. The sieve holds back more unwanted solids while allowing the liquid sago to go through into a long wooden trough known as a 'jalor', where, eventually, the sago flour sinks to the bottom and gradually builds up its level ever higher, while the clear water will eventually overflow into the river below. The jalor has a bung so that the water above the surface of the sago can be removed. Any unwanted pith is emptied from the ideh and tapih into the river. When not specifying a certain category of sago palm, it is known as 'mulong' or 'balau' and the sago flour is called 'lemanta'. To get a good quality lemanta, the sago flour should be strained several times through the tapih. It should then be put in the sun to dry and this drying process should be completed in one day. If

the drying process is not properly achieved and the lemanta is stored overnight and put out next day to complete the drying, it will go reddish or blackish, which is cosmetically undesirable, though its quality is unaffected. No harm comes to the sago if a krat or the lemanta in a jalor are kept under water.



Balingian River sago palms have thorns which protect them, when young and vulnerable, from wild boar and their sago content is usually greater than that from the palms of the Mukah or Oya Rivers. I don't know how they manage it, but it is well known that only Balingian sago workers can walk barefoot in a thorny sago plantation, and remain unhurt while felling a palm and cutting up the trunk into krats.

Traditionally, the jobs the men did and the jobs the women did took about the same time. I mentioned above 'the well intentioned' Agricultural Department, who helped the Melanaus (men only) by providing saw cum rasping mills. This reduced by half the time the men spent on their share of producing sago powder but had no effect on reducing the impressive work that the women carried out and, of course, the macho men did not wish to use their spare time by helping to do 'women's work'. What did the men do with the spare time they now had? I doubt if the Agriculture Department had foreseen that the men would use up their spare time and energy in the way that they chose to do, which was to carry out a few household jobs that had long needed doing, and then, that soon being completed, they joyfully turned their attention to philandering with women other than their wives. The number of adultery and divorce cases went rushing up! Nowadays, I suppose, the Agricultural Department might have been castigated as being sexist in easing only the jobs of the men.

The Melanau produced pearl sago, done by putting sago flour into a shallow, flat bottomed basket with concave sides and, shaking the basket from side to side so that the sago could not escape from the basket because of the over-hanging sides but was pushed back into the middle, and eventually coalesced into little round sago balls, rather smaller than a pea. Sooner or later, Moslem Melanaus, when they could afford it, went on the journey of their life's ambition to Mecca, taking pearl sago with them for their personal enjoyment. They soon realised that the Arabs liked this delicacy and wished to purchase it from them. I don't know what Allah would have thought, but being humans, the Melanaus spun a story that it was a very slow hard process that produced pearl

sago and hence the high price. They claimed that the hard working women took a small amount of sago, rubbed it in their hands and produced one pearl and went on until after a very long time they had a small bagful, which they were willing to sell at a high price, which the Arabs were willing to pay!

Morris was one of the excellent anthropologists sent to Sarawak – in his case to put in a report on the Melanaus. He announced that he wished to do whatever the Melanaus did. This he quite comfortably achieved except for one habit unique to Melanaus – he had, so far, refused to consume the sago grub. This was a Melanau delicacy, extracted from the sago palm. It was a 1½ inch long grub – no doubt full of desirable proteins – which the locals would pick up, bite off its head and then chew the deceased corpse with pleasure. It took several months for the Melanaus to corner Morris and insist that he carried out his promise. A day was fixed. A large crowd assembled, because for one reason or another they had never seen a white man eat a sago grub. A saucer was brought with six or so grubs on it, lying on their backs and waving their short legs ineffectively in the air. Morris had seen them before and now looked at them with no signs of pleasure at the joys about to happen to him. He said "Show me once more how you do it". Once again this happened. Reluctantly and cautiously, Morris picked up a grub and wasted an appreciable time looking at it. Then taking his courage in his hand, he raised the live wriggling grub to his mouth, which he opened wide, threw it as far as possible down his throat, hoping to swallow it in one gulp, but the grub had other ideas. It refused to disappear into Morris's interior but waggled its many legs and it bit Morris's throat and then, suddenly and unexpectedly, appeared again into this world having been ejected by Morris's natural reflexes. He claimed he had eaten it. This claim was denied by ALL others present. Reluctantly Morris had to admit that he could not – as could a Melanau – enjoy the delights of a sago grub. I presume his kudos was lessened amongst the Melanaus – though perhaps not amongst his brother anthropologists! I suppose it would be unkind to chide an intelligent man like Morris, who presumably knew that the days of eating merely to survive were over and that food had become a yardstick by which one can measure cultural changes. Incidentally, I feel sure that the grubs fattened on good sago, were a wonderful source of excellent protein. A well-educated man should not allow the heart to rule the mind in food matters!

Except that Sarawak had a wet and a wetter season, it never seemed to me that there were noticeable seasonal variations and certainly there were none as distinctive as one gets in Europe. Several plants produced flowers or fruit throughout the year, but others were definitely seasonal, such as durian and mangoes. Sarawak ducks, on the whole, ignored the slight difference between the seasons and produced ducklings throughout the year – except in Mukah. Mukah was built on flat land only slightly above sea level and the Melanau kampongs were built on or near the edge of the slowly meandering Mukah River, which was tidal and usually brackish, and which provided the women with the necessary water supply for working the sago. I have mentioned how, while doing this, the women emptied the unwanted pith into the river, whose floor therefore was made up of an ever rising amount of sago pith and, in due course, this sent up bubbles of gas as it fermented and disintegrated. In the rainy season, the flood water raised the volume of water in the river and flushed out some of the decaying pith to the sea and the gas was scarcely noticeable. In the dry weather, the gas was much more evident. Grown up ducks were not affected by the gas but ducklings succumbed to it. Over the generations, the Mukah ducks had realised that it was pointless to start a family in the dry season but made up for this abstinence by producing large families in the landas

(monsoon season). Doubtless Darwin would have been interested in this adaptation to local circumstances.

There is a S.E. Asian pudding usually known as Gula Malacca (Malacca sugar). It is made out of sago, coconut milk and nipa palm sugar. The R.C. nuns at Mukah had a very pretty name for it – Three Palms Pudding.

### **Life in Mukah**

Near the mouths of many Sarawak rivers and along some of the coastline were mangrove swamps. Mangroves are one of the few trees that can grow in salt water and their roots appear out of the mud and, looking like crooked furniture legs, then join up to form a trunk above the mud level. New shoots also stick out with sharp points from the mud. At low tide the mud is revealed and at high tide the mangroves look like trees standing up in a peaceful lake. All this makes mangrove swamps one of the truly impenetrable jungles by boat or on foot. Not far up the rivers, the mangroves cease to grow and are replaced by nipa palms, which virtually have no trunk and the palm fronds branch out elegantly from just above the earth. Nipa needs brackish water to survive. To the locals it is a most useful plant as the fronds make excellent roofing material. When the fronds and trunk are burnt, the ashes mixed with water and boiled off, salt is left behind. Tapping the tree results in it exuding a treacly liquid rich in sugar (and so, useful for Three Palms Pudding) or for fermenting into an alcoholic drink.

During my time in Mukah, I had a pleasant week entertaining some representatives of Bird's Custard, who were not wholly satisfied with the corn flour which they used in producing their mock custard and who hoped instead to be able to use sago flour, which is virtually tasteless. Government expected that by developing this plan, the Melanaus would have a useful cash crop. Unfortunately, the Melanaus were unable to adjust their lives so as to provide the desired amounts of sago required by Bird's Custard on a regular basis and so the plan fell through.

I was worried when I received a Most Immediate telegram from Kuching "R.A.F. AIRCRAFT LEAVING ON COAST POSITION 02520 111 DEGREES 54 MINUTES EAST BOTH ENGINES STOPPED. PLEASE SEARCH IMMEDIATELY". Obviously, if both engines had stopped immediate and effective action was required. I rarely used latitude and longitude when map reading in Sarawak and in any case I only had the longitude position. After a hunt around in the Mukah office, I was able to find a small scale map of Sarawak with latitude and longitude shown on it, and it could scarcely be called pin pointing the position when I found that 111° 54' E crossed the coast somewhere in the 12 miles separating Mukah and Oya. What did "leaving" mean in the telegram? Mercifully, the tide was still low though it had started to come in. I told the N.O. to get a move on and take a jeep and drive along the beach to Oya and look out for a plane. Meanwhile, I sent a telegram asking for clarification of the message, well knowing that it would be quite some time before my telegram had reached Sibu, been relayed on to Kuching and I could receive an answer by the same route.

The N.O. found that the plane had evaded the logs and had landed safely on the hard part of the beach some time before, and he was able to tow the plane closer to the soft sand above high water level, as mercifully it was a neap tide and so likely that the sea water would not now reach it. He brought the crew back to Mukah. I heard later that, when the Civil Aviation Officer in Kuching, who had never met me, received my

telegram, he said "The D.O. Mukah doesn't seem very bright!" It turned out that the garbled telegram, which had reached me, should have read "R.A.F. AIRCRAFT LANDING ON COAST POSITION 02 DEGREES 52 MINUTES NORTH 111 DEGREES 54 MINUTES EAST BOTH ENGINES STOPPED. PLEASE SEARCH IMMEDIATELY".

I have been impressed at how barefoot natives (including, though more rarely, women) manage to walk fast, often carrying a very heavy load, through jungle, swamps, up and down steep hills, and walking in rivers, including coping with sharp rocks, which are often invisible. Two upriver Iban men had been gaoled in Mukah and escaped and, it was thought, they might be trying to reach Oya by the beach. This turned out to be the case and they were found sitting on the edge of the beach about seven miles from Mukah. Apparently, they had started walking on the soft sand as the tide was high and then switched to the hard sand as the tide retreated. Their leg muscles were not attuned to walking on sand and their initial quick progress had got slower and slower as their muscular pain increased. Finally, they had decided that it was pointless to go through the unknown swampy jungle above the beach and, as they certainly were incapable of reaching Oya walking along the sand, they decided to wait where they were and surrender. These Ibans would, of course, have been scornful of lowlanders whose lungs and leg muscles were such that they caused them to toil painfully when coping with steep sided high mountains, even when not heavily laden!

The D.O. Mukah required a small launch, as the only practical way to get to his Sub-District H.Q. of Oya or Balingian was to sail out of the Mukah River and go by sea into the Oya or Balingian River. It had two berths in the bows and a shallow draught to allow to cross the sand bars at the entrance to those rivers.



Beside the  
Batu Balu  
Rapids, ulu Oya

I had been told that it was possible to walk from the village of Oya at the mouth of the Oya River to a small bay on the Igan River and the path was unmistakeable. I had gone to Oya by jeep and arranged for my launch to go from Mukah to the small bay and wait for me there. I sent the jeep at Oya back to Mukah and set out along the beach and was shown the start of the path to the Igan River. The path got less and less clear and disappeared altogether. I got lost and so used my compass to go across country to the bay. This meant walking through a mangrove swamp at low tide. A most unpleasant experience followed. I jumped from aerial root to aerial root, trying to avoid the sharp shoots of baby trees and periodically slipped into the mud. Mud skippers, fiddler crabs and other mud lovers ran from my presence. There were no thorns but I had to spend a lot of time ducking under branches that blocked my route and weighing up the advantages or not of abandoning my compass journey and going further to the left and hoping to reach dry land. I decided that, if I left the direct route, I was quite likely to get irretrievably lost so I carried on hoping that I was going more or less in the right direction. All this was very exhausting and I was frightened lest I met a crocodile and in addition I was an easy prey to swarms of mosquitoes, who were delighted to find me – what did they feed on when I was not there? I had little idea of how far I needed to walk to reach the bay. Then I noticed that the incoming tide was arriving. I felt very lonely and unhappy and regretted my desire to see more of the local geography, fauna and flora instead of reclining luxuriously, with a drink beside me, on my launch, as it sailed a short distance downriver from Oya, out to sea (while I was possibly watching dolphins dancing around the boat's bowwave) and followed the coastline to the mouth of the Igan River and so to Sibu. It was with more than pleasure that eventually I found proper soil around me and then I joined a path, going in the right direction. The mosquitos had been left behind and I began to walk jauntily along at greater speed. I couldn't have cared less whether this was the path to the bay. My main pleasure was that I had escaped from the mangrove area, never again would I travel in one, and I knew that a path must lead somewhere – it did, to the bay – and there my launch was anchored and when I called, a rowing boat came to collect me. In a short space of time I had progressed from utter misery to a feeling of great relaxation as I sat in a comfortable armchair with a brandy ginger ale beside me.

Where the coastline had sandy beaches, the seashore was likely to have casuarina trees. I was interested to see that, when the landas wind brought with it damp salty air, seaweed got a hold on the branches of the trees and looked very out of place as it started to grow hanging downwards from the branches. I now regret to say that I played childish jokes on unsuspecting visitors by asking them if they had ever seen moss forest. I omitted to tell them that in Sarawak moss forest can grow at a height of 4,000 feet or more. I then took them to admire the casuarina trees at sea level!

On a fine day, there was quite a glare in Mukah, as the few coconut palms and casuarina trees dotted around were tall and thin and did not often produce worthwhile areas of shade or absorb the glare as effectively as spreading umbrella shaped shade trees would do. However, there was usually a sea breeze by day and a land breeze by night. I used to find that, after dusk had fallen and I had had my evening shower, there was a very sticky, windless 1½ hours while the changeover of breezes took place. After my shower in stations such as Kapit or Sibu, I would put on a string vest and a sarong and feel cool and relaxed. This was not possible in Mukah as masses of sandflies took advantage of the windless conditions to attack me. It is astonishing how such very tiny insects can torture one with their bites. I had to put on a long sleeved shirt and long

trousers and apply insect repellent to all exposed areas of skin. After my shower and with a tumbler containing a peg of whisky and a lot of water beside me, I would write my letters. As the insect repellent disintegrated the outside of my fountain pen, in Mukah I had to wrap my handkerchief around the fingers that held my fountain pen and remember to prevent the cloth from touching and spreading the wet ink on the paper.

Many post offices allow Christmas cards to be stamped cheaply if the envelope is unsealed and the flap, with the glue on it, is folded into the envelope. People in colder and drier climates do not realise that, as an envelope progresses through the world postal system before delivery to the recipient in Sarawak, the natural humidity in the air is often such that the glue is activated and the flap becomes stuck to the Christmas card, which, if it is the picture side up, is not thereby improved. When posting a card in Sarawak, one had to ensure that the picture was placed in such a way that the sticky fold would, if the humidity was great, stick the flap to the back of the card.

## Sea Fishing

There are various methods of extracting fish from the sea that are used by the Melanaus. The most interesting is called Panau. For this type of fishing, the Melanaus have evolved a most seaworthy, broad, sailing boat about 20 feet long called a 'barong', and it is well suited for this part of the coast. Barongs are practically unsinkable although they sometimes get overturned when crossing a bar in exceptionally bad weather. Twelve to 14 men make up the crew of a barong. The main season for this particular type of fishing is from April to July and again from September to December.

During the fishing season, it is the practice for the panau fishing fleet to set sail in the early hours of the morning. The fishing grounds are reached after 4 to 5 hours' sailing into the South China Sea and are 18 to 25 miles from the shore. Each barong makes for



Melanau Islam from Kampong Judan, Mukah fishing for shrimps and small fish at low water, October 1952.

its own fishing area and, on arrival there, the crew drop a series of fronds of the nipah or coconut palm (known as 'upan'). An upan is weighted down with lumps of clay, tightly enclosed in sago bark and bound with rattan – these weights are known as 'petuak'. An upan also has a 6 foot long cord attached to it, at the other end of which is a floating buoy known as 'apeng'. The result of all this is that when an upan is thrown overboard, the floating frond is anchored by the weight about 6 feet below the surface of the sea. The upan are thrown overboard about 90 yards apart in roughly a straight line. The theory is that the fish

collect under the frond leaves to obtain shade. This part of the fishing routine is often performed out of sight of land.

The barong then returns to port. Next day the barong sallies forth again to find the upan that is at the end of the series that were thrown overboard the previous day.

Having found the upan, the barong's sails are lowered. The boat has, on one side of it, a large triangular frame (known as 'idus'), with a net in it. This is fixed up and sticks out into the air at about 45° or less from the side of the barong with one of the points of the triangle resting on the deck and the long side between the two other points sticking up into the air. The sailors wait until they judge there is a large shoal of fish sheltering under the upan, the barong gently approaches the first upan and, when close to it, all the sailors go to that side of the barong, that is next to the upan, so that the boat tilts enough for the idus (with its net) to go under the water well below the level of the upan, which is hooked and gently and slowly drawn towards the boat until the upan is over the idus – hopefully the fish have stayed under the frond and not been frightened away. The sailors then rush to the other side of the barong, which causes the idus to come out of the water (with the frond and the fish in it), and the angle of the idus is such that the fish all slither and are funnelled down the netting to land on the deck of the barong. The upan is thrown back into the sea and the barong goes gently to the next upan, and the process is repeated. Sometimes, before the idus has been lowered into the water, one or two men lower themselves gently into the sea on the far side of the barong from the idus and swimming quietly in a large circle until they are on the other side of the upan, quietly waiting there until the idus starts to be lifted out of the water, when they vigorously splash around, thus discouraging any fish from trying to escape by swimming away from the barong and out of the rising idus.

I asked if I might join a panau fishing team and was rather unwillingly told that I could, provided I did not hinder the fishing by using prohibited words, which would assuredly cause the fishermen to have bad luck. We set out about 2.30 a.m. The words that I should not allow myself to express included a fair number of words, many of which I had never heard before. The forbidden words were all involved, in the widest sense, with the actions men did when fishing, but many of the words were also involved in everyday life, and I found that I was getting anxious lest in normal conversation one or more of the forbidden words would escape my lips – this was especially likely when I was asking someone to explain to me what was going on and why. About an hour after daylight, the crew arrived at what they clearly knew were their own upans and that they were not poaching someone else's. I gave them full marks for navigating in the dark to a spot in the sea out of sight of land, which meant that they must have worked out what would have happened to the positions of their upans, due to the effect of tides and winds since they had last seen them.

The income from the catch is usually divided so that the captain of the boat gets two shares, the crew one share, the owner of the boat one share and the owner of the idus one share.

### **Formation of the Sarawak Rangers**

In Sarawak 90% of the Chinese know nothing reliable about the Ibans, have no wish to learn anything of the Dayaks or the Orang Ulu and certainly do not want to visit their areas and would be fearful of spending the night in a longhouse! In 1857, the Chinese gold miners in Bau surged downriver and arrived unexpectedly and fully armed in Kuching, intending to capture the first Rajah and to cause general mayhem amongst the white Government officers and their families, but they carefully left the missionaries

alone. The Rajah had escaped by swimming across a creek, hiding in the jungle and then succeeded in reaching the house of a friendly Malay. Kuching was in the hands of the Chinese. It was not long before James's nephew, the future Rajah Charles Brooke, arrived from Second Division with a Sea-Dayak and Malay force, and chased the Chinese back to Bau, where retribution was swift and effective, with the Ibans taking many heads.



Sergeant Major of the West Yorks with Sarawak Rangers queuing up for lunch, 1953.

This episode made a deep impression on the Chinese population, who regularly regaled head hunting stories. British and Australian visitors who I took on trips were also aware of the fearful reputation of the Ibans and were often nervous at the idea of spending a night in a longhouse. The reputation about the headhunters of Borneo had spread to Malaya, where the Communist (95% Chinese) troubles were still going on, with the Communists operating from the jungle, with the object of overthrowing the Colonial Government and replacing it with a Chinese Communist regime. The morale and discipline of the Communist troops were good and they had learnt how to live in the jungle, were well supplied with arms, and successfully blackmailed the Chinese farmers, bazaar

shopkeepers, doctors, etc. (who were not politically minded and merely wished to be left alone and get on quietly with their lives) to provide them with food and medicines.

The ulu Iban men (who were good trackers) were used to going into the jungle, often living there for quite long periods, hunting and getting jungle produce of economic value. The Malayan government asked Sarawak if some of these people could be brought to Malaya and be attached to British or Gurkha or Malayan Army units as trackers. Their reputation as headhunters and possibly as users of blowpipes (though they had long ago given these up for shotguns) would be an additional point in their favour. A further factor was that it was a tradition for Iban bachelors to leave the longhouse, go and do daring deeds and return with a head, and the maidens would fall over themselves to give such brave and lusty warriors the sort of favours that vigorous and fit bachelors enjoy. Nowadays, however, it was frowned upon for the bachelors to go off and return with a head. Instead, they often went to the Sarawak oilfields to work there and returned with cash, which was the next best thing.

So, from November 1952 to January 1953, I was taken away from Mukah and told to go on a recruiting trip amongst the Ibans of ulu Second and Third Divisions. I was to tell them about the formation of the Sarawak Rangers, which wanted Ibans used to tracking in the jungle, to go to Malaya and be attached to units there who were fighting the Chinese Communists. Their primary task was to track – not to fight – but it must be realised that there was a strong element of danger in the job and they would be armed

and might have to fight and risk death. The news I brought was received amongst the bachelors and also amongst a certain amount of married men with delight. Going to Malaya as a tracker was a more attractive proposal than going to the Sarawak oilfields! It was stated that it would be easier for those to be recruited who were traditional Ibans and who had their hair cut straight across their foreheads and long behind and, of course, who were tattooed.

As can be imagined, there was no difficulty in recruiting for the Sarawak Rangers and the press in Malaya was helped to 'inform' the Malayan citizens that the fierce head hunting Ibans would soon be amongst them, by publishing pictures of Ibans in loin cloths, which had been carefully adjusted to hide the fact that they were wearing shorts (their usual garb nowadays), parang at the side, blowpipe in one hand, and a headdress with hornbill feathers. It would have been dull for the Press to have been given a truthful picture of a tracker in the normal camouflaged jungle green uniform of a soldier armed with a rifle. The Press did not mention that I had told the trackers that, on no account, were they allowed to take heads.

The fear of Borneo headhunters held by the public in Malaya – the majority of whom had never been to Borneo and, as is usual with the public, feared the unknown – was greatly increased by the lurid press reports at the time, when it was announced that the Commanding Officer of the Sarawak Rangers in Seremban had an Iban batman, who had quarrelled with the Commander's Chinese cook over a matter of honour and so had inflicted a very nasty wound on him with his parang. In addition, and more to the point, the British, Malay and Gurkha troops greatly appreciated and the Communists greatly respected the ability of the Ibans to trace accurately the movements of the enemy.

In Seremban there was a Eurasian hairdresser called 'Blossom', whose reputation was such that European ladies from far and wide flocked to her so that their hair would appear as nature had never intended it to be. While they were on duty in the jungle, the Ibans had no expenses as they had free uniforms, free food and nothing to spend money on. Apart from their pay, they had a handsome jungle allowance. A couple of long haired, tattooed Iban trackers returned to civilization after a long time in the jungle and were presented with an amount of cash that they had never expected to have. Instead of spending it on wine, women and song (and saving their money for the future, was not a high priority for them), they decided to go to Blossom and ask for a shampoo and a perm! Their appearance at the entrance to Blossom's establishment caused great alarm. Blossom put a table between her and them and said in a high pitched squeak "What do you want?" When she heard how they wanted their long greasy hair attended to, she shrieked "Get out! Get out". Sadly the thwarted Ibans followed her instructions and left her premises to spend their cash in a more traditional male manner.

I have previously mentioned how the Ibans lay great store on the information that the spirits impart to them in dreams. On my recruiting tour, I had noticed in a longhouse, where I was spending the night, one young Iban, who had loudly and repeatedly volunteered how desperately he wished to become a Sarawak Ranger and do or die. That night he had had a dream that it would be most risky for him to join up. Next day, this was accepted by everyone as a perfectly valid reason for cancelling his application to go to Malaya and not one person even hinted that perhaps he was a coward and had had second thoughts about joining up. I suspect that many an Iban's sub-conscious feelings could cause him, very conveniently, to have a dream, which could be regaled to

all and sundry, and so enable him to carry out an action he wished to do or refuse an action others would have liked him to do.

When an Iban goes into a deep sleep, he suspects that his soul takes temporary leave of him. He hates therefore being awoken suddenly as he feels his soul may have difficulty taking up its place again inside him.

## 11 – PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNOR 1953 – 1954

The Governor, Sir Anthony Abell, a bachelor, had joined the Colonial Service and was a provincial commissioner in Nigeria before being appointed to replace the murdered Duncan Stewart as Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Sarawak. When need be, he realised the necessity of dressing up in his full formal uniform, but by nature he preferred informality. He was an unassuming and approachable man, and he genuinely enjoyed ulu travel and so philosophically bore the concomitant discomforts. To sum up, he was very popular with the people as they felt that he was someone who adopted as far as possible the best aspects of the patriarchal Rajahs, although, of course, he could not escape from the bureaucratic control of the Colonial Office. He realised that Sarawak's background and traditions were very different from those of most other British colonies and certainly from African ones, so his behaviour had to take this into account. In fact, someone at the Colonial Office had made an inspired decision in selecting him. He had great admirers amongst all races in Sarawak and had so many friends amongst them, that no-one ever thought that he favoured one race over another or one individual more than another.

I had met Sir Charles Arden-Clarke and Sir Anthony Abell and their present and past private secretaries from time to time and, after discussions with the latter, I had never felt that to become Private Secretary was my cup of tea. I was startled therefore in January 1953 to be told to cease recruiting Ibans and become Private Secretary. My predecessor's tenure of the post had been suddenly shortened. I suppose his return to other duties had been hastened when, late one evening, he drove the Governor's car across a wide deep ditch from Rock Road into the Museum gardens – a remarkable feat of driving and worthy of great applause had it not been done by someone notably inebriated. Anyway, next day the P.W.D. had to go to a lot of trouble before they could work out how to reverse the process and return the undamaged vehicle to a life on the road. The disfavour, in which my predecessor was held, was increased when he lost the keys to the Governor's safe and Messrs Chubb had to be invited to open the safe and change the lock. As if this was not enough trouble for him, my predecessor found the missing and now useless keys and, instead of keeping quiet, triumphantly announced his discovery and so succeeded with flying colours in reminding everyone of his unfortunate exploit.

A certain D.O. was so horrified at being appointed P.S. that, in great haste, he got engaged and shortly afterwards married to a lady in Kuching and the Governor had to release him and find a replacement for him! I never considered this escape route.

The job of P.S. had its perks. I had free board and lodging and a free servant and a far higher standard of living than I had previously had. When I stopped being P.S. my financial situation was agreeably healthy. One of the inevitable problems of being P.S. was that the Governor and I were thrown together when he was carrying out most of his duties and sometimes when he was off duty, and so it was difficult for me to lead a life of my own. Basically, it was because Sir Anthony was such a considerate man (and had no dragon of a wife to make one feel one was her tormented slave) that I enjoyed my 1½ years in the job. When I compared my life with those of the P.Ss. in North Borneo or in Malaya, they were very envious of me.

On the household side, I was helped by Ruth Murray, a New Zealander and wife of the Superintendent and later Director of Lands and Surveys. She was a tower of strength in organising dinner parties and the general running of the Astana (the Governor's residence) and managed to keep the Malay staff and Chinese cook devoted to her.

I was not present when the Governor had to entertain Princess Marina, Duchess of Kent, and her staff. Her Lady-in-Waiting was a daughter of the Duke of Norfolk and, on one full dress gala night, she turned up wearing a far from distinguished looking tiara. After he had had a few drinks, Sir Anthony said "Lady Mary, you have on a most unusual tiara. It looks like a piece of old iron!" to which she answered "It is a piece of old iron. It was given to one of my ancestors by King Edward 1<sup>st</sup>!"

Mr Mark Longman (and his wife who had been a bridesmaid to Princess Elisabeth) of the well known publishing firm, came to Kuching to discuss the provision of books with the Education Department, but because he was a friend of the Governor he and his wife stayed at the Astana. On such occasions, I was often told to leave my office work and take the guests on a day trip to one of the Land Dayak areas. They were most appreciative. When someone says something to me, I presume that they mean what they say. I had not yet learnt how to interpret Buckingham Palace euphemisms. Mr Longman and his wife were rather late for dinner and she complained to me that this was because the hair dryer in her room "was not working". Next day, when they had left Sarawak, I plugged in the hairdryer and put the switch to 'cool' and it worked, and I switched it to 'hot' and warm air came out, so I decided that the complainant was just incompetent in using it. It was a few weeks later that the next woman who stayed in that room told me, in very clear angry terms, that she had washed her hair, turned on the hair dryer to 'hot' and after a bit realised that a disgusting smell came out of it and had contaminated her hair. She had had to re-shampoo her hair and then dry it with the cold part of the blower. I took the hairdryer to bits and found the remains of a long dead chichak lizard which had made a home in it and then been electrocuted!

On another occasion, the Governor had invited various Kuching dignitaries and their wives to dinner. After the port and the loyal toast, and while the gentlemen were enjoying more port and the relaxed stories that accompanied this, the Governor noticed that, much earlier than usual, the ladies had returned to the verandah and so we men all adjusted to the situation and trooped out to rejoin them. Usually the guests waited for the Governor to withdraw before leaving the Astana or until he had given them a signal that those who wished to could now leave. On this occasion, the senior lady told her astonished husband that it was time to leave and she resolutely got up and immediately all the other ladies collected their husbands. The party had seemed to be going quite well and so the Governor and I were intrigued at this slight solecism in observing strict protocol and as the Governor was unmarried, it was my job to find out what it was all about. It turned out that the first lady to go into the bathroom, was about to sit down when she found a frog in the W.C. bowl and she called the others to look. There was much twittering. One answer to the problem, that did NOT occur to any lady (for it was quite inconceivable) was to put her hand into the bowl and scoop out the 'problem'. No-one even murmured that perhaps they could or should each in turn ignore the beastie in the bowl and proceed as though it was not there. Eventually, someone with great initiative suggested flushing the loo and there was a chorus of approval. The plug was pulled, the frog disappeared, the pacified ladies (less the first one there) left the loo. The first lady cautiously had one more look before sitting down and then, to her

consternation, saw the frog reappear! There was no Mrs Governor to deal with this problem. If there were other loos, hopefully without frogs, no-one knew where they were. The needs of the ladies varied from desperate to not too urgent. With great solidarity they agreed that a desperate situation needed a desperate remedy and so they noisily returned to the verandah and soon collected their husbands – who were deprived of the brandies they had been looking forward to.



At the Astana: Tama Weng on left in foreground, Sir Anthony Abell at rear, Commissioner General (Malcolm MacDonald) on right in foreground, 1954.

On another occasion, the Governor had invited from the ulu Baram River Temonggong Oyong Lawai Jau, the Paramount Chief of the Kayans and Kenyahs, and his wife to join his other guests at a large dinner party. They behaved impeccably though the conventions at the dinner table were utterly foreign to them. The Kayans had an aristocracy and both the Temonggong and his wife had a long genealogy behind them. The Temonggong was definitely a commanding personality and his wife held herself, on the right of the Governor, upright and was reminiscent of a rather short Queen Mary, even if she did have elongated ears with heavy earrings in them and wore a sarong – but a gold brocade one. While she sat next to the Governor her husband sat opposite him. They watched the Governor out of the corner of their eyes but without looking directly at him. He was served first and on this occasion, to help them, he slowly and clearly served himself and then equally clearly picked up one of the many implements to the left and/or right of his plate and held it momentarily for them to identify it. Whichever piece of cutlery he picked up, they did the same. The amount he took from the dish was the amount they took. The Temonggong's wife told the Governor how much she was

enjoying these strange dishes. All was going well. There was, however, a slight hiccup, when, after the loyal toast, the Chief Secretary's wife, the senior European lady, said "Shall we ladies adjourn to the drawing room?" and all the ladies, except the Temonggong's wife, got up and then all sat down again as Mrs. Temonggong said that she had enjoyed the port and could she please have another glassful. Thus, on this occasion, the ladies took much longer than usual to leave the table to the men.

I heard later that, while we men were enjoying ourselves relaxing in the dining room, a problem had arisen with the ladies. Mrs Chief Secretary had invited Mrs Paramount Chief to go into the Ladies first. After 10 minutes, with some ladies beginning to get desperate to go in, Mrs Temonggong had not reappeared. However, it seemed rude to tap on the door and shout through "Are you all right inside there?" Eventually, after 15 minutes or so, when Mrs Chief Secretary had steeled herself to call through the door, it opened and a beaming Temonggong's wife emerged saying "How civilized you white people are. I did enjoy that bath!".

I also had to attend parties outside Sarawak. The Governor of Sarawak was also High Commissioner for Brunei, and in 1954 we adjourned there to celebrate the week long ear-piercing ceremonies of two of H.H. the Sultan's daughters and the circumcision of his son. Though I did not witness the actual ceremonies, I do remember the subsequent splendid dinner party. The rectangular room had a marble floor. At one of the narrow ends was a dais with luxurious cushions on which sat His Highness and his most honoured guests to partake of the food. For us hoi polloi there were no cushions. We sat on hard mats laid on the marble floor in two rows down the length of the room about four feet apart, facing each other and at right angles to the dais. For most of us white people, sitting cross legged for any length of time can be torture, especially so if portly and with stiff joints. For a long time nothing happened. Then plates and glasses were put in front of us, after which there was another long pause. Then dishes of excellent looking curry and sambal (small dishes of spices and other condiments) were put in front of those on the dais and between the two rows of guests below it and, for us alcoholics, champagne, which had not been chilled, was put in the glasses. After some speeches of welcome, we could at last have a drink and serve ourselves from the dishes. My main memory of this meal was of cold curry and warm champagne (the curry was delicious) and of an elderly and fat P.W.D. engineer, who in no way was able to sit cross legged and reach forward to put things on his plate, so he decided to kneel down on the floor with his huge bottom in the air as he ate off his plate on the floor.

While on the subject of Brunei, I might mention here that poverty struck Sarawak was desperately short of state funds to develop the country and raise its standard of living, while ultra rich Brunei had money to do all that was needed and, for instance, had no income tax! Brunei also had no tax on tobacco. Sir Anthony Abell told the British Resident, Brunei, (John Barcroft) that he had a most difficult job for him but it would be a feather in his cap if he could achieve it. As Sarawak was losing a lot of revenue through people buying cigarettes in Brunei and bringing them into Sarawak undeclared to the customs at the border, would he try to get adopted by the Sultan's Council, what would certainly be a most unpopular decision, a tax on tobacco in Brunei at the same rate as in Sarawak. Barcroft put this matter on the agenda at the next meeting of the Council with great foreboding, and then turned up at the meeting of the Council (largely composed of Brunei aristocrats, often closely related to the Sultan) and spoke with great fervour about the danger to public health of smoking (he himself was a great smoker)

and of how highly Sarawak would appreciate a far-sighted decision made by Brunei and that, of course, any duty on imported tobacco would not apply to imports for the personal use of H.H., the Sultan (as Head of State) nor to his immediate relatives. The members of the Council looked glum, mentioned that they scarcely saw the need for them to help Sarawak with its difficulties etc., but eventually reluctantly agreed to pass the measure and Barcroft was able to tell the Governor that he had achieved the impossible.

It was several weeks later that Bob Chater, now in charge of Brunei customs, came to see Barcroft and said it was embarrassing, but the Sultan's brother had for some time been importing some 100,000 cigarettes a month for his personal use. This is the sort of problem that Residents have to tackle tactfully and he went and called on the gentleman in question and was immediately offered tea or coffee. Good manners forbade enquiring what was the reason for the visit. In due course Barcroft cautiously broached the subject matter and the Sultan's brother looked the Resident straight in the eye and said "But this is outrageous. It is that damned clerk of mine. I must tick him off. He has added two noughts to what I need."

I also accompanied His Excellency (H.E.) to Jesselton (now Kota Kinabalu), capital of North Borneo (now Sabah). Pre-war, the country had been known as the Chartered Company of British North Borneo and I was amused (as indeed I was expected to be) when I was told that the Company issued its own paper money, on which appeared the usual "Promise to pay bearer on demand" signed by the Treasurer – W.C. Smelt. How inconsiderate and unimaginative his parents must have been to give a son those initials with such a surname!

I have mentioned how few roads Sarawak had, so that most cross country journeys consisted of going down one river, out to sea and up another river on a launch (or in the case of the Governor – a yacht) that could cope with the shallow water on the sandbar that was a hazard at the mouth of most of the rivers. When sailing across the sea, the crew would let out a line or two from the stern of the boat and pull in beautifully fresh fish. There was a delightful dish called 'Ikan Umeh', where the fish had to be absolutely fresh, was immediately boned and its flesh cut into mouthful sizes, which were then marinated in lime juice and spices. After a couple of hours or so it was ready for consumption.

On one such journey, the Governor, the Chief Secretary and a Colonel of the Royal Engineers and I had left the Baram River and were sailing in calm weather parallel to the coast on the way back to Kuching, when an ikan tenggiri (large mackerel type of fish) was caught and I asked the crew to prepare ikan umeh, which, I was sure, the Governor's guests had never tasted. The wind then began to rise and the yacht began to prance about and the previous happy exchanges of conversation became less and less. Some of us now began to feel pallid and in a cold sweat and preferred to lapse into silence. At this stage, a cheerful Malay sailor arrived with the ikan umeh. The Chief Secretary asked what it was and, when I said "raw fish", he and the Colonel quickly got up and bolted to their cabins. For that matter, on this occasion neither the Governor nor I welcomed the idea of raw fish, but to show willingness, we cautiously partook of one small piece each and then we began to feel better and, after some more ikan umeh, were soon chattering happily again. Thus, we learned that, when feeling queezy, we

could recommend to anyone raw fish as something which will cure you or drive you to your cabin.

It was interesting how the extrovert Ibans, the aristocratic Kayans and Kenyahs and the westernized Malays and Chinese, male or female, were prepared to cope with the problems of British customs and habits. A great many traditional Malay and Chinese men, when they had received a formal invitation to a party at the Astana, had gone to the trouble of finding out what was the correct way of answering. Some of the wives of the Chinese and especially of the Malays were unwilling to attend such functions. Thus I often received an answer worded as "Mr So and So accepts with pleasure your very kind invitation to such and such a party on such and such a date but Mrs So and So much regrets that she will be ill". I used to find that when these ladies did decide to accept an invitation, they collected together with others of their race, who, they had made sure before they accepted the invitation, would be present. It was a real chore feeling duty bound during a party to go and talk to them. They were so modest that when I, a man, approached them for a polite chit chat, the result, so far as I was concerned, was uncomfortable. I would select one of the more senior of them and ask an anodyne question about the weather or their children and they would exchange glances with each other, and the one I had selected would giggle but say nothing. I then recklessly tried a question with another and received the same result. Shortly afterwards I would smile at them and leave them to my and, doubtlessly, to their relief.

An edict came out of the Colonial Office that Government officers, who had war service before joining the Colonial Service, would be given a pay rise up the incremental scale (but not any change in their promotion position) according to the length of their war service. Personally, since I had joined up in October 1939, I found this an unusually agreeable edict. An interesting case then arose. Otto Brunig, a German, who had served with his country's forces and was now a Forest Department officer, claimed extra pay under the edict. This shocked some in the Secretariat, but after perusal of the wording of the edict, it was clear that no-one had thought of specifying that the necessary service must have been in the British or the allied forces. I have never really made up my mind as to whether my country gave a shining example of the right way to behave or was quite mad when the authorities decided to grant him his request. I doubt very much whether any other country in the world would have done so to a former enemy under similar circumstances.

The Government buildings were on one side of the Sarawak River, together with the bazaar, some Malay kampongs, the mosque, the cathedral, the wharves and indeed 90% of Kuching. The Astana was across river in rural surroundings more or less opposite the Secretariat and Law Courts. On the Astana side of the river were several Malay kampongs and Fort Margherita (the H.Q. of the Sarawak Constabulary). There was a suspension bridge some miles upriver, but it meant a long detour to drive from the Astana to the Secretariat along what was a bad road. To cross the river, the Governor used the traditional long boat, made out of a huge log and paddled by Malay paddlers fore and aft. In the middle of the boat was a semi-circular seat (that could cater for several passengers), well upholstered and cushioned under a large awning. The journey across the river took about 10 minutes. The Governor had frequently been asked to save time and money by replacing the paddlers with an outboard and driver but had steadfastly refused, saying that the click-clack of the paddles and the lack of urgency as he reclined on his cushions was very soothing, gave him time to think quietly

about problems and, indeed, on more than one occasion, due to the relaxing atmosphere of the passage across the Sarawak River, he had come to a decision or decided to reverse a decision as he travelled across the river, just as the Rajahs had done in olden times.

When the Duchess of Kent had visited Sarawak, the press reported that this brave woman had crossed the crocodile infested Sarawak River in a tiny log canoe. The postwar increase in river traffic, including noisy outboards and sea going ships, had long ago discouraged crocodiles from living anywhere near Kuching and there had been none for a very long time. Calling the Governor's comfortable long boat a 'canoe' was stretching truthful reporting to the uttermost.

There was an Agriculture Station some 30 miles from Kuching on the Serian Road, which was run by Ken Kay. The Governor enjoyed Ken's company and was always interested in the agricultural experiments going on at the station. On one occasion I drove the Governor's official large Humber there up the narrow winding road. Also in the car was Dr Clapham and Lek, an Astana servant. Next day, we had to leave the Agricultural Station early as the Governor and I had to cross the river to get to the Astana, change our clothes, re-cross the river, and go to the quayside to welcome our new Chief Justice (from Hong Kong) who was coming to us on the Rajah Brooke.

On our way to Kuching, I was driving round a curve on the outside bend of the narrow road, with a sheer drop down on my side of the road, when I suddenly saw coming at speed towards me in the middle of the road a large Public Works Department lorry heavily laden with soil from some earthworks. I went as far left as I could and the lorry and the Governor's large Humber just managed not to scrape each other as we passed in opposite directions. Then to my alarm, the Humber leaned over to the left as the road verge gave way and the car began to roll over down the slope. The car came to a halt on its side held up by a stout tree some 15 feet down the slope. During this episode there was complete silence in the car. To my consternation, I found that I was now standing on His Excellency. I grasped the steering wheel and quickly managed to remove my feet from his body. The escorting police were around us and got us out. The Governor was in pain from what turned out to be a broken arm. Dr Clapham (I don't know how it happened that although he had a broken back, he didn't die) was very quiet, as was Lek.

The Governor ordered me to go off at once in the police car so as to welcome the new C.J. The police had radioed for help and the vehicle taking the Governor and party back to Kuching were very nearly forced off the road (once again by another heavily laden P.W.D. lorry) at a corner. They were taken to hospital for a check up. The Governor's arm was set and put in a sling. He was worried, as it was his right arm and we were about to enter the series of ceremonies for the Queen's coronation. John Clapham's back and chest were enveloped for many weeks in plaster of Paris. When he emerged from this, instead of being a rather round shouldered academic, he looked like a guardsman. He never thanked me for the alteration. When he got to the Astana, Lek, though unhurt, went straight off to his kampong and was off work for about four days as he went frequently to the mosque to pray.

As for me, the car I was in was also nearly forced off the road by yet another P.W.D. vehicle as we went to Kuching. During the journey I had time to wonder about how

much the responsibility for the accident was due to my driving and its effect on my future. I got to the wharf on the town side of the river and was glad to see the paddlers waiting for the Governor. I was also alarmed to see the Rajah Brooke coming majestically up the river at full speed on the high tide and about to start her startling manoeuvre, whereby she turned to the right and appeared to be about to charge up into a narrow tree lined creek beside the Astana garden. Just in time, her bow anchor was dropped close to the entrance of the creek, so that, held by the anchor, her stern was swung round by the incoming tide and she was now facing downriver. The engines were set to 'forward' and she slowly moved downriver against the tide and, in full control, was able to draw up at the wharf on the town side of the Sarawak River.

I told the paddlers to paddle as they had never done before and as I leaped ashore at the Astana steps I told them to be ready to do the same in a short time in the reverse direction. I galloped up the path to the Astana to my room, threw off my clothes, sponged my face, leaped into a suit, rushed out of the Astana into the boat and shouted "Go like hell" and they went just as the Rajah Brooke in the middle of the river was cautiously approaching the quayside. I leaped out before the boat was at the steps at the other side, rushed the 300 yards to the wharf, charged through the crowd gathered there and was in the right position as the gangway was let down by the ship. Geoffrey Wilson, Commissioner of Sarawak Constabulary, was waiting there and he said to me "You look very white." I told him what had happened and he said he would get me a brandy ginger ale. I went aboard and greeted the Chief Justice and Mrs Williams and gave the Governor's apologies. Mrs Williams gave me the key to her cabin and graciously told me to see to the luggage. On the way to the cabin I met the Commissioner with a glass in his hand for me. I took it to the cabin, sat on a bunk, looked at the luggage and did nothing about it but began to sip my drink and was feeling the better for it when I walked Mrs Williams. She gave me a very peculiar look and later told me that (while in Hong Kong) she had heard that some people did drink a lot in Sarawak and obviously, right at the start of her tour in Sarawak, I had confirmed all that she had heard.

The Governor of Malaya sent a secret message to the Governor of Sarawak to ask if Sarawak would accept a surrendered Chinese Communist. Apparently he had been a very good jungle soldier but unfortunately had fallen in love with his officer, a woman captain. They got married and then wished to leave the jungle forces and lead a middle class life. There was no point in asking permission to do so, therefore they surrendered to the Government, said (truthfully) that they had got fed up with Communism and life in the jungle and wished to settle down and start a family. They knew that as soon as the Malayan authorities released them, they would be traced and assassinated. Very reluctantly Sarawak accepted Koo Chong Kong and found him a job in a cinema and the Special Branch watched him like a hawk. There was not the slightest evidence that Koo was associating with the Sarawak Communists and the Special Branch used to consult him occasionally, and found that his knowledge of communist processes of thought and ways of doing things was invaluable to them. In 1952 he was invited to join the Special Branch and rose up the ranks and became an Assistant Superintendent. Long after I left the Sarawak service, the Malaysian Government wanted him to become head of the Police in Ipoh, Perak, West Malaysia. He and his wife were very happy in Sarawak and he tried hard not to go but to no avail. The Communists had long memories. A fortnight after his arrival in Ipoh, his car was stopped at traffic lights and he was shot.

There were no doubt cogent reasons for having the Coronation in June 1953, but it was a highly inconvenient time for Her Majesty's Islamic subjects, who were in the middle of their month of fasting. For the Coronation in London, Sarawak was represented by the Chief Secretary, Robert Aikman, for the Malays, there was Datu Abang Openg, District Officer Kuching and later to become the first Governor of an independent Sarawak; for the Ibans, Temonggong Jugah and for the Chinese, Chew Geok Lin, who owned the Wah Tat Bank in Sibu and who was Kapitan China of the Cantonese there.

Mrs Chew had heard about some air accidents occurring to the Comet and her husband had promised her that he would not fly by that plane, well knowing that the party was flying from Singapore on one. To his embarrassment, the Sarawak group was photographed just before getting into the Comet, which was clearly visible behind them. Mrs Chew saw the photograph and a very angry letter reached her husband in London. Next day the party happened to be walking down Bond Street and Mr Chew saw a magnificent diamond ring, with a huge flawless stone in it. He had a great respect for the Chief Secretary and presumed that a man in that position would be very rich indeed. Credit cards had not yet been invented, so he asked Aikman to produce the money to buy it. Aikman told him that he hadn't that kind of figure immediately available and he certainly wasn't carrying such a sum of money on him. Mr Chew was amazed and disappointed at this response. Anyhow, he acquired the ring and, on his return to Sibu, gave it to his wife in atonement for breaking his promise. Next time I saw Mr Chew, the ring was on his own finger.

Datu Abang Openg saw a tie in a Leicester Square shop window and went in to buy it. The shopkeeper told him that the tie was that of the Horse Guards and looking at the Datu piercingly enquired whether he was entitled to wear it. The Datu – short, tubby and it would be difficult to find anyone looking less like a Horse Guardsman – answered that he hadn't realised what the tie represented, but he now wanted it more than ever. Aikman persuaded him not to wear it while he was in the U.K.

The party was delayed at Dum Dum airport, Calcutta, and drove into the city on a sight-seeing tour. The Temonggong, who had a great respect for the Indians, whom he had met as successful traders, doctors or holding posts in Government, was horrified at what he saw in Calcutta and said he would never have the same respect for Indians in future. He did a journey by train to Devonshire and was most impressed at how the British appeared to have a use for every acre of land. Aikman had told the party that daylight arrived about 4.30 a.m., but Jugah couldn't believe this and, after his first night in a hotel in Britain and having remained awake since daybreak, he persuaded the other two to descend to the breakfast room at 6 a.m. to the astonishment of the charladies who arrived shortly afterwards.

When leaving the longhouse of Kayans, Kenyahs and other Orang Ulu, one can be affected in more than one way by their unusual method of showing their friendship for you and, later, their regret that you are leaving their premises. Accompanied by the Tua Kampong and/or Penghulu, you descend the longhouse tangga and down the river bank to the log or floating wharf to your boat. The whole longhouse accompanies you – the shy, demure maidens in the forefront. When the guests of honour are a few feet from the boat, those damsels, who have up to now discreetly kept their hands behind them, rush at the guests and rub their open hands all over the faces, hair and clothes of their

guests, with great merriment. Before descending from the longhouse, these innocent girls have rubbed their hands in a mixture of oil and pot black. There is nothing the guests can do except try to get some of the pot black back on to the girls, while at the same time leaping into the boat and yelling to the outboard driver to be quick and drive away before the girls can get in too. The girls on the river bank then wave their scarves at you and sing their equivalent of "Will ye no come back again?" I would not go so far as to say that Sir Anthony enjoyed this face blacking, but he took it all in good spirit and as an unusual evidence of friendship. He always hoped, but in vain, that if he could remove the evidence of blacking in one longhouse from his skin and clothes, the next longhouse would not show its appreciation of his visit in this way. I have a lovely ciné film of H.E., smeared in the black mixture, sitting on a shingle bank while dipping his hand in the river and rather ineffectively trying to remove the black from his trilby hat. I may say that removing the mixture is difficult and this is the reason given by the girls for doing the blacking. They say, quite truthfully, that as you are doing it you will be thinking of them. How true, though one's thoughts about their friendship may be mixed!

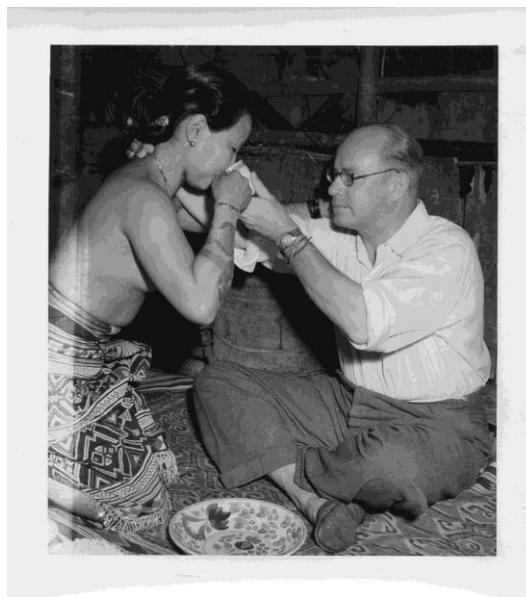
I accompanied H.E. on a walking tour in Serian District. Naturally, he was on a timed programme, to which all concerned tried to adhere. On this occasion, at one stage, we were striding quickly along a path in an endeavour to reach the next longhouse on time, when we came to a junction at which a deputation was waiting. It consisted of the headman of a village, sited about a mile down the side path, and the headmaster of the local school, who asked H.E. to call on them. Sir Anthony politely pointed out that he was on a timed programme and was already behind his schedule. They countered that the whole school and the school band were on parade waiting for him and the detour was negligible. Reluctantly H.E. agreed. On arrival at the school, the Headmaster (who had run ahead of the party) was ready with his conductor's baton raised as he faced the bamboo 'flute' and percussion band. As we got closer, he said "One, two, three" and the band started up. The Governor stood to attention and took off his hat, while the two policemen with us saluted. Instead of the National Anthem, we then heard, clearly sung by the children, "You are my sunshine, my only sunshine". We all looked at H.E. who continued to stand at attention with his hat off, although his body did quiver a little with suppressed laughter.

When senior military officers took over a post in Singapore or Malaya, sooner or later they would call on the Governor, who was also 'Commander in Chief' in Sarawak. Major General Sir Hugh Stockwell was invited to come from Malaya and join the Governor on an ulu trip up the Balleh River to Temonggong Jugah's house in Kapit District. The Temonggong was a good host and had laid on various items of entertainment in addition to the usual ceremonies, all of which seemed to need the imbibing of tuak if one was not to appear rude. The Temonggong had had built a storeroom for himself on the far side of the tanju from the longhouse. The Governor felt that it was a bit hard on the General to experience all the festivities until well into the early hours of the morning, and so he had arranged for the General's camp bed to be put up in the storeroom. Thus, he could leave the party and hopefully be lulled to sleep with the distant sound of gongs and singing.

When engaged in being a good guest in longhouse ceremonies, the Governor played his part nobly for some time and quaffed down tuak to the pleasure of his hosts, but there came a time when he began to delegate his drinking to me, which was quite understandable but nevertheless an unkind act as I had plenty of drinking of my own to

cope with; I had no-one to whom I could delegate my drinking and, of course, I could not refuse to carry out H.E's. orders. The General noted how H.E. coped and it wasn't long before he too delegated his drinking to his A.D.C.

Soon after 11 p.m., the General retired to his bed in the hut on the other side of the tanju. Surprisingly an hour later, he returned to the party. It appeared that he was just going off to sleep when he heard a creaking noise, the door had opened and a shadowy figure had come into his hut. The General recalled stories about head hunters and shouted out loudly "Halt! Who goes there?" There was a muffled squeak and someone fled from the room, closing the door behind him. It took the General some time to calm down enough to begin to nod off to sleep once more, but he slept lightly and quickly woke up again with the same procedure happening as before. He now decided that to avoid being decapitated he had better rejoin the party. It then appeared that the Temonggong had realised that he was close to running out of tuak in the longhouse and had told an Iban to go quietly into the hut and bring out his reserve of tuak stored there. He had presumed that the General (who had rejoined his bed) would be a sound sleeper and wouldn't wake up. Eventually, the General went back to his room and we didn't see any more of him till after daylight and a morning cup of tea had been brought to him.



The Governor at Kerangan Mong, 1954

Next morning, the Governor, the General, the District Officer and I gathered together. If they felt as I did, they would have been glad to be left alone. The A.D.C. was not to be seen. The Temonggong told us that he was further down the ruai and there we found him lying in a drunken stupor, hugger mugger with Iban bachelor braves, one of whom had his leg across the A.D.C's body. It was clear that the A.D.C. had finally gone down gallantly upholding the reputation of the Army by not refusing the glass of friendship. I thought the General looked rather sourly at his A.D.C. We were well on our downriver return trip before the A.D.C. recovered and asked us what had happened, as he remembered nothing after the General had left to go to bed.

From the front entrance of the Astana, an asphalted drive led to the steps down the river bank, where the Governor's boat was tied up and ready for use when required. A quirk of nature had arranged that at the steps there was a whirlpool effect whereby the water there moved in the opposite direction to the prevailing tide.

When calling on the Governor, the Admiral from Singapore generally used a minesweeper or other small ship that could sail up the Sarawak River to Kuching and anchor mid-stream near the Astana. The first time that Sir Anthony received such a visit, he went down to the bottom step to greet his visitor. As the Admiral's barge approached, moving against the tide and got ever slower as it approached the steps, the Admiral put one foot on the gunwale and stretched out his arm ready to leap on to the steps and take hold of H.E's. outstretched hand. However, at the last moment to

everyone's astonishment and to the mortification of the Admiral, who nearly fell into the river, the barge suddenly gathered speed and flashed past the Governor. From then on, when an Admiral proposed to call on the Governor by boat, the P.S. had to inform the Royal Navy of the whirlpool effect. The written word seemed to have no effect, for each time the approaching barge came close to the steps it suddenly swept past and I feel sure that the boat's crew got a blast from the Admiral. In the end, H.E. ceased going to the steps to greet Royal Navy visitors and, to avoid being a witness of the Navy's mismanagement, waited at the top of the steps in the Astana for his guest.

In the case of a Royal Navy ship, the Governor had to return the call. For this purpose, a Government launch tied up at the steps, H.E. got on it and the launch's captain had the difficult job of going against the tide towards the ship's gangway steps, and then holding the launch stationary some distance short of her and about thirty or more feet from the ship's side, while the ship's guns gave the Governor a salute. H.E. would stand on the launch's deck in full uniform. When the first gun fired he raised his arm in the salute position and had to lower it as soon as the last gun had fired. I was standing behind him. He always asked me to count the number fired and mercifully we always agreed on this – I have no idea what would have happened if we had disagreed. He said that in fact he often counted the guns by the number of times the cock feathers in his topi were blown out of position by the blast from the gun's blank ammunition.

When the Air Marshal called, he usually stayed for a day or two at the Astana. I have no comments to make on the R.A.F. visits, except that on one occasion, when, due to the sickness of a lady guest at a dinner party, one of the Air Marshal's staff, who had grown a prize example of what an airforce moustache should look like, found himself next to a man. Everyone at the table was chatting amiably to the person on his/her right or left and the total noise they made was considerable and many people had to raise their voices so as to be heard by their neighbour, when suddenly there was one of those occasions when everyone seemed to run out of anything to say – everyone, that is, except the staff officer, who was in full swing telling a story to the man next to him and, heard in silence by all, he clearly spoke saying "and I put my moustache between her breasts and went brrr brrr". Gallantly, everyone tried to spare the poor man's blushes by starting to speak at once, though I must say that there were some present who, rather than appearing shocked, could hardly control their grins.

It was not only the heads of the armed forces that were responsible for Sarawak who called on the Governor when they took over from their predecessors. I remember when the recently appointed German Consul-General in Singapore, with jurisdiction in Sarawak, requested that he might call on the Governor and H.E. asked him, his wife and 17 year old daughter to stay at the Astana for a couple of nights. The Consul-General was a most interesting person and his wife and daughter were charming. A dinner party was laid on. The guests left and after a bit the two German ladies asked to be excused. H.E., the Consul-General, with me in attendance, carried on. Later than I desired, I got to bed. I lived in a pleasant extension at the back of the Astana, overlooking the extensive grounds including on one side the swimming pool.

At 7 a.m., I was still sound asleep and was suddenly awoken by a clear and commanding "Ein, zwei"" repeated again and again. I peered out of my window and saw the Consul-General, who looked rather like Bismarck, at the side of the pool and drilling his wife, daughter and himself. They were doing physical jerks in time to his orders.

After 20 minutes of this, he got them in a straight line with him at the edge of the pool and, on his command, the three of them dived into the pool and swam several lengths together. It was admirable. But how did he do it? I was still a bachelor, but if many years later, I had tried to keep my wife and 17 year old daughter fit like this, what co-operation would I have had? Indeed, it never occurred to me to try. The subsequent morning (the day he left), I was awoken by the same procedure. Was it Prussian male dominance or did the ladies (also possibly impressed by the Prussian traditions) ask him to indulge with them in this disciplined way of ensuring suppleness and fitness?

The Governor also had his duties to do when he travelled abroad. He took local leave to Hong Kong and Macao. In the latter place he called on the Portuguese Governor and was invited to stay for lunch. The Governor of Macao mentioned an annoying case. A Chinese in Macao ran a small factory making oyster sauce. A Chinese, settled in California, visited Macao and much enjoyed the sauce – so much so that he took several bottles back with him to the U.S.A. He found that the sauce was much appreciated by connoisseurs of good food. The Chinese returned to Macao and asked for a regular supply of the oyster sauce and he guaranteed to distribute it in the U.S.A. It proved so popular that the Chinese in Macao was persuaded to invest a large sum of money in increasing the capacity of his factory. For a time everyone was happy with the result. Then the U.S.A. Customs enquired where the oysters came from and were told that they came from the Pearl River. The Customs enquired further as to what part of the Pearl River and when they found out that they came from Chinese, not Portuguese, water, they told the importers of the sauce that they were contravening the U.S.A. laws on importing from China! The unfortunate clientèle in the U.S.A. were much saddened by this decision, while the even more unfortunate factory manager went bankrupt as suddenly he couldn't dispose of his vast production and so couldn't pay the interest on the sums that he had borrowed.

I was startled when H.E., returning from a trip to Singapore, told me that the Governor there had introduced him to the Sun Kissed Kuties, a group of very fit and large young Australian ladies, who told Sir Anthony that they were proposing to take a holiday in Sarawak and what should they do to be able to meet headhunters. He suggested that they should spend a couple of nights at the Astana and I was detailed to take them to a traditional Land Dayak longhouse, that still had the traditional large room on stilts, where the bachelors slept and where the heads of their past victims were kept. This was one of the pleasanter duties allocated to me. The young ladies were genuinely, but rather naively, interested in all that was going on around them. I enjoyed answering their questions and their enthusiasm was evident. It was not always that I found entertaining H.E's guests so attractive, possibly because they were usually much older even if more worldly wise.

At the time that H.E. conveyed to me that I was the next P.S., I wrote and thanked him and asked him if I might bring Eustace with me. His answer was a clear "yes". Eustace was a fox terrier sized black dog of indeterminate ancestry. When I was in Sibu, he had wandered somewhere where he was not welcome. He arrived home, lay down and showed no joy in life. Then I noticed that he was trying to lick the area behind his shoulder, but was not flexible enough to do so. He shrieked when I touched him there. Eventually his skin peeled off and it was clear that someone had got fed up with him and, no doubt effectively, stopped him going there again by pouring boiling water over

him. His hair never grew again in those areas. He was the same happy dog to me, but certainly no beauty.

Eustace lacked exercise, and when we were in small perahus being paddled, I pushed him into the water and he grew ever more expert at knowing when to follow the boat on the river bank, when to swim across river to the other bank and when to swim behind us. Eventually he was allowed back into the boat, shook himself and wetted us. He was a menace on batangs, which he managed perfectly, but he liked to be up front and was expert at keeping on the batang while squeezing past tuans and making them totter if not fall off the batang.

On one occasion, H.E., Eustace and I were travelling overnight on the Governor's yacht. It was a sultry, hot night and H.E. and I took our mattresses up on deck. H.E. took the centre part of the deck, which was level, and I was nearby, but where the deck began to have a slope. After several hours' sleep, I had unknowingly slipped down the slope to beyond the mattress and my feet were then close to H.E. I was three quarters asleep, but became fully awake when I found that H.E. was tweaking my toe in an affectionate manner. I hastily moved back up my mattress and out of his reach. Next morning he said to me "I'm sorry I tweaked your toe. I thought it was Eustace's nose as he snuggled up to me".

The Ibans, Land Dayaks and Orang Ulu liked and were interested in Eustace. The Chinese ignored him. The Malays, being Moslems disliked him and often feared him. The Astana houseboys (although Moslems) got to like him. Late one night I returned to the Astana and found Eustace waiting for me on the red carpet of the Astana front staircase. When I got to him, I realised he was dead – apparently of heart worm. He was buried near where the Rajahs and Ranees had buried their beloved dogs.

'Zahora', the Governor's launch was a sea-going craft – it had been bought second hand in Britain and sailed all the way to Sarawak. A yacht was essential for the Governor because of the lack of roads in Sarawak and so that, when visiting outstations, he could entertain local dignitaries on it or take important guests travelling with him. When the Zahora reached Kuching, it had been completely overhauled by the Marine Department and made fit and safe for H.E. to use. He had been on it in many of the sudden storms that occur when travelling out at sea parallel to the Sarawak coast or when going over the bars that were an obstacle to easy navigation at the entrance to most Sarawak rivers. After a few years' use, the yacht seemed to the Governor to become less steady in rough weather and he complained to the Director of Marine. His investigation found that, when the Zahora had been made shipshape, the price of copper was at an all-time low and copper bars had been used for ballast. When the price of copper rose, some unknown but impecunious member(s) of the crew had from time to time removed a copper bar and sold it. Apparently it only needed the removal of a very few more bars for the yacht to have turned turtle in severe weather!

The job of P.S. was in two parts – sitting in my office and being on parade with the Governor – neither of which kept me fit. The Astana had a not very large swimming pool and near it was a padder tennis court – a small court with the rules and markings of a tennis court but played with something like a ping pong bat. The two went very well together and H.E. used to invite his guests to play padder tennis with him, in bathing costumes and bare foot, and the party would mix up playing, swimming and sitting out

with a drink – altogether a pleasant pastime. At one end of the court was a tall durian tree and in season, the durian flowers would become tiny fruit, some of which developed into proper durians but many of which dropped down as tiny spiny aborted fruit. Padder tennis was not meant to be a serious game. In the tiny fruit discarding stage, H.E. chose to play at that end of the court that was not under the durian tree and said that it was a waste of time periodically changing sides. Sooner or later a high ball would be lobbed so as to land near the back line and the player at that end would run backwards to get it, and tread on an inch and half long spiky durian, a disturbing additional feature added to the game and one that caused a distraction from concentrating properly when returning the ball. To get his opponents in the right mood, H.E. would solemnly warn them to look up at the tree and take note of the large spiny fruit and to please take care not to allow one to fall on them during the game. So far as I knew a durian never fell on a player, but H.E.'s words did unnerve some. Beyond the swimming pool was a small pond with carp in it and a path around it. In the Rajah's time there had been a nine-hole golf course at the back of the Astana but after the Japanese occupation this land had been left to itself and was impenetrably covered with lalang grass and a few surviving trees and bushes. With a sturdy lawnmower that could cope with the work, I got my exercise sweating away charging the lawnmower at the lalang and undergrowth until it could cope no more and then pulling it back to the mowed area and charging forward again. It was a heavy machine but was magnificent at doing the clearing. Occasionally it suddenly fell into a hole or ditch that had been hidden from me by the vegetation. It was the job of the Astana gardeners to collect up what had been mown, burn it and then keep the mown area cleared. By the time I ceased to be P.S. I had cleared three quarters of the Astana land. From the windows of the building one now had a nice view of meadowland, with a few trees dotted here and there, rising gently towards the horizon, and in the distance a nice view of the dramatic Santubong Mountain at the mouth of the Sarawak River. Later on, the golf course was resurrected. One of the other of my landscaping efforts was to plant two tapang trees on the river bank of the front Astana garden. To my disappointment, because they were not struggling for survival in a jungle environment, they did not, as I had hoped, develop like the magnificent trees I had seen in the jungle and send up a huge tall branchless trunk surmounted by an umbrella of branches and leaves, but instead they grew in a shape reminiscent of any other garden tree.

Some guests, of both sexes, at the Astana were taken to Fort Margherita to see a shooting competition. One of the ladies expressed a wish to look closely at a sten gun as she had never even held a gun of any sort before. The sten was unloaded and handed to her. She didn't appear to me to be the sort of woman that was a practical, down to earth mum, so I thought it unfortunate when a police officer asked her if she would like to fire it. She showed every sign of excitement at this and accepted with alacrity. Various men, including me watched her rather anxiously. It was stressed to her that she should never allow the sten gun to face anywhere else than the target area. As well as actually striking the target, the bullets from her first burst went all over the neighbourhood of the target area. She then very archly said "Aren't I doing well?" and swivelled round through 180° with the gun pointing at various of us in turn as she did so. We knew that the magazine had not been emptied and very quickly we scattered to the nearest shelter.

On visits to Singapore, H.E. had become acquainted with Loke Wan Tho, a very westernized, well travelled Chinese and an extremely rich film magnate. He was invited

to the Astana and I was gratified to find that he was just as natural and friendly with me as with H.E.

It so happened that when Aikman left, Sarawak had a Welsh Chief Secretary and a Welsh Financial Secretary; I don't know how much Welsh they knew. The only Welsh I knew was 'Cymru am bwyllch' though I am uncertain about how correct was my pronunciation of those words or, indeed, of their spelling. Anyway, they were invited to the Astana for a quiet stag party when Wan Tho was there. Relaxed after dinner on the veranda, one of our Welshmen made a remark in Welsh to the other and, to H.E's. and my surprise, it was Wan Tho who answered in Welsh. He was a well-qualified ornithologist and, in the past, he had spent some time bird watching (and incidentally picking up Welsh) on an island off Pembrokeshire. We all agreed that a Welsh speaking Chinese in the Astana was unexpected.

When Wan Tho heard that I was taking local leave in Malaya, he asked me to spend the first night in his penthouse flat in Singapore and then next day take one of his cars (a Buick) for my ten day trip! A much appreciated offer, especially as I stayed at his Kuala Lumpur house en route and it was there on that trip that I first met Bunty, who was eventually to be my wife.

H.E. was a keen ornithologist as were Tom Harrisson (Sarawak Museum) and Alastair Morrison (Administrative Service and later Information Officer and later still Godfather to my daughter) and Bill Smythies (Forest Department). All of these were grateful to Loke Wan Tho for producing most of the cash for the production of a wonderful book 'The Birds of Borneo' by B.E. Smythies. It was unique as it included an anthropological section on Bird Omens. Later on, when I was D.O. Baram, H.E. and Loke Wan Tho were travelling in the ulu of my district and were sitting in the room of the headman, when I saw on the ruai a hen in a cage that had for some reason been sprayed with red, purple and blue paint. I went into the room and asked what was the multicoloured chicken sized bird I had seen tied up on the ruai. They couldn't answer my question and rushed out to have a look and then, quite unreasonably I thought, were very angry with me.

Some years later, when I had two small children and my wife and I were going on local leave to Malaya, Wan Tho offered us hospitality in his luxurious flat in Singapore, even though he was not present there at the time. It was one of the disadvantages of staying in the home of a millionaire that we could not gain entry to the flat until we had been well and truly scrutinised by his servant and listened to many locks being undone before we were admitted. He had no children and scattered around his rooms were wonderful jade artefacts, priceless porcelain jars of various sizes and other well-chosen examples of Chinese antiques, many of them within reach of our small children. The dining room table had chairs covered in gold brocade. We suggested having our meals with our children in the kitchen, but this was disallowed. At breakfast, where rather runny strawberry jam was on offer, my wife and I had to hold a damp flannel at the ready to clean tiny hands before gold brocade became red brocade! My wife, a smoker, was embarrassed by being uncertain whether the saucers on the side tables were Ming or ashtrays.

Some of the more staid international travellers, who were used to staying with colonial Governors, often became ill at ease when Sir Anthony, on the spur of the moment,

would suggest going out for a meal in Kuching's open air market, but scarcely liked to turn down the Queen's representative's suggestion. Dotted over the available space of the market were the cooking stalls, mostly Chinese, although there were some Malay and Indian ones. Also scattered around were a variety of tables, hard chairs, benches or upturned orange boxes to be used as chairs. The clientèle were mostly far from well off workers and labourers and rarely the affluent citizens of Kuching. Many of the stalls produced food very cheaply and were popular with those who wore merely a singlet and boxer shorts – though poor and grateful for cheap food, most of these people knew very well which stalls produced tasty dishes at a price they could afford. The astonished guests followed H.E. as he wound his way amongst the tables, the sounds of Cantonese, Malay, Hokkien or Foochow, the sudden hissing of vegetables put into very hot oil in a wok, the sight of the corpses of bright red ducks hanging from a rail, squids, noodles and a host of other appetising sights. Then of course there were the smells – perfume to some, whilst others disagreed. There was hot water beside each stall for washing crockery, cutlery or chop sticks – some of this water had become soup coloured. H.E. would ask for two tables to be joined up and he and his party of up to eight would sit down amongst the hoi polloi. Guests were then asked to look round the stalls and choose what they liked, but many of them had never sat in an Asian open air market before or, indeed, eaten Asian food and so decided to eat the same food as that chosen by their host for himself. On a table were bottles of soya sauce, vinegar, saucers of hot chili sauce, etc, which one could add to one's fried rice or noodles with pork, prawns or crab or to a sweet and sour whole fish. Chinese tea or bottled beer went well with the type of meal available. Usually the Governor ordered a selection of chicken, beef or pork satays, with lovely peanut sauce. It was all very informal. The locals eating there naturally showed no surprise at seeing their Governor amongst them – indeed, only a few would know what the Governor looked like – and if the word got round that the Governor was amongst them, no-one stared impolitely at us. Ten years later, after the Brunei Rebellion and Indonesian Confrontation, sadly it was felt that these unheralded eruptions of the Governor and party into the open air market amongst the populace were a security risk, but when I was P.S., security was little more than a Special Branch man enjoying his food at Government expense at a neighbouring table! I used to wonder in how many other Colonies would the Governor have wished or been allowed on security grounds to move amongst the populace in so informal a way and eat the local food.

In fact, if the Governor's guests wished to know, in the short time at their disposal, what the political situation in Sarawak was like, they would have got a truer impression of Sarawak's largely informal method of Government by watching the people of all races milling around their unconventional Governor eating and obviously enjoying what he was eating, than they would at a formal dinner party sitting next to the (usually British) Director of Public Works, the Government Printer or the Postmaster General, or to whoever's turn it was to be invited to the Astana. I never ceased to wonder at how few of the Governor's official guests were fascinating and interesting people, and at how many that I met at the Astana were deadly dull or filled with their own importance.

Malcolm Macdonald told the Governor, with me listening, how he had been invited to Brunei in the late 1940s by Sultan Mohamed, who, though a Moslem, was known to drink alcohol excessively. It was also known that he didn't get on well with his Sultana. When asked at a Brunei dinner to give a speech Malcolm rather wickedly started off with "Your Highness, in this happy family atmosphere" and he bowed towards the

Sultana "when you are intoxicated" and he paused for an appreciable moment as he turned to the Sultan before adding "with joy".

He also told of how, when the same Sultan was staying with him, he had organised an official dinner party for him, but at the last moment the seating arrangements had had to be altered as the Sultan was too drunk to attend. After the meal had started, he suddenly saw the Sultan weaving down the corridor towards him and quickly ordered that a chair be placed beside him for H.H. the Sultan, who said and ate nothing and appeared to be in deep thought. Then without warning the Sultan rose to his feet and Malcolm prayed for silence while H.H. spoke, which he did in Malay and, of course, none of the senior British present understood him. The interpreter translated that H.H. wished King George VI good health and a long life and he thanked His Majesty for all that the British Government had given Brunei in so many ways. The Sultan then sat down amongst enthusiastic applause. However Malcolm had noticed that a senior Malay officer was barely able to conceal his mirth. Later on Malcolm asked him what had amused him and found out that what the Sultan had actually said was how disappointed he was with what H.M. King George VI had done for him and he would like to be given a variety of expensive cars, after which he listed a whole lot of complaints against the British Government.

When there was a drinks party at the Astana, one of my duties was to stand beside the Governor and introduce the guests as they arrived at the top of the main staircase, where H.E. was waiting to greet them. My trouble is that I often have a complete block when it comes to producing the names of people, whom I know perfectly well and, worse still, I fail to recognise people, whom I ought to know and I have a complete blank when some apparent stranger greets me in the street and quite clearly expects me to know who he is.

I used to study the guest list until I hoped that I was name perfect. It was then embarrassing when I announced to the Governor "Mr and Mrs Knight" and he addressed them saying "Good evening, Mr and Mrs Edwards"!

The Governor, Philip Jones (the Information Officer) and I went travelling amongst the Ibans of Second Division. The first night, the I.O. had put on a cine show for the Ibans. It consisted of scenes in West Africa, which the Ibans watched with interest. There was one scene that had them rolling around with helpless laughter so that that part of the film had to be shown two or three times. The scene in question showed a group of black women standing around together bare breasted. Admittedly the ladies of South East Asia are not as well endowed with such huge breasts as are some West African women. On this occasion, one such mum had her 18 month old child in a basket on her back. When it cried, she chucked her pendulous breast over her shoulder and the child caught it and started suckling – an action that would be physically impossible for a South East Asian lady to carry out.

The Governor wore two war medals and, as I had the impression that he had been told that he could not join up because it was more important that he should stay in Nigeria, I asked him how it was he had these medals. He said that it was for secret work. He was called to Lagos and was told that in the harbour of the Spanish island of Fernando Po, off the Nigerian coast, was an interned German ship, which was keeping the Germans informed of all the shipping that was sailing to Nigeria or along that part of the coast.

The British Consul on the island had found out that, on a certain evening, the German Consul was having a party to celebrate some great occasion and all German citizens were to be invited, including the crew of the ship, except for a skeleton crew left behind. Sir Anthony was asked if he would take part with a few others to dash over in a fast motor boat after dark to the ship, overcome the skeleton crew, place a bomb with a time fuse in the ship, put the skeleton crew in a lifeboat, and return hell for leather to Nigeria. The British had blackened faces and hands. Sir Anthony was told that if anything went wrong, the British Government would disown him! The scheme was successfully carried out and hence Sir Anthony was entitled to two war medals!

Sir Anthony Abell's unassuming manner, his ability to combine dignity with friendliness and approachability and his genuine love of travelling all over the country and, where necessary, spending nights in the houses of his hosts of all races, meant that he was as



H.E. the Governor with a 2 ½ kati Ikan Semah, 1953.

well known to the people as the Rajah had been and he was just as well loved. It also meant that he had a far greater practical knowledge of most of the corners of Sarawak than did several of the headquarters officers in Kuching. It was not a surprise therefore that, in 1953, when his period as Governor was due to expire, it was extended for another three years. It says much for the calibre of those in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office that in 1956 they broke with tradition and succumbed to public clamour and agreed to an almost unheard of (in modern times) third extension of three years. I can testify that, when the news reached Sibul, there was a feeling of joy amongst all races and of great relief that there was to be no change in the leader of the country. Sir Anthony had a most

equable temperament and. when he asked a person to do a job, he left him to get on with it. The one time that he was unbearable was when preparing for some important public occasion. He would then show that he was under tension by continually interfering with all the arrangements he had ordered. After the ordeal was over, he was once again sweetness and light. I was lucky to have worked close to such a man.

In June 1954 I ceased to be Private Secretary and went on home leave.

This gives me the opportunity to interrupt the hitherto historical theme of Anecdotes and mention some legal aspects I came across during my time in Sarawak.

## 12 – THE LAW AS CARRIED OUT IN SARAWAK

The Second Rajah, Charles Brooke, kept in touch with the Colonial Office and with the India Office as he wished to know what was going on outside Sarawak. In fact, he often, quite rightly, thought that administrative decisions made by him were more advanced and sensible than what was occurring in the colonies and in India.

He greatly admired Lord Macaulay's Indian Penal Code, which came into force in 1862, and covered the whole of what was then India. He admired the way that this penal code coped so successfully with the inhabitants of such a large and diverse country as India, with all its many races, languages, customs and religions and was one that eventually helped the Indians to understand that they all lived in one country called 'India'. Hence he decided that the Indian Penal Code, with very few alterations, should be adopted throughout Sarawak in the higher courts for criminal cases. It was also used in Malaysia.

Brooke knew that the natives of Sarawak had certain ancient customary rights and he approved of the native headmen continuing to adjudicate in certain customary cases, mostly of a sexual nature or quarrels about customary land tenure, always with the proviso that an aggrieved person could appeal to a District Native Court composed of the District Officer helped by a local chief and a Senior Native Officer. The Headmen's Courts had to be held in public but most of them had no written record of what was said and what were the decisions reached. Written records were kept of the proceedings of the District Native Court. The Rajahs had also bit by bit forbidden certain disagreeable customs such as head hunting.

Some of the laws of the native peoples have been codified and much of it makes interesting reading. I select below three laws that are unusual by British standards.

The first one is an Iban (Sea-Dayak) law on adultery. Adultery is divided into two categories – dry adultery and wet adultery, the former having a light punishment and the latter a much heavier one.

The second category is also Iban and states that if a woman becomes pregnant and refuses to give the name of the father, then incest can be assumed and the woman is punished appropriately.

The third case concerns Islamic law. If a woman becomes pregnant, she must give the name of the father. If the named man denies the accusation, and there are no outside witnesses to the conception, then, in Court, he is counted as having one vote and she has two votes (one for herself and one on behalf of the unborn child). It is not unknown for the prospective mother to look around for the most prosperous man in the neighbourhood and name him!

'Trial by Water' was when both parties put their heads underwater at the same time and the first one to surface was the loser. This method of settling a quarrel had been forbidden, but as the Ibans and Orang Ulu saw nothing wrong with it and, indeed, when the problem was to decide the truth between two people, neither of whom had even a single witness, the local people had no doubt that 'Trial by Water' was the best method of reaching the truth.

Normally, the head of the longhouse or the area penghulu would try to settle a quarrel, but if an impasse had been reached and it was one man's word against another's, one party would challenge the other to 'Trial by Water', and the latter could scarcely refuse to accept the challenge as this would have implied that he didn't have right on his side.

If the quarrel was between two groups of people, each group would choose a champion to represent that group. If the quarrel was between two individuals, one of whom was clearly in poor health such as due to advanced old age, then he too could select a champion.

In a pool or in a stretch of river, the headman would stick in two poles into the water. On the command 'Go', each man would immediately dive under the water and hold on to his pole. The first man, whose head appeared above the surface of the water, was adjudged the loser. There was no appeal possible against this decision, hence Government would be unlikely to find out that such an unorthodox Court procedure had taken place.

Immediately after the Japanese occupation, there was at first nobody in Sarawak with any legal qualifications and, indeed, no-one with the necessary qualifications to be accepted on a course leading to a legal qualification. When such a person eventually arrived, naturally he had to start at the bottom of the legal ladder as a magistrate. This meant that for many years the High Court judges, the Attorney-General and Prosecutors appointed to the Unified Judiciary of Sarawak, North Borneo and Brunei came from elsewhere and spoke no Malay. The only exception was Danny Lascelles, a Rajah's administrative officer (he was appointed a cadet officer in 1932) with a law degree – he therefore was fluent in Malay and Iban and also understood the customs and ways of the local people. In 1948 he ceased being an administrative officer and transferred to the Judiciary. He was appointed a Circuit Judge. He was much liked by the local people as, consonant with the way their minds worked, he allowed much greater freedom of expression in his courts than would have been tolerated elsewhere. Danny knew that the ulu people did not consider a court room to be an awe inspiring place. After all, if a court case is carried on in a building with the noises of children running around, dogs squabbling, chickens and pigs moving around underneath the slatted floor and people pounding rice, while the magistrate was dressed in a sweaty vest and shorts or a sarong, it was difficult to exude an aura of great and august dignity. Being such an expert on local matters, Danny was always asked to induct new arrivals. To approving nods from the newly arrived judges, Danny would say "As one who knows the country well, let me give you a piece of advice. I am always most strict in court." The inductee's surprise was all the greater when Danny then added "For instance, I never allow more than three people to talk at once during a court case, as beyond that number I find it too difficult to follow the train of evidence".

Danny once told me of a civil case where the plaintiff, a Chinese, wished to be as helpful as possible and, when asked to produce his account books, said to Danny "Certainly, but which are the account books you want? Those I keep for myself, those I show to my partner or those I hand over to the Inland Revenue?" Personally, I find it difficult enough to keep one set of accounts going and my mind boggles at the thought of keeping three different and separate sets of convincing accounts going at the same time!

In a country where local people do not move around a lot (as indeed was the case in Britain for most of the time that the jury system has existed), everyone knew everyone else including their past histories and whether they had a criminal record or not. So, as a district officer sitting as a magistrate when hearing cases in a longhouse, I had to assume that everyone present except me knew all the circumstances of the case. According to modern thought, it is a good thing that magistrates and juries know nothing about the accused, though personally I feel that there is a lot of miscarriage of justice because of this. Amongst all races in Sarawak, the English laws of evidence are not understood and, if understood, are often not approved of. In a court case in a Dayak longhouse or in an ulu small Chinese bazaar, it was common to hear a witness affirm "But everyone knows what the truth of the matter is." As a magistrate I regularly had the greatest difficulty in finding out whether the witness himself had seen an action or himself heard certain words. It was typical when I said "Did you see the action with your own eyes?" "Yes." "Where were you when you saw the action happen?" "Oh! I arrived there after it happened but so many people told me what had occurred, that it was as though I had been there." I tried not to get too exasperated when I eventually found that due to the witness' lack of understanding of the Laws of Evidence, I frequently had to expunge from the record evidence that did not comply with the official legal requirements.

A typical case that I experienced now follows.

### **The Dog Case**

I had turned up at the longhouse on time and, according to the programme, could only afford an hour or so there before returning to my home about four hours away going downstream by outboard.

Having settled the various matters for which I had come to that longhouse I relaxed, and asked the tuai rumah (T.R.) if he had any more business to bring up. He answered straightaway that there was the dog case. His whole tone and appearance, and the sudden increased interest of the spectators showed me that they all considered this far more important than the Government business that had previously been transacted. He seemed pained and surprised that I knew nothing about this local cause célèbre when I said "What dog case?" The T.R. was very earnest and paused, concentrating hard, then his brow cleared as though he had come to a decision and he called to his wife for some more betel nut, which he carefully prepared and popped into his mouth and chewed slowly and, after contemplatively enjoying it awhile, he said:-

T.R. "Yes, it is very difficult and they won't agree as to the price and I hope you will settle it." Long pause while I waited for further information, then

Me. "Yes, but what dog case? Please begin at the beginning and tell me the story as it happened."

T.R. "You see Buah insists on \$30 and the other man will not give more than \$15. What do you think? Everyone in the house is discussing this case." Another pause and, as the betel nut chewing seemed to be occupying the T.R. fully, I hazarded,

Me. "But why does Buah demand \$30? And who is the other man who only offers \$15? And where are they?"

T.R. "Buah wants the money for the dead dog of course. What do you think is a fair price for it?"

Me. "I still have not understood the story. Why does he want money for the dead dog? Did someone kill it?"

T.R. "It is quite clear that Gendang killed it."

Me. "Where are Gendang and Buah now? Were there any witnesses?"

T.R. "Buah is here but Gendang is in the fields. Linda, a woman, was there when it happened. She is in the house now in that room over there. I told Gendang to make sure he was here when you arrived, but he said he had to fetch in his maize."

I called for Buah and Linda and meanwhile my joints creaked as I crossed my legs over the other way and mustered what few facts I now had on the Dog Case. I looked at my watch and realised that I ought to leave in ten minutes's time. The T.R.'s other cheek bulged as he moved his betel nut into the other side of his mouth, he leaned forward and spat accurately between two mats and two slats in the floor on to a pig passing beneath the house, cleared his throat and said:-

T.R. "He hit the dog unnecessarily hard and I incline to \$30 myself. Ah this is Linda." A middle aged, betel nut chewing woman advanced, bent at right angles at her hips in a respectful manner and, holding her hands together as would a Hindu, she weaved her way between the spectators sitting on the floor, and then sat down in front of us and waited.

Me. "Did you see the dog case happen with your own eyes?" She pushed the betel nut into the corner of her mouth, leaned sideways and she too spat accurately between slats in the floor, leaned forward, stretched out her left hand to me and said "Greetings Tuan." The T.R. hastily knocked away her hand and said "Right hand, woman" and she quickly changed hands and clasped mine, leaving betel nut marks on it. With growing impatience I repeated the question and asked the T.R. if he thought I could spend the whole day in his house over the Dog Case, at which he seemed to sense my note of exasperation and told Linda to get on with her story. She thereupon with great deliberation took all the condiments out of her mouth, chucked them on to the outside verandah and eventually began:-

She. "I was never so surprised in all my life. Quite unjustified I thought it. There I was, just resting near my mortar after I had pounded some rice – that mortar over there it was – when it happened. I was so surprised that I called out to my son to come out, and he was surprised too. And it wasn't as though the dog had done it on a mat or even on the rice. I asked him why he had done it, as he lives in the next room to mine and ...." Very stupidly I interrupted her clear story, which it was obvious she had repeated to many people before and always in the same way and I said to her:-

Me. "Yes, but what did you see happen?"

She. "I'm telling you, I was never so surprised in my life, unjustified..." and she started at the beginning again. I interrupted and put a leading question:-

Me. "Did Gendang hit the dog?"

She. "Yes, just after I had been pounding rice, about four days ago, and it was quite a good dog too, though not as clever as yours." and turning to the various people around her she said loudly "I remember a year ago when the tuan came he brought his dog with him. A very clever dog. It could talk. And turning to me she said "Where is it? The dogs of white people are so clever." I got diverted from The Dog Case and told her that Eustace was in the boat below and furthermore he was an ordinary pi dog, though possibly a Chinese one, and any Dayak could train up any of his dogs to be as clever as he was. Then glancing at my watch I hastily avoided expatiating on Eustace's training and by putting direct questions all the time, to which I got indirect answers, I think that at last I was near piecing the story together.

Gendang had been sitting on that part of the ruai that was outside the door to his room. He had a long bamboo in his hand, which he was waving at the odd chicken that

fluttered up from below and pecked at the rice that was laid out drying on a mat, when Buah's dog came along and casually raised a hind leg near the post of Gendang's door, leaving his mark there. While concentrating on the business in hand, the dog never noticed Gendang raise his bamboo until it was too late to avoid the whack that came down hard on his back. Next day it died. After a lot more querying, I found out that Buah considered his dog a first class wild boar hound, and he related various stories proving how it had many a pig to its credit. Linda agreed that it might have developed into a first class hunter, while the T.R. felt that such a dog was invaluable in hunting (the T.R. turned out, by chance, to be Buah's uncle). I then refused to get diverted into an interesting conversation about Eustace, this time on his hunting powers, which in fact seem negligible despite the fact that he had nine teats, and I found out that the dead dog was somewhere between ten months and two years old. As the Dayaks said "We are not very clever at reckoning time."

Quite a crowd had now collected, eager to hear my decision in this difficult and important matter. They were disappointed when I said I couldn't do anything in this matter now as Gendang's views had not yet been given to me in person (this they thought was a feeble excuse as everyone present hastened to tell me that he himself knew perfectly well what were the views of Gendang), there was no native officer present with me, and only with a N.O. sitting with him in a District Native Court could the D.O. hear a case. So I announced that I could not settle this case and in any case I had to leave at once or I would be travelling at night by outboard in a swollen river. The T.R. implored me to come to a decision in the matter, as it was splitting his house and it was quite a way for both parties plus witnesses to go to Kapit for the case to be heard. I was adamant that I couldn't hear the case till everyone concerned was present, and I left 45 minutes late with all those left behind most dissatisfied with me.

Two days later, just as I was about to leave my office for lunch, Buah and Gendang and witnesses arrived. They had paddled a long way to have this case settled and were eager to get it over and return to their longhouse. Gendang refused to pay more than \$15 because the dog was mangy, only had eight teats and they were not favourably positioned, and it had never been responsible for catching a pig. Buah still refused to accept a cent less than \$30. I suggested a fine of \$22.50 and a look of consternation passed over everyone's face and all agreed that such a compromise solution was unacceptable. As I got up to go to lunch, I pointed out that the only alternative to my arbitration was a court case, which could be heard next day if they didn't mind spending a night away from home. Gendang then asked me to bear witness that he would pay the \$22.50 and wanted me to give him a written document to this effect. He very slowly brought out from some inner recess fifteen \$1 notes and then even more slowly counted out ten 50 cent notes and said that he would pay the remainder later. Buah naturally objected and, as the matter seemed to be endless, I left them to it and I presume the matter was eventually settled sensibly as I have heard no more about the Dog Case. On my arrival home for lunch, I was greeted effusively by Eustace and I looked at my talking dog with renewed respect and wondered if anyone would ever offer me \$22.50 for him!

In one murder case, presided over by Danny Lascelles, it appeared that a well known Malay prostitute, who lived in a wooden kampong house on stilts, had borrowed money from a high ranking Malay lady. When this lady asked for her money back, the prostitute murdered her. The prostitute's gardener had got out of the sun and was sharpening his

scythe under the house, when he saw drops of blood coming through the floor. He called up to enquire what was happening and the prostitute answered that she was having menstrual problems. A recently appointed Scottish legal officer, whose knowledge of Malay was limited, was prosecuting. He spoke with an educated Glaswegian accent, that is that he clearly pronounced every letter 'r'. He wanted to put the prostitute at ease before firing the questions at her that really interested him. He was running out of pointless questions and she was still not at ease, when he noted that she had masses of white powder on her face, her lips were bright red, a lot of rouge had been used on her cheeks and she had mascaraed eyes; so rolling his 'Rs' he said "Do you take grreat carre of yourr appearrance?" The interpreter was used to the King's English in which the lazy English cannot be bothered with pronouncing a final 'r', so that 'your' is pronounced "yoa". His translation of the prosecutor's sentence in Malay became "Do you take great care of Europeans?" She was immediately put at her ease by this question and, before the amused Danny Lascelles (who had understood the mistranslation) could intervene, she said to the startled Prosecutor "Yes indeed" and reeled off in Court the names of various prominent Europeans, including some senior Government officers, whom she had 'cared for'. Danny ordered that the question and the answer be deleted from the record of the case.

Just before I left Kapit, a Foochow girl came into my office and said that she wished to complain that she had been raped while bending down tapping rubber trees: a Foochow young man, doing the same thing, had come upon her from behind, quickly pulled down her trousers and raped her. I asked her if she had any witnesses and was startled when she said "Yes, my father and mother were a few yards away tapping trees, but because of the undergrowth and because they were bent over their work, they had not noticed the rape as it happened". I asked her why she had not called out for help. Her answer was "I was about to call out, when suddenly a lovely feeling came over me, so I waited till it was over before calling out!" Apart from the fact that I was shortly leaving Kapit, I was not empowered to hear Rape cases and I never found out what had been decided in this one.

On returning from leave after having been P.S., I was appointed as District Officer Baram, the District H.Q. being at Marudi. This district covered the Baram River, which arose on the Indonesian frontier. I had only been in this District a week, when I got a telegram from the Governor asking me whether or not I recommended that he should exercise his powers of clemency by changing the death sentence on a young Kelabit murderer, who was now in Kuching gaol, to a life sentence instead. I was very worried how to answer this telegram. I had never ever met a Kelabit, I knew very little about this tribe, which lived three weeks' journey away and the Governor wanted a quick answer. Luckily Lawai, the Kelabit Penghulu, who rarely came downriver to Marudi, happened to arrive at District H.Q. that day. He called on me to chit chat about the problems of his area and enjoy the drink that I offered him. I broached the subject of the murder and he said that it was a dastardly case and the Kelabit's conviction was quite justified. I asked whether that meant that he considered that the local people would approve of the death sentence being carried out. He looked shocked and said "Certainly not!" I asked him for his reasons. He said "Well firstly, it was a 'crime passionel'. Secondly, look at me. Long ago, I was sentenced to death for a crime passionel and the Rajah used his powers of clemency and just think, if he had had me shot, he could not later have released me from prison early and how could I then have become chief of my tribe?"

Admittedly his advice to me may have been biased, but it was the best advice available and I recommended that the Governor should exert his powers of clemency.

On one occasion in Marudi, I was in Court and the police struggled in with four 40 gallon drums of illicit arrack. The Chinese defendant, a rubber tapper, pleaded "Not Guilty" to the charge of illicitly distilling spirits. The evidence was that the police had gone to the defendant's house in his rubber garden. One side of the clearing, in which was his house, was bounded by uncleared undergrowth. A partly disguised path went through this undergrowth and led to an illicit distillery, where the drums had been found. The Chinese had no witnesses but elected to speak on his own behalf and said "The arrack was not made for sale but for the use of my wife who has menstrual trouble!" He did not call his wife to come and explain why she needed 160 gallons of arrack, and so I found him guilty of the charge. The court room was near the edge of a high cliff leading down to the Baram River and to make sure that the arrack did not get into the public market, I ordered that the four drums should be emptied down the precipitous side of the hill and I watched the order being carried out. This order of mine was a silly one, as the arrack killed off all the vegetation on the hill side and erosion soon started there.

On another occasion, I was sitting in the magistrate's seat in Belaga, and in front of me was a table on which were a pipe and other items used in smoking opium. The accused, an old Chinese man, was brought to the accused's box on one side of the table. The witness' box was on the other side of the central table. The accused showed all the outward signs of being a far advanced opium addict. He pleaded "Not Guilty" to smoking opium or owning the articles on the table. After half an hour's damning evidence against him, during which he showed no expression of interest in what was going on – indeed he showed no expression at all – I suddenly saw a change come over him. His eyes became fixed onto the table, and it was quite clear that he was unaware of where he was or what he was doing as he stretched out his arm of mere skin and bone and lifted up the pipe and the opium saying "They are mine and I must have them – now." I had no alternative but to find him 'Guilty' for he had broken the law. I saw little point in punishing such an unfortunate person, except as an example to others, and gave him the minimum sentence possible.

Some of the judges that came to us from African colonies tended to be full of their own dignity, and to have little wish to get to know the local people. There were exceptions. L.D. Smith was appointed in 1951 and was still in British Borneo in 1963, and so he had plenty of time to associate with the local people and his kindly disposition meant that he had many friends amongst them. He looked more like an absent minded university professor than a judge. Far from being pompous, he told me that he regretted how many of his case decisions were overturned on appeal. Nevertheless on several occasions he was appointed Acting Chief Justice. He was delightfully vague. Far from going everywhere by car, as did his compères, he enjoyed going by bike. On one evening after dark, he was out later than he had expected and was called over by a H.B. Rowland, a Police Superintendent who, when he did this, hadn't realised who his victim was. Archie Rowland pointed out to L.D. that he was riding a bicycle after dark without a light on. The Judge admitted his fault, apologised and pointed out that the Superintendent must do his duty. However, both of them agreed that it was not altogether desirable for a Judge to be hauled before a magistrate for such a minor infringement of the law and he was let off with a warning. The Judge then said "By the way, tell me please. When we met was I going to the Resthouse or coming from it?" On

finding out that he was coming from it, he said "Ah! That means I have had my evening meal".

Jesselton (now known as Kota Kinabalu) had been devastated by the war and post war a temporary court house had been built post-war on the sea front, from which a wooden pier jutted out into the sea ending in two arms like a 'V', one leading to the 'Gents' and one to the 'Ladies'. L.D. Smith, who was very tall, dressed himself in his wig and robes, looked at his watch, found he had ten minutes to spare, said to himself that he must not waste this opportunity and, while deep in thought about his impending court case, walked up the pier and took the arm that led to the 'Ladies'. The door had not been locked and the Judge went in and found there a Chinese market stallholder squatting down over the hole in the floor above the sea. From her point of view, as she looked up, this lady decided that a spirit and a very evil one at that, was proposing to enter and share the tiny space with her. In her terror she let out scream after scream. Her fear was not lessened when the apparition did not immediately leave the toilet and close the door behind him, as most of us lesser mortals would have done in such an unfortunate circumstance. The Judge stayed in the doorway (cutting off her escape route), bowed deeply to her and said in English (a language she did not know) "Please excuse me, Madam. It was an aberration on my part to come here. Please, Madam, do not be alarmed. I am a High Court Judge, Madam, and have no evil intention against you." After which he left her and went up the other arm of the pier.

The same Judge was travelling with a North Borneo Resident on his launch to the latter's divisional H.Q. to hear a court case. The launch tied up at the wooden wharf but rose and fell with the waves. The Resident stood on the side of his launch and waited for the start of an upward movement of the boat and leaped on to the wharf. The Judge, however, could not decide when to jump. With the launch still rising and falling and the Resident getting ever more exasperated as he watched him, he did eventually decide to jump and fell flat on his face on the wharf and lay there. The unsympathetic Resident said "Come on L.D., don't lie there squirming". The Judge answered "I can't. My flies are caught". Such an unlikely event could only happen to someone like L.D. Smith. It was a fact that a fly button had gone sideways down between two planks and then, becoming horizontal, held the Judge on his tummy on the wharf.

One of the few Judges that I became friendly with – J.R. Blagden was a nice person to meet at any time – had arrived in Sarawak in 1950 and stayed there happily until he retired. Accompanied by his wife, Pauline, he was posted to Sibü as a Puisne (to his amusement pronounced 'puny') Judge, with jurisdiction in the Third, Fourth and Fifth Divisions of Sarawak. He found the ways of life and attitudes of the local people most interesting, ably helped by his wife – as both of them were perfectly happy to associate themselves with anyone of any race. However, he had one blind spot, which is pertinent to the judiciary, even in Britain. He tended to believe that Latin words, in common use amongst the judiciary, would be understood by all and sundry, even in Sarawak! John Fisher, Resident Fifth Division in Limbang, had to arrange for a lot of witnesses, friends of the accused and local dignitaries to come to Limbang the day before the trial took place of an alleged murderer from the ulu, so he sent a telegram to Blagden in Sibü, who would be the judge to hear this case, to fix a date to hear the case in Limbang. The answering telegram gave the date and said the case would be heard in Sibü. The furious Resident sent a very long telegram, pointing out the inconvenience of getting all these people to Sibü and what a bad impression it would give of justice and of

Government that such a large number of people must make the very long, most inconvenient and expensive journey there, when clearly the court case should take place in Limbang District, where the murder had taken place. The mystified Jack Blagden called for the duplicate copy of his instructions to his clerk, as he had intended to go to Limbang to hear the case. The telegram he had drafted in his own handwriting, in return to the question of the Resident, had been worded by him "Will hear the case in situ"! The telegraph clerk had used his initiative and, well knowing that there was no town in Sarawak called 'Situ' he had transposed the 't' into a 'b'!

On the question of law administration in Sarawak, as described by me in the above pages, I expect that a lot of what has appeared here would be surprising if not shocking to conventional British judges. To end with, I wonder how such judges would have dealt with my predicament – sorting out the public and private image of how a District Court Magistrate (me) should behave as a magistrate and combine this with the social and 'spirituous' condition I would be in before the Court case started. I had arrived at a longhouse at about 5 p.m. There had been the usual greetings to the D.O. (accompanied, before I climbed up the tangga into the longhouse by alcoholic lubricants), then the required pleading to the spirits (accompanied by alcoholic lubricants), then my insistence that all business of Government and the – much more vital – business of the longhouse should be attended to. Having ensured that there was nothing else on the agenda of either side, I agreed that jollifications could start. At about 10.30 p.m. it was intimated to me that, well, there was one more small item of business to be considered, namely an unsolved quarrel that had split the longhouse into two and would I please decide it one way or the other? I considered how *compos mentis* I was and decided that I was aware of what was going on even though I had had a lot to drink. The longhouse I had visited was far away in the ulu and it was highly unlikely that I or my successor would visit it again for 18 months or more. The quarrel was proving very divisive. There was not the least possibility of all the interested people coming so far away as Marudi for the court case to be held there. I was told that all the necessary witnesses were now available. I could not hear the case next day, as I was due to leave the longhouse at 8 a.m. to start the rest of my timed programme. So I washed my face in cold water. I gathered a Native Officer and a Penghulu to sit with me and at 11 p.m. the District Native Court started its proceedings, which went on till 2 a.m. next day. Thus the proceedings started, as dated by me at the top of the Court record as 12<sup>th</sup> April and were signed by me at the bottom of the last page as being on 13<sup>th</sup> April – such court cases, I am thankful to say – were rare in Sarawak.

The native peoples of Sarawak traditionally did not hold land under title, which meant that land under title was largely limited to towns, in and near rural bazaars and to those areas legally occupied in large numbers by the Chinese. Government believed it was necessary to protect the naive natives from handing over their traditional land rights to others for a short term gain, which was why non-natives were forbidden from holding land titles in native areas. It was not only non-natives who were a problem. The Ibans, as a group, were more forceful than the Orang Ulu or the less exuberant Land Dayaks. So, when going on tour in areas where the Ibans lived next door to the more gentle (willing to compromise, listen to promises, and hope it will work out in the end) races, the D.O. had to persuade (rage at, humiliate in public) the gentler races NOT to give up their land rights for ONLY one season to the Ibans on promises of restitution after that period. In their heart of hearts they knew, as the D.O. knew, that land they gave up for one season would be surrendered for ever.

Shifting cultivation meant that a sufficient area was occupied by those in a longhouse for a period and then, when the harvests were getting poorer and there was little more jungle to fell, the longhouse would move elsewhere. They would then stay there as long as possible, start felling the jungle for rice planting and thus the process would go on, with the longhouse possibly returning to a long vacated previous site in due course. Fruit trees would grow up near a longhouse and also near the temporary huts of rice planters and the natives would lay claim to these trees. After a longhouse had moved on elsewhere, certain people would, in season, return to their trees to harvest fruit. There were also some trees of commercial value in the jungle such as jelutong, engkabang and damar that certain people claimed as theirs, with or without very good reasons. Fruit trees also grew up at such places as cross roads, where people tended to stop, rest, eat some fruit and throw the fruit stones over their shoulders, hoping they would establish new trees, which, in due course, someone with an unusually good memory, would claim saying "I remember 10 years ago planting that lansat tree." A fruitful cause of native court cases (usually decided by native chiefs but sometimes going to the Native Courts) were quarrels over individual trees or a group of trees. I have often started a court case in a longhouse and then, accompanied by two or three people, had to adjourn for a 30 minute or 5 hour walk to go and look at certain trees and hear these people, aged from 25 to 65, each say most convincingly and, apparently, with remarkably clear memories to me "I remember when I was aged 8 (or 4 or 10) and walking with my grandfather (who might have been the same grandfather of all the claimants or each claimant had a separate grandfather), when he said to me "One day these trees will be yours. Make a special note of where they are. This I did. And what we are looking at are the trees in question." If the speaker was asked how old he now was, he had no idea. I usually felt quite unqualified to decide the rights and wrongs of each such claimant and would ask the native assessors, sitting with me, for their views, hope that they had all come to the same conclusion and then agree with them. Incidentally, this sort of situation illustrates how impossible it would be for the quarrel to be decided at District H.Q. many miles away by river or over very difficult tropical jungle covered mountains.

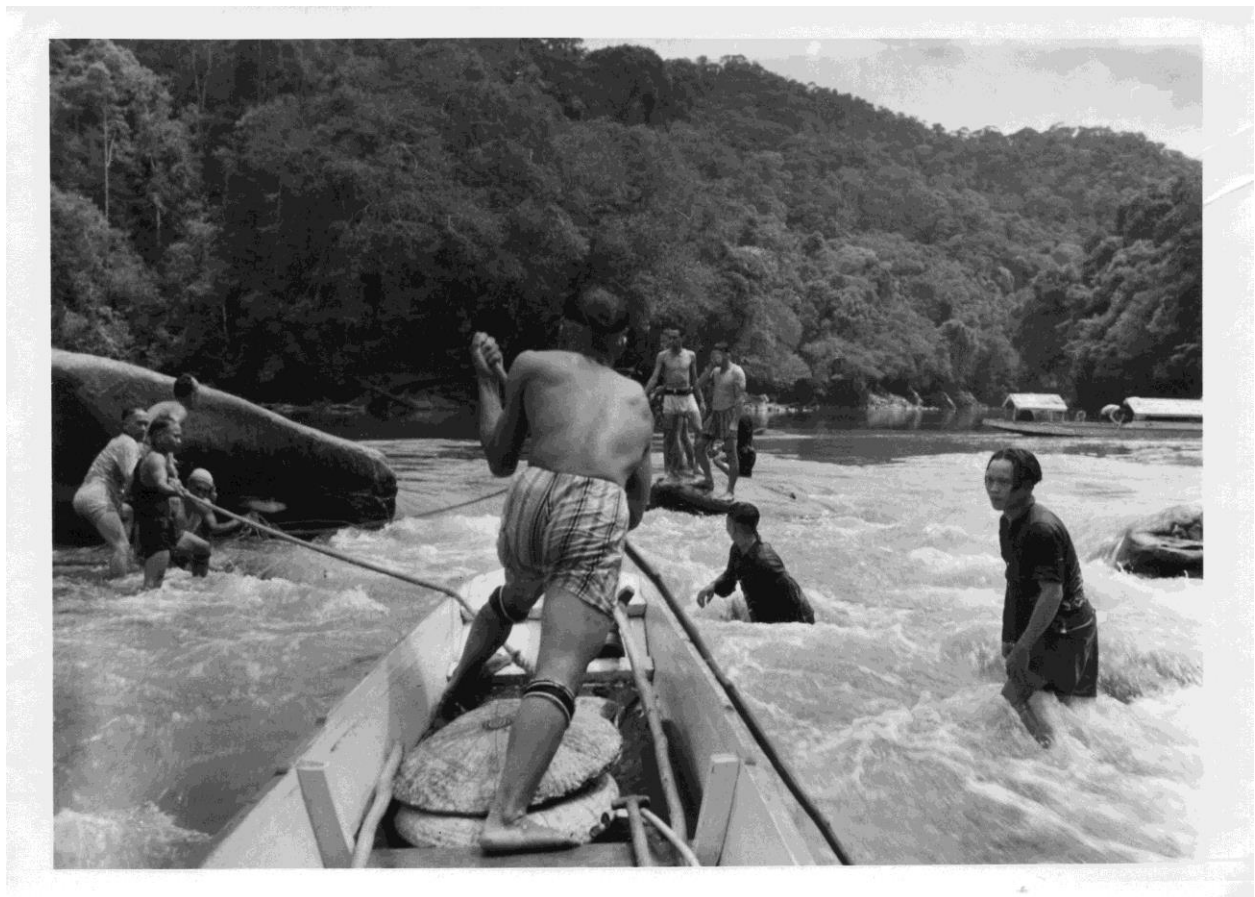
The most unpleasant type of cases to deal with were family quarrels involving husband v wife or brother(s)/sister(s) v each other over property. The virulent hatred expressed reaching close to physical assault by one party on another was horrid. I always hoped that these cases could be settled without going to court. A typical case would be when a Chinese couple would come into my office glaring at each other and be asked to sit down on two chairs facing me. Each person would, before sitting down, turn the chair sideways to me so as to sit with his/her back to the other's back and then, turning his/her head round as far as nature would allow, not talk to me but to the other and scream out "I would come home and find you had not prepared a meal for me." "You adulterous philanderer were humiliating me." Eventually, I got out of hearing such cases by telling my 21 year old Chinese administrative officer to try and sort out the problem and was delighted when, after half an hour or so, the couple departed. I would then ask him what was the result. He was young enough to see all such problems in black and white, and told me that he had told them that one of them was in the right and the other in the wrong! When this happened, it was quite clear that I had abandoned my responsibility in such cases but, as a European, I consoled myself that I was much more likely to reach a wrong decision than would a Chinese.

A frequent typical unpleasant Iban case could be where an elderly widow had been looked after by a niece for many years during which the widow's own children had not helped out at all. The widow might – or might not – have announced in public "What little property I have should go, when I die, to my niece." When the widow was obviously near death's door, the children would suddenly appear and look after her most solicitously for a short time and, after her death, claim her property on grounds of inheritance and of having dutifully looked after their mother and insist that the niece was not entitled to anything at all. Such cases were not easy to decide in a satisfactory way for all concerned.

### 13 – DISTRICT OFFICER BARAM 1955 – 1957

Baram District covered the whole area of the Baram River except for a strip where its mouth joined the South China Sea, which was in Miri District. This was a sensible arrangement, as the lower reaches of the Baram were swamp jungle and uninhabited. There was, however, a road, that ran parallel and close to the coast, from Miri town to Kuala Baram ('kuala' is Malay for 'mouth of a river'), where there was a ferry. The road carried on, crossing the nearby Brunei frontier to Kuala Belait and on to Brunei town (known as 'Bandar Sri Begawan').

The Baram is the second longest river in Sarawak at about 250 miles (400 km) long. It rises near Murud Mountain which is nearly 8,000 feet high and on the frontier with Indonesia. Baram District was bordered in the East by Brunei, Limbang and Lawas Districts, in the South by Kalimantan (Indonesia) and in the West by Kapit and Miri Districts. Baram District H.Q. was at Marudi, situated about 80 miles from Kuala Baram, at the first point where a low hill emerged out of the downriver swamp. At this point the river was about a quarter of a mile wide.



Negotiating rapids going up the Baram, 1955.

The Bakong River joined the Baram halfway between Marudi and Kuala Baram. Along this river were some Iban longhouses. Upriver of Marudi were the longhouses of the Kenyahs, the Kayans and, in the far distant plateau area near Indonesia, of the Kelabits. In the far ulu of the Baram River and of some of its tributaries there roamed Nomadic Penans. Marudi had a large Chinese bazaar and a large Malay kampong. Upriver

thereof were small Chinese bazaars at Long Lama and Long Akah ('long' means 'mouth of a river' in the Orang Ulu languages). The Kelabits were taller than most native races in Sarawak, and were unique in the upriver areas in that they planted swamp padi with the help of water buffaloes. For some reason these animals dislike the smell of white people and so I always kept my distance from them, unless I was sure that the buffalo in question had got used to my odours.

To avoid squabbling between Christian Missions, the Rajahs had sensibly only allowed more than one mission to be established in Kuching and Sibu Districts, while elsewhere they only permitted one sect per river. The Baram River had been allocated to the Roman Catholics, well trained at Mill Hill. Most of the Fathers in Sarawak were Dutch with a sprinkling of Irish and other races. Lawas District in Fifth Division had been allocated to the Borneo Evangelical Mission (B.E.M.), whose missionaries had been trained in Melbourne and were nearly all Australians. When Sarawak became a Colony, the Rajahs' arrangements, to prevent unedifying squabbles between different Christian religions, could, unfortunately, no longer be maintained and so, after the war, the B.E.M. moved into some ulu parts of Baram District.

Francis Drake, my predecessor as D.O. Baram, with H.Q. at Marudi had left the District before I arrived there and so had composed a comprehensive hand over report to await my arrival. I remember being amused at his paragraph on 'Religious Affairs': "The inhabitants of the following upriver tributaries of the Baram are R.C., the following tributaries are B.E.M. and the following rivers are Pagan and undecided whether to turn to Rome or to Melbourne."

The Pagans in Borneo had their 'Pantangs', which restricted their movements from the longhouse when a severe sickness or death occurred or when an omen bird or other kind of omen had warned the inhabitants not to leave the house. This was especially galling when the rice, which was due to be harvested, could not be reaped because of a pantang and so the inhabitants could take no steps to control the birds and animals, which were happily eating their rice. When I went travelling, I was sometimes told by a Pagan longhouse that they wished to become Christians so that they need no longer observe the pantangs. It was embarrassing if they then asked me for my advice as to which brand of Christianity to adopt. Was it wiser to choose the church where the priests drank alcohol and joined in the fun of their longhouse parties but didn't marry and disapproved of birth control but did provide good schools, or should they select that church where the priests only sang hymns, forbade them to drink alcohol, encouraged birth control and in their schools taught little more than was necessary for the people to be able to read the Bible and sing their hymns in the local vernacular?

Later on, after I was married and my wife went travelling with me, it was interesting to witness how delighted the people were to see her – especially the women, who soon formed a separate group in the longhouse around Bunty. When I got married, I had not visualised how my wife would call me over and say that the women wished to know about contraception. I found that, to cope with this, I had to increase my vocabulary so as to impart to them all the intimate ins and outs of birth control in the minutest anatomical detail – a subject D.Os. didn't normally talk about to men, let alone to women.

In Robert Nicholl, Sarawak had a most interesting and unconventional Education Officer, who had joined the Rajah's service in April 1946. He was brought up as a Methodist, converted to Roman Catholicism and became a monk at Buckfast. Later he became an atheist. He later still became Curator of the Brunei Museum for many years and did invaluable work going through all the Brunei records, mostly in Malay written in Jawi (Arabic) script over centuries, which brought to light a great deal of new facts about Brunei history. In his capacity as Education Officer, Fourth Division, he visited me in Marudi at the start of a tour to try to persuade the heads of all schools, whether Moslem, Chinese or Mission, in the District to adopt a new advanced curriculum. He had no difficulty with the Moslems or Chinese. He then went to the R.C. Mission at Long Akah and the priests there agreed that the proposal was desirable. He then pointed out that they would have to co-operate with the Moslems, Chinese and Evangelicals. Co-operation with the first two caused no problem, but they drew the line at even speaking to a hated Evangelical. Robert pacified them by saying that he sympathised with them for after all the Evangelicals did have slightly heretical views, but could they not ignore this when discussing education matters? They eventually reluctantly agreed. He then approached the B.E.M. in the Akah River and the Kelabit Plateau. They too were quite happy to co-operate with the Moslems and Chinese, but talking to the R.Cs. stuck in their gullets. Robert placatingly agreed that the R.Cs. were devils and would undoubtedly go to hell, but, that that would not happen until they were in the next world and meanwhile, could not the Evangelicals try to co-operate with the R.Cs. while we were all in this world? Robert had achieved what he wanted and I feel that this cynical Education Officer would have made a very good diplomat.

A telegram reached me in my office "The Secretary of State for the Colonies accompanied by his Forest Officer Adviser will be visiting you on etc". Baram District was an excellent place for the F.O.A. to come with its wide variety of different sorts of forestry and indeed land tenure, often competing with each other. I remembered much of what I had learnt about the running of the Forest Department in Sarawak, but not enough to cope with a visiting expert. I therefore did research into each of the varied types of forest reserve (and they were several) in the District, when they were formed, why, and what were their present day problems. When the S. of S and his party arrived, I went to the only person in the room, whom I could not place and whom I presumed was the Forest Officer Advisor and discoursed knowledgeably to him about the forests in my District. I was surprised to note how bored he seemed with our conversation – indeed he did not have a single question to put to me. It wasn't a question of me leaving him, he left me. It was only later on that I found out that the telegram had misinformed me. The person I was talking to was not the "Forest Adviser" but the "Far East" Adviser to the S. of S.! However, my time spent swotting up on forests was not wasted, as, over the period that I was D.O. Baram, what I had learnt about forestry affairs in that district frequently came in very useful.

Coming upriver to Marudi, one first sees, on the east bank of the river, the Malay kampong with its wooden houses on stilts, then the very ornate Chinese temple dating from the last century and then the bazaar, which consisted of shophouses on three sides of a rectangle, with the river forming the fourth side, alongside which was a large floating wharf and a godown. The middle of the rectangle was largely grass with paths criss-crossing it. Next, going upriver, one came to a nearly vertical cliff on top of which was a plateau. At the top of this outcrop, overlooking the bazaar and the river was the old belian fort (Fort Hose with its guns aiming out of its port holes), which now housed

the Government offices. A little further on was a belian building used at times as quarters for senior service officers and at times as a resthouse. Some 200 yards further on was the D.O's. bungalow and garden. At this point there were steps going down the steep cliff side to the D.O's. private floating wharf. The D.O's. garden ended where the outcrop gave way to a steep slope down to the low lying ground that was the feature of the whole of the lower part of the Baram River. Behind my house, going inland from the riverside outcrop as far as and beyond the Brunei border, there were the clerks' houses, a school and the Government dispensary, and beyond them was uninhabited virgin jungle all the way to the Brunei frontier. After work, I thoroughly loved roaming in this virgin jungle, accompanied by my puppy, Olga. She was a fine example of a smooth haired fox terrier, except that she had legs that were rather too long and she had a tail that curled over her back. She was born under the police barracks – but then one doesn't really have much choice in deciding where one wishes to be born, does one? At the far end of the garden, there was a small valley, which at some time in the past had been dammed to produce a tiny swimming pool. It was surrounded by towering trees and fed by a cool stream of peaty coloured water released from the jungle. The small gaol was in the fort, as was the Police Station. At the time that I was there, there were no roads leading out of Marudi. When I wished to go to Divisional H.Q. at Miri, I had to take my long boat to Kuala Baram, having previously 'phoned for a landrover to meet me there.

The D.O's. bungalow (built in the Rajah's time, when Baram was headed by a Resident) was a rectangular belian building on stilts, built to encourage the maximum movement of air, helped by the fact that the house had no windows and relied on blinds to keep out driving rain. The ground floor was tiled. Behind the building was a covered way leading to the kitchen and servants' quarters. There was one huge bedroom facing upriver and two smaller bedrooms. From each bedroom a steep staircase went downstairs to an enclosed area, which was the bathing and toilet area. The house relied on rainwater pouring off the considerable area of the roof of belian shingles into large tanks in the three bathroom areas. Washing consisted of dipping a dipper into the tank and pouring it over one's head. The water in the tank was, by Sarawak standards, excitingly cold. From the house, there was a magnificent view to far away Mulu Mountain (nearly as high as Murud). At the entrance of the bungalow, brought there pre-war from an ulu longhouse by a Resident of Baram, was a wooden man-sized carved figure of a naked man. It used to possess an outsize phallus, which would most certainly have deterred any evil spirit from entering the house, as it would assume that all the male inhabitants would be equally well endowed and so stronger than it was. Unfortunately, by the time I came to Marudi, this figure had been deprived of all its private parts. The Moslem Malays had always disliked this statue, and eventually, just before a visit of the Governor, an unknown person, but believed to be the very devout Datu Mohammed Zen Galau (an Orang Ulu converted to Islam) had come by night with a sharp knife to avoid His Excellency being disagreeably shocked as he entered the Bungalow.

Normally, outboard drivers avoided driving at night, but sometimes, as for instance when one is a mere hour's driving time from one's home after darkness has descended, we would all agree that in a wide calm river it was worth ignoring the risk of carrying on driving in the dark for the sake of getting to the comfort of one's home. Once on the Baram and on another occasion on the Rejang, and each time on a very dark night, the outboard driver was going downstream in the middle of the river, because this is where it is fastest. With the monotonous noise of the engine and no fixed object to be seen

and a, by now, tired driver, it was easy for him to snooze off for a moment. Even when the excellent driver knows every turn of the river, in conditions such as I have described, it is easy for the driver on waking up to be disorientated and make a mistake. He suddenly realises that he is approaching the river bank at an angle. He assumes that he has reached the next bend in the river and makes the necessary correction so as to continue downstream in the middle of the river. What in each case had happened was that he had not reached a bend in the river and with no obvious feature on the river bank showing up in the dark, his 'correction' had resulted in the boat now going upstream! When one is longing to get home, it is certainly very annoying when the driver finally recognizes a fixed point and informs us that we passed that feature half an hour ago going downriver on the starboard side and that, as it is now on the port side, we must have been retracing our steps.

Returning to Marudi after a visit to Miri, I got on to my outboard at the mouth of the Baram and started traveling upriver. Naturally, on the river one gets used to seeing logs, branches or, sometimes, logs with a branch sticking upwards floating downriver. On this occasion I suddenly noticed, quite a distance ahead of our boat, to my astonishment, a shortish log with a branch sticking upwards behaving in a peculiar manner in that it wasn't floating downstream, the river here was over a quarter of a mile wide but was 'floating' from the right bank to the left bank! As we drew closer to the 'branch', it turned out to be a clouded leopard with its tail erect out of the water. This beautiful animal is Sarawak's biggest member of the cat family, can reach over 5 feet long, is rare and this one was the only one I have ever seen in the wild. As we approached it mid-stream it faced us showing its teeth and looked as if it wished to launch itself at us. This caused it to put its dry tail in the water. The crew wished to kill it, but I forbade this and told the driver to carry on upstream. I looked back. The unfortunate animal was carrying on with its cross river swim but was looking very tired with its water logged tail in the water hampering it. I hope that it made it to the other bank.

There was an R.C. Mission in Marudi, with three Dutch fathers when I was there. Provided we kept off the subject of religion, we got on well together and, unless one or other side had cried off, on alternate Saturday evenings, I would visit them or they would visit me for a drink or two before separating for our evening meal. I found it interesting how hierarchical they were. The youngest priest would never speak unless first spoken to. The senior priest largely monopolised the conversation. When I had been at Deolali in India, where decent alcohol was difficult to come by during the war, I had seen an unopened bottle of Bols Gin in the local bar and I was one of those rare British who liked Dutch gin. As no-one else wished to join me in this drink, which was still at the pre-war price, I happily consumed some Bols each time I went to the bar, until sadly eventually it was finished. From the oilfields shop at nearby Seria in Brunei, I was able to buy de Kuyper gin and offer the fathers this or whisky, while the fathers gave me, I know not from where obtained, Bokmar (a Friesian gin), and so we enjoyed our regular get-togethers.

When I arrived at Marudi, Government, with World Health Organisation (W.H.O.) help, had started a scheme to eradicate malaria from Sarawak. It had been noticed that the malaria carrying Sarawak mosquito never flew higher than a certain not very high height. One of the main parts of the plan was to spray every building inside and out in the whole country with a D.D.T. mixture (at that time not a disapproved of substance) to

just above the magic height above ground level. This included the roofs of most longhouses. All the peoples of Sarawak welcomed the W.H.O. teams with their spraying pumps and, after several years, Sarawak was declared free of Malaria – a remarkable achievement. W.H.O. had provided the necessary structure to start off the scheme. First of all, a W.H.O. expert would go to the ulu accompanied by a Government officer and visit each longhouse and explain what would happen. W.H.O. officers were stationed in strategic parts of Sarawak and their first job was to recruit people who spoke the local languages, form them into teams of about three men and teach them how to carry out their job. For the scheme to be a success, it was essential that the team members behaved very well, whether in a town house, ulu longhouse, or a farm sulap. The D.D.T. mixture lasted well on the walls, and mosquitos that settled on these walls perished. Nevertheless, over several years, each building had to be re-visited and re-sprayed several times. At the same time as spraying, an effort was made to make every human being swallow the necessary anti-malaria medicines. One of the troubles was that outsiders coming into Sarawak might have malaria and re-infect the mosquitos. This was especially a problem with travellers coming over the border from Indonesia.

There were other problems to be dealt with. Though bugs in beds and elsewhere existed pre-W.H.O.'s arrival, they were never annoyingly numerous but their number seemed to increase after the scheme had been put into effect. I suppose that they did not go on to contaminated walls, or perhaps they were tough and soon became immune to the mixture. In any case, I had never been bitten by a bug in Sarawak until after W.H.O. had toured round the ulu as it carried out its spraying.

During my time in the Baram, I received messages from the ulu that the W.H.O. teams were no longer welcome in certain ulu areas. This was worrying and had to be investigated immediately. I went to one of these areas and was told that the people there were grateful for the abolition of malaria, but they wished the teams to cease coming because, as a result of the spraying on the roofs, the thatch now only lasted some five years instead of twenty or more years as used to be the case, and the people would rather have malaria than have to go to the trouble and expense of re-thatching every five years. W.H.O. staff carried out immediate investigations into the effect of the D.D.T. mixture on thatch and could find no evidence that it had any effect at all. The locals were sceptical as they knew from their experience that it must be the spray. W.H.O. then looked closely at the affected roofs and found that the thatch was being destroyed by a certain wee beastie that was present there in fairly large numbers, but that was present in only tiny numbers on untreated thatch. A comparison of the wild life of both types of roof was made. It was found that the wee beastie was or had become immune to D.D.T. It was then found that on untreated roofs there was a spider that enjoyed consuming the thatch destroyers but that was not immune to D.D.T. On the untreated thatched roofs therefore there was still a balance of nature that ensured that only a few thatch destroyers survived, but this balance had been interfered with on the treated roofs of the complainants.

Canadians François and Pauline Lachance were the W.H.O. representatives in Marudi when I arrived there. François's parents and sister came to visit him. His father was an Admiralty Court Judge. His mother suffered from very swollen legs and ankles, and I admired her for travelling so far from home and also because, by choice, she avoided wearing shoes whenever possible and sensibly wore bedroom slippers instead. They spoke French and Madame Lachance was not fluent in English. I must say that

although I can understand the French in France, I found difficulty in coping with their French Canadian accent. Their late teenage daughter was most attractive and had beautiful eyes, which she well knew how to use. We all went to a high ranking Malay wedding. The bride and bridegroom were seated in splendour side by side. Denise fixed her eyes on the groom and he forgot all about his bride and his eyes never left her. When the formal part of the party was over, the bridegroom made a beeline for Denise and never left her – not that she seemed to mind.

### **The Governor's Visit to Marudi and the Tinjar River**

My first trip to the ulu in Baram District was when I was Private Secretary and I then wrote an article for the Sarawak Gazette; here it is:-

On 1st October, 1953, at 9.30 a.m. the Lorna Doone and the Mermaid left Kuala Baram with His Excellency the Governor, the Resident Fourth Division (Mr. A.F.R. Griffin), Mr. Loke Wan Tho and the Private Secretary. At 5.40 p.m. we arrived at Marudi at the tail end of a rainstorm and were met by the D.O. Baram (Mr. A.R.G. Morrison), his wife and local notabilities and a Guard of Honour standing in a sea of mud. After H.E. had inspected the Guard and met the local dignitaries, he toured the now nearly completed fine new bazaar, which already has greatly improved the general aspect of Marudi, even though the central space has still to be laid out properly and was a muddy waste when we saw it. H.E. then adjourned to the D.O.'s bungalow, where three Iban and one Kenyah Penghulus called on him. We then all went to the Foochow Association room, where the Chinese Chamber of Commerce had arranged a drinks party, after which we embarked in the Leonora to go to the kampong. Both banks of the river looked entrancing on this pitch black night as all the Malay houses on each side of the river and the front of the kubu and certain roads and buildings had all been lit up with fairy Hari-Raya like lights. At the Malay school we were treated to a most excellent curry, and after the meal H.E. looked round the school and congratulated the Malays of Marudi on their enterprise in raising up their old school on to high stilts and thus getting increased and better accommodation.

Next morning the sun was shining as H.E. made his way to Fort Hose, where he inspected a smart Guard of Honour, and then went into the kubu to present Long Service Medals to N.O. Wan Mahadzar bin Datu Tungku Mohammad, Mr. Joseph Yong of the Medical Department, who is now helping the W.H.O. team in the Baram, and to Mr. Lim Chui Kang, a retired headman. H.E. then heard requests and went upstairs to meet the office staff, after which he went to the Chinese school where he was offered refreshments. He then passed the proposed site for an airstrip and visited the R.C. Mission, where he was entertained by Fathers Van de Laar and Michielsen. H.E., the Resident, Mr. and Mrs. Morrison, Mr. Loke, N.Os. Wan Hashim and Tinggang Malang and Penghulu Gau then embarked on the Mermaid and went upriver a short distance to Datu Zen Galau's house where we found the aged Datu and his wives had come to the river bank to meet H.E. Old Brunei cannons were let off without harm to anyone and we were then invited into the Datu's house, where H.E. presented him with the badge and Certificate of Honour. We were all glad to note that the Datu appeared remarkably active and alert for his age. After refreshments and after the Datu had invited the Governor to attend the 1954 Baram Regatta, we re-embarked on the Mermaid and carried on upriver.

At the mouth of the Tinjar we changed to the Lorna Doone and reached Long Teru close on dusk. We were taken to the Local Authority School where Penghulu Enteri, with Iban girls in traditional dress, greeted us with much 'tuak' and a fine party spirit; speeches of goodwill were made and H.E. was presented with a Kenyalang. We were next led to the Chinese bazaar and treated to beer and then proceeded across river to Penghulu Lawai's house, inhabited by Berawans. Guns were let off and we were all overcome by the great welcome. We were escorted into the longhouse and, while some of the gentle sex plied us with 'borak', others brought on dinner and before we knew what had happened, a sumptuous meal was laid out on the floor before us. After dinner we had a short respite while the Berawans watched a cinema show, and then the party started spontaneously again with Mrs Lawai (Kasi) ably acting as hostess. The fair sex became less gentle and more boisterous and there was no doubt that they were all thoroughly enjoying the party, with its singing and traditional dancing. One by one we guests excused ourselves in the early hours of the morning murmuring that we had had a long day and were tired and we retired to bed, but our hostesses refused to be baulked of their determination to enjoy themselves to the full and so would come and haul the slumbering guest out of his mosquito net to carry on with the fun and games. For myself, I know that at 3 a.m. I was at last allowed an uneasy sleep to the sound of merry-making on the verandah which lasted until daylight, when I shakily stepped out of my room to find a lady waiting with a morning pick-me-up of rather dirty and vinegary 'borak' for me. As H.E. and party were carrying on their ablutions at the water's edge, we were all rather alarmed to find the indefatigable Kasi and a bunch of Amazons coming towards us with their hands covered with mud and pot black, smearing the hair, faces and clothes of menfolk with this mixture and pushing others into the river. Various Native Officers were vanquished by these ladies, while members of the crew of the Lorna Doone fled before them. The D.O., was caught unawares by them and discomfited and the Resident too had, to pretend he enjoyed the hearty party spirit of being dirtied just after he had washed himself. There was no doubt that these people were out to enjoy themselves in the traditional manner on this, the first visit of the head of state to the Tinjar for a very long time.

After this, most of H.E.'s party accompanied him to Bunut Lake, leaving at 7.30 a.m. while the remainder of the party arranged the switchover from the Lorna Doone to three large outboards. Altogether there were 17 outboard engines taken upriver – this large number being necessary to allow for boats of different sizes in all depths of water and for replacements in case of break-downs. About 11 a.m. the whole party carried on up the Tinjar. We called on the Penans under Tama Sedut, who entertained us in the usual traditional manner, and then we had a cold lunch on the grass edge of the river bank near an empty hut and reached Long Jegan, Tama Arek Subai's Berawan house, at about 5.30 p.m. Our hospitable hosts provided a fish and chicken dinner for us. After the cinema show, the party began in the same mood as that of the previous night, but these Berawans were slightly more restrained and the dancing was more beautiful. Even so, the damsels did not wish to appear to be lacking in hospitality and plied us with 'borak' with a verve and hived one or two of us out of our beds, after we were slumbering happily, and forced us to rejoin the party. N.O. Wan Hashim was especially to be congratulated and commiserated with in this matter as he had worked hard all day and yet managed to show no signs of fatigue at night

despite the fact that he was hauled out of bed 2 or 3 times a night and could get little sleep before 5 a.m. Penghulu Gau too was a tower of strength at party times, but then he is experienced in these matters and took care to sleep as much as he could during the day or during cinema shows, etc.

On 4<sup>th</sup> October, we were away by 8.30 a.m. and called at the Sebop houses of Aban Matu at Long Sungai and Tama Itang Bit at Long Simiton (where we were given some mature tasting pork, that had been stored for a very long time inside the bamboo in which it had been cooked) and reached the Sebop house of Wakil Penghulu Balan Lejau at Long Tejoi at about 5 p.m. U.R.A. Belalang (alias Tama Abit) was also there. After a bathe and dinner we witnessed a drill display by the school children of nearby Leppu Leju and some excellent dancing by both sexes. The party went with a swing and ended with guests and hosts doing a Conga in the early hours of the morning.

We changed into eight perahus on 5<sup>th</sup> October and first of all visited Leppu Leju bazaar, where the Chinese entertained H.E. hospitably, and then we went to the kubu, which is now the Local Authority School. H.E. looked round the school and had tea with the headmaster. We carried on upriver visiting Usat Lian's Sebop longhouse at Long Aton, had lunch and a pleasant bathe at a 'kerangan' in the river, which was now beginning to get clear and at 5 p.m. reached the Lirong house of Tama Itang Liah just up the Dapoi River, which is where the name Batang Tinjar originates. The Lirongs gave us a very good party. By this stage some of us were beginning to get the knack of how to take a sip and refuse the rest of the liquid in the glass offered by muscular buoyant maidens and also of how to persuade them to accept some of one's glass without having 'borak' spilled down one's shirt front. The main thing, I found, is not to bend one's arm at the elbow.

On 6<sup>th</sup> October, the water was up quite a lot and we had a speedy but exciting journey up the Dapoi to the Sebop house of Tinggang Keling at Long Buroi, arriving there in time for lunch. That afternoon H.E. (a happy angler) went a short way upriver and caught his first fresh water fish in Sarawak waters, an Ikan Semah of 2 katies, which made an excellent fresh fish supper for us all. That night the party was slow to begin, but worked up to the usual peak, slackening off soon after daybreak. There was no doubt that in this area each longhouse had long looked forward to the Governor's visit and was determined to make it an unforgettable occasion, regardless of the strain on the guests, who were beginning to droop somewhat at this treatment every night and, often, by day as well.

Next day was meant to be a restful holiday at Long Buroi. It started off however with H.E. ceremoniously spearing through the neck three pigs tied up on the verandah, after which H.E., accompanied by the Resident, Private Secretary and Penghulu Gau went on upriver for a couple of hours till we eventually reached a very lovely small gorge with a deep pool and some rocks in it. Before lunch Griffin (not an angler) had distinguished himself (instructed by H.E.) by catching his first fresh water fish ever, a fighting Ikan Adong weighing almost one tahal. This was later divided up amongst ten of us for lunch! That evening a rather more distinguished event occurred, for at the top of a rapid, he had a whopper of a fish

on his hook and the boat, (with ten excited people in it, all shouting instructions to which no-one listened) rod, line and the fish careered down the short rapid. The fish reached the bottom first and wound itself in and out amongst some sunken tree trunks in a pool and there stuck fast. People dived in after it and eventually a Lirong caught it in his jersey. Thus did the Resident land his second fish, a 3 katy Ikan Semah in rather an irregular and unorthodox manner, but one suitable for the difficult circumstances in which he found himself. This fish was much appreciated for dinner that night, though we found when we got back that the Sebops had laid out a veritable banquet, at which there must have been 200 persons present seated on the floor. The three pigs formed a large part of the food provided. Any hope some of us had that last night's party would suffice and we could get some sleep was soon dashed as yet another party developed. Though most of us got to bed by 1 a.m., we were awakened at 2 a.m. by the usual complement of competent damsels. So far as I was concerned, they first of all tickled my feet through the mosquito net. When I ignored that, they lifted up the net and let in the mosquitoes. I pretended that this had no effect and I ignored their repeated calls to come out and 'main-main' (play), yet I could not go to sleep as I heard them nearby whispering a plan of campaign amongst themselves. Next I found that the mosquito net was let down around my feet and I felt despair welling up within me. Then, with much giggling, they let the mossy net down over my face and lay down on me, smothering me. So, fully awake, I went out and joined the chanting Conga up and down the length of the longhouse until 3 a.m. when I sneaked off unperceived. My experience was much the same as that of other members of the party, although some of them were got out of bed as much as three times in one night.

Lest I have given the impression that these ladies of the Tinjar are harridans, I hasten to state that normally they really are coy, charming, feminine and walk and carry themselves well and with great poise and dignity, but there is no getting away from the fact that, at a party, en masse they can be very hearty in the way they organize our entertainment.

Rather jadedly, H.E's party rose in time to be off by 7 a.m. Only one of the more active maidens of the previous night had succumbed and failed to make an appearance on the verandah to see us off. When the majority of us were in our boats ready to set off we noted with some concern that Resident Griffin, his face and clothes streaked with black finger like marks, was approaching us rapidly along batangs and tanggas down the river bank to the floating wharf. He was followed more rapidly, like a stag caught up by hounds, by the ladies of the house. Three maidens leaped into H.E's boat uninvited and showed their goodwill and knowledge of the right way to send off a treasured guest by splashing water at us all, regardless of our cameras or binoculars. Such is the strength of these 'ulu' damsels that they successfully resisted being thrown out of the boat, gently splashing us at intervals and gaily laughing these ladies accompanied us across the Dapoi River and 100 yards up the Buroi River, when with one accord they leaped out of the boat into shallow water and gurgling with merriment really got down to soaking us. The D.O., Resident and Penghulu Gau leaped out and held them at bay while the rest of us made a hurried and ignominious getaway. The last I saw of Penghulu Gau for some time was three members of the fair sex sitting on him in about 3 feet of water. Such is the

traditional 'adat' of these people! An overnight stay in their longhouses and their farewell ceremonies are meant to be memorable and, in this case have surely succeeded, as no-one, present is likely to forget his hosts.

Wet and bedraggled, we got out of our boats and walked for nearly 5 hours before we reached the next longhouse. For the first part of the journey we were walking for 3 hours up the shallow Buroi River then over a small watershed and we then walked down the Belepau River to its junction with the Pakulon River. We arrived in time for lunch at a house now inhabited by settled Penans under Basing Kedaman, though a generation or so ago they were nomadic. The luggage went ahead early while H.E. and some of us followed later in perahus and were thus caught in drenching rain and were thoroughly soaked and chilled. Our bedraggled party, headed by the Queen's representative, must have made a fine sight on arrival at the Penan house of Tama Lorai Nagan at Long Tah in the Nibong River but our spirits revived with hot tea and dry towels. These people mercifully do not have quite the same vigorous tradition of parties and we had a pleasant time with just enough dancing to watch without boring us and just enough 'borak' to drink for us to enjoy it and then we were actually allowed to go to bed at 11.30 p.m. and thereafter were not disturbed by anything worse than the usual noises of dog fights and cocks crowing.

Next morning, we were up at daybreak as we had a long journey to do and would have to go hell for leather to reach our destination. We were disheartened to find that our breakfast had been eaten during the night by the dogs. I had often heard that Penans were fond of their animals. The dogs had not, however, taken the coffee and had left us a tin of dry biscuits. We left at 7 a.m. and stopped at Long Nibong to visit Utong Jangan with his partly Penan and partly Sebop longhouse and then were soon back in the Tinjar, which, after yesterday's rain, was in a state of high flood. Longhouses and Leppu Leju bazaar were standing in water and huge trees were sweeping downstream. We dropped the U.R.A. and Wakil Penghulu at Long Tejoi after a small party there and, with the help of the favourable water, we all reached Long Teru at 7 p.m., which was very good going, as we had started in a multitude of small boats, had a party or two on the way and switched into three big boats. It says a lot for the D.O's. organisation and luck that throughout the trip we had kept up to schedule and, out of all the outboards in use, we broke only one pin. After a wash and brush up, we adventured into the longhouse and found the familiar face of Kasi (Mrs. Penghulu Lawai) waiting once again to do us the honours of the evening. We were surprised but thankful that she allowed us to enjoy a fast and pleasant party and then retire to bed around 11 p.m.

On a cold misty double 10<sup>th</sup> (this date, the 10<sup>th</sup> of October,) is important in South East Asia, being anathema to Chinese Communists because it was the National Day of Chiang Kai Shek and is still celebrated in Hong kong, Formosa/Taiwan and by all of anti-Communist Chinese), we left Long Teru at 6 a.m., reaching Marudi about 10 a.m. His Excellency met Dr., Mrs. and Miss de Zulueta, photographs of the expedition were taken, H.E. congratulated the outboard drivers on their magnificent performance and we transferred to the Mermaid, leaving Mr. and Mrs, Morrison and the Native Officers and Penghulu Gau behind. Early that evening, we reached Kuala Baram, where H.E. and Mr. Loke Wan Tho

went bird watching and later Mr. Loke and Mr. Griffin climbed up the staircase of the Baram lighthouse, which, because of its light, was a useful source for finding out about migrating birds, slaughtered there because of their disorientation due to the light and so they knocked themselves out on the glass. Next morning we disembarked and were driven to the Residency at Miri. That evening H.E. and the remainder of his party were entertained at a very successful drinks party given by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in their spacious new building.

On 12<sup>th</sup> October, His Excellency left on the Mermaid for Kuching, arriving there after dark next day. Much lack of sleep was made up on this part of the journey, which was uneventful apart from the unexpected arrival of a Lesser Blue Winged Pitta, which knocked itself out on the Mermaid some 20 miles off Kuala Igan in the darkness.

To end with, I might mention once again how very much appreciated is the Information Office film unit on these ulu trips, if only because during the performance some of us exhausted travellers can get an hour or two's sleep and so help to prepare oneself for the pleasures to come.

The beginning and end of the above article gives an interesting insight into how long it took to go by launch between Kuala Baram upstream to Marudi and downstream again, when travelling in a virtually empty, very low lying swamp land. It is also interesting how long it took to go by sea from Kuala Baram to Kuching. The same Governor who refused to modernise his relaxing cross river paddle perahu in Kuching was the one who could have arranged to go to Kuching from Miri by air, but very sensibly decided that a short period relaxing on a cruise made him a much nicer, more balanced man by the time he had reached Kuching. He was able to get into a correct perspective all the information and experiences gained on his recent trip and he would, mentally, be much better able to cope with the horde of problems that would be hurled at him AT ONCE when he reached Kuching.

One of the episodes on our trip, which I had decided NOT to include in my article in the Sarawak Gazette, concerned Kasi, wife of Penghulu Lawai at Long Teru. Before we set out on our trip, we had been warned that she was a very positive, extrovert lady, who was an indefatigable hostess. She could organise the longhouse maidens very effectively and never accepted "no" to any of her plans and could drink three men, one after another, under the table while she herself was apparently unaffected. Her husband was an amiable nonentity and as negative as she was loud and exuberant. She had lovely eyes and must have been beautiful when young. She dominated him (and, indeed, all of us) and was more the head of the longhouse than he was.

On the above trip, when H.E. felt he had had more 'borak' than he wanted and was telling his hosts that he had deputed me to drink on his behalf, he also told me to mix up two glasses of whisky and gin. We had watched Kasi drinking 'borak' from the same bottles as we had done and her capacity to be unaffected by it was obviously greater than ours. H.E. now returned hospitality by offering her in succession two glasses of mixed whisky and gin. She licked her lips in appreciation and showed no effect whatsoever. After a bit, it was noted that she had disappeared and we felt that we had at last, even if in rather a despicable manner, vanquished her. However, an hour and a half later she re-appeared as cheery as ever and at dawn was ready to lead her team

of Amazons against any of the visitors, including the launch crew, that it could reach. She was a remarkable lady and will appear again in these anecdotes later on.

A very old Malay, Awang Gador, tottered into my office and handed over two very frail and tattered documents, yellow with age, and asked me if they were still valid. The first document read:-

*Sarawak Oilfields Limited  
(Incorporated in Sarawak)*

*THE ANGLO-SAXON PETROLEUM COMPANY LIMITED, SARAWAK.  
CONCESSIONS  
29th: April, 1915.*

*From Dr. A.R. Andrew,  
Miri.*

*To whom it may concern.*

*The bearer Gador of Marudi has been in the employ of this Company from January 1913 to April 1915 (over two years). During 1913 he was employed as Mandore and local guide by my colleague Mr. T.E.G. Bailey and for the rest of the period he has been engaged in the task of exploring the Baram Valley for indication of oil and gas, examining these and reporting the result to Mr. Bailey in Miri. The nature of his work has necessitated his being left almost entirely to himself, and his work has given every satisfaction. His reports in so far as they have been checked by Mr. Bailey's examination have proved trustworthy and Mr. Bailey has every confidence in him. Mr. Bailey left for England some months ago and on his behalf I have pleasure in giving this recommendation.*

*Original) Arthur R. Andrew.  
Signed by)*

*For SARAWAK OILFIELDS LIMITED,*

*LABOUR SUPERINTENDENT.*

The second letter read:-

*SARAWAK OILFIELDS LTD.,*

*Miri,  
Sarawak,  
10<sup>th</sup> March, 1920.*

*Mr. Awang Gador,  
BARAM*

*Confirming our conversation, in the event of this Company drilling Wells for Oil in the Bakong/Baram River districts or elsewhere up the Baram and Bakong Rivers, it is agreed that the Company will pay to you \$50 - for each Well drilled by the Company within a distance of 5,000 feet of any new Oil Seepage discovered by you, and reported by you to the Company subsequent to this date (March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1920). Such Seepages*

*referred to must have been identified, examined and approved as Oil/or Gas Seepage by the Company's Representative.*

*General Manager,  
Sarawak Concessions*

I sent copies of this correspondence to the General Manager of Sarawak Oilfields Limited (S.O.L.) and informed him that Awang Gador wished to know whether the Company was still prepared to honour its promise. In due course, I was able to pass on to Awang Gador that the Company would be pleased to confirm that it would honour its promise. I bet that, at that price, it was 'pleased' to do so!

S.O.L. had long thought that the oil that it had found in Miri was on the edge of an oil field, and that perhaps the other edge might be in the area of the lower Baram River or its tributary the Bakong. Prior to my arrival in Baram District, downriver of Marudi a small clearing had been made in swampy jungle at the edge of the river bank and prospective drilling was taking place there.

One day a Malay rushed into my office to tell me that the Company had found oil in my District. I was a bit miffed that the first I had heard of this exciting news was from a member of the public. I asked him how he had got this information and he told me that he had been returning to Marudi by his outboard and, when passing the drilling area, had suddenly seen oil gushing out in large quantities. It is always pleasant to pass on good news to people, but I am glad to say that instead of rushing to pass on this desirable news to my Resident, I asked the man in charge of the drill about the truth of the Malay's story. Apparently, what the Malay stated he had seen was largely true. Oil had gushed out – but not from an oil field. Periodically, the oil used to lubricate the drills had to be changed, and what the Malay had seen was the old oil being removed before replacing it with clean oil!

I have already mentioned some 'pantangs' that have to be followed by the pagans. Two further ones were:-

I was travelling up the Tinjar River and came to a longhouse, where one of the primary school educated children of the Sebop tribe had been sent for training as a Dresser/Hospital Attendant before returning to his longhouse to add elementary medical treatment to his accomplishments as a traditional farmer. He was newly married and informed me that his wife was now pregnant. He accepted my congratulations but added that he could no longer give injections. On my enquiring why, he told me that when a woman was pregnant, the couple must have nothing to do with a hole. They could not copulate; they even could no longer pass through the hole in the wall between them and their neighbour to visit each other. Despite still being on good terms with them, they now had to go out of their front door on to the ruai and then use the front door of their neighbours when going to see them, and he could no longer make holes in the ground and his wife could no longer dibble in the young rice plants into holes in the ground and so on; and of course he could no longer puncture someone's skin when making an injection. I agreed that in such a case as his wife's pregnancy I could not order him to make any necessary injections but at the same time I did not see why, for several months, he should be paid his monthly governmental allowance, when he could not carry out his job. He then reluctantly agreed to make an exception for injections. I

felt awful when I learnt later that his wife had miscarried and, of course, none of the locals was surprised at this as the dresser had broken the pantang.

Many longhouses have Croton-like plants growing near their entrances and these are protected so that pigs cannot get at them. I was spending the night in an R.C. Kayan longhouse and wished to take a photograph from a particular spot. The trouble was that some of these plants were in the immediate foreground; I pushed my head, shoulders and camera through this mini jungle, bending some of the plants as I did so and when I had taken my photo and moved backwards away from these plants, I noticed that one Croton had snapped about six inches above the ground. I apologised but could not help noticing that there was the sort of atmosphere about that there might be at a vicarage tea party when one has broken a Crown Derby tea cup by mistake and the hostess says "Don't worry. It doesn't matter". Later that evening, when we were feeling relaxed and enjoying our 'borak', the Tua Kampong edged up to me and said, slightly embarrassedly, that did I remember breaking the Croton? Well, in fact, it did matter as the plants were there to encourage good spirits and discourage bad ones, and it could well be that the spirits would be outraged at the snapping off of one of the plants. I refrained from pointing out that, as good R.Cs., they should no longer believe in spirits and asked what could now be done to rectify the situation. It turned out that if a chicken were slaughtered and the blood scattered over the plants, the spirits would probably be appeased. I took the hint and bought the longhouse one of their own chickens.

I went to a trade meeting, held at Long Akah and controlled by a Government officer to see fair play, where Nomadic Penans had brought in their goods to barter them for cloth, shotgun ammunition and other desirable articles. One of the Penans had fallen out of a nearby fruit tree and broken his thigh bone with a very nasty looking compound fracture. Very reluctantly, as I was on a timed programme, I offered him my large Government boat, outboard and driver, as I felt that, with a Nomadic Penan more than with any other race in Sarawak, his days would be numbered unless he could be got downriver swiftly for proper medical attention. He however said that he was already worried enough at having come so far downriver for this trade meeting and he had no intention of undertaking a further journey to hospital. He had no cash whatsoever, but he would be grateful if I would buy him a hen. This I did and he took out his parang and there and then sliced the bird through the breastbone, thus spread-eagling it. My hospital assistant did his best to set the leg and the Penan then wrapped the hen round his wound and tied it tightly – the bird's spine acting as a splint and, I presume, the bird's inside produced maggots that fed on decaying flesh and died off when nothing remained but sound flesh. Two years later I happened to meet this Penan, who was as fit as a fiddle, had had no after effects and was able to carry on with his nomadic life!

Penans and some other ulu tribes too, when they had a pain, used to cause a lesser pain to divert attention from a larger one. They used to pinch the skin, where the pain was, between their finger nails and so produce a blood blister. Someone with a headache would look peculiar with two or three rows of blood blisters at half inch intervals on his forehead.

I myself had very little knowledge about the inside of my body and of what to do to cure a sick person. My medical bag contained nothing but sulphanilamide powder, Enos Fruit Salts, brandy, Johnson's Baby Powder (which I had been told was the same as Johnson's Prickly Heat Powder but cheaper) and aspirin. Even if these did not always

do good, at least, they did no harm. Tiny cuts and especially leech bites (which always itched and caused one to rub or scratch them with dirty fingers easily went septic with the sort of life I led and the powder was marvellous at removing the itch and preventing infection. One of the recipes I invented for curing vomiting and being unable to keep food or drink down was to use stealth. I would soak a piece of lump sugar in brandy, put it in my mouth and say to myself, do NOT swallow. Inevitably, I had to allow a trickle to go down my throat at times. My theory is (rightly or wrongly) that the stomach nerves were unaware that anything had arrived to trigger off the vomiting reaction or they were anaesthetized by the brandy. After several lumps of sugar (a valuable food) had gone down and stayed down I would try a tiny amount of some food such as bread and it usually stayed down. Gradually, I got better. I reckon I saved a Kelabit dresser's life. My party had arrived at Seridan, a most inaccessible place beside a river with large numbers of rapids both up and down river of it. In those days, it had no airstrip. The dresser had been unable to keep anything down for two days. My sugar and brandy recipe at once worked a marvel with him as half an hour later he took a small helping of food and kept it down. I doubt whether borak would have worked as well in the absence of brandy.

### **My Ulu Lepers**

Traditionally, most ulu people isolated lepers by insisting that they remained in shacks some distance from the longhouse and relatives would take food along to them. My impression was that no census of lepers had ever been made. If Government got to hear of cases of leprosy, it tried to get the affected people to come to the Leper Asylum a few miles away from Kuching. I have no reason to think that there were large numbers of lepers hidden away by their families. I am certain, however, that there were some here and there and that touring Government officers were rarely told about them.

I was travelling far in the ulu Baram when I found amongst a group of Nomadic Penan a man and a woman (no relation to each other) with what appeared, to my limited knowledge of the subject, to have leprosy but not in too advanced a stage. Coping with lepers must have been very difficult for all concerned in a nomadic group. I tried to persuade these two people to leave their group and come downriver with me to be cured. I never expected them to agree, but to my surprise, agree they did. It may be that they dreaded what the future held for them as their symptoms became ever worse. I may say that the staff that accompanied me and the crew of the boats I used showed not the least sign of approval of my plan to take on board two lepers! I am still amazed that the two lepers agreed to such an awesome and frightening change in their lives by going downriver with me. After all, they had never seen a proper road or a bicycle, much less a car. They would be faced with strange foods and customs and what could they do if it turned out that they were unhappy? I doubt whether they had seen a white man before and yet they were willing to trust me with their future.

It took over a week for us to reach Marudi and I can't say that my two guests were popular in the places where we stayed. Not unnaturally, no-one (including me) stayed near them on the journey. On arrival at my headquarters I had a long telephone chat with the Medical Officer in Miri about them and pointed out how essential it was to treat them with the utmost gentleness and kindness, or we would never get another ulu leper to come downriver to be cured. I then sent the two Penans to Miri with Tinggang Malang, a most excellent Native Officer, who could converse with them. He returned and told me that they had settled down well in their respective wards.

Two days later, I heard that the male leper had run amok in the ward and had had to be put in a straight jacket. I dropped everything and rushed to Miri with Tinggang Malang. The M.O. told me that during the evening the leper had picked up his parang and rushed to the end of the ward and, with his back to the wall, had waived it at anyone who came near him. The staff, in some alarm, rushed out of the ward taking with them the the sick and the lame. The Police had been called and, after a lot of effort, had captured the Penan and he was now in a cell in a straight jacket.

I knew perfectly well that, whatever trouble he had had, my Penan leper was NOT an amok case and also found it interesting that the local medical fraternity did not know this. With a glazed look on his face, an amok rushes blindly forward (my Penan had his back to a wall), slashing unselectively at all and sundry whom he comes across (my Penan did no such thing) and has no fear of anyone (my Penan showed every sign of being very frightened). It is infrequent that any person runs amok and when it does happen, it nearly always turns out to be a Malay armed with a kris or parang.

Tinggang and I went to the cell and I had the greatest difficulty in persuading the police and medical staff that the first thing to be done was to undo the straight jacket, which illustrated to me the disproportionate fear and panic that this one man, belonging to an unknown tribe, had caused to otherwise sensible medical staff and the police. I then had the greatest difficulty in persuading them that I was not recklessly mad when I said "Leave Tinggang and me to go into the cell alone". The leper's story to us was:-

"At first I was treated very kindly and given food, drink, tobacco and medicine. Then I was alarmed when an Iban headhunter was put in the bed next to mine. I was even more alarmed when he took up his parang and started to carve pieces of wood" (this I later found out was him doing his occupational therapy) "and I then knew that that evening after dark he would kill me by taking my head because Ibans kill Penans. No, I don't speak Iban, but we Penans well know that the Ibans are our enemies. No, I have never seen an Iban before. So I decided that after supper I would defend myself. I picked up my parang, rushed to the end of the room and, with my back to the wall, I was ready to defend myself against anyone who attacked me. There was great commotion and the ward became empty. Then the Police came with guns and looked at me from outside, but did not come in. Then there were bombs" (it turned out to have been tear gas grenades) "and I couldn't breathe so I climbed to the top of the wall where there was a space between there and the roof and then jumped down to the ground on the other side and was then overpowered by the Police, who tied me up".

I had barely started to clear up the disastrous misunderstandings on both sides, when a message came that the female leper had run away and been caught in the undergrowth outside the hospital. Her story was:-

"Everyone was most kind to me and gave me food, drink and tobacco and I was enjoying myself. Then one afternoon people from outside came in to visit the patients in the ward. Suddenly, amongst them, I saw a huge, horrible hairy devil" (it turned out to be a well built Sikh) "and he came to the bed next to mine (where his wife was) and I immediately hid under the sheet. After he had gone, I decided to get away from so dangerous a place as this before he returned to attack me".

The M.O. told me that both Penans were in the early stage of leprosy and were not infectious and could be cured if they took their medicine regularly for several months. We mutually agreed that it would be better if their course of medicine took place in Marudi and he asked me to take the necessary medicine with me for the Hospital Assistant there to administer to them.

On arrival in Marudi, the Penans said that they did not wish to stay in the Marudi dispensary but would like to stay with me. I admit that I did not enthuse at this suggestion, but who amongst my staff would volunteer to house them and ensure that they went up each day to the dispensary for their treatment.

It eventually turned out that the Penans were not thinking of using my guest room. We compromised and the two lepers went off together to the nearby jungle with their parangs and soon returned with all the necessary ingredients to build themselves a cosy shack about 30 yards from my front door, close to the path to my house and not far from the top of the steps leading down the cliff to the D.O's. wharf. There they set up house as man and wife. They had no money but the Medical Department provided them with food and I gave them tobacco. They collected firewood from the nearby jungle and went regularly to the dispensary for their treatment.

Should visitors come to my wharf, the curious lepers rushed down the steps and in the friendliest manner shook hands with all and sundry and helped to carry up the visitors' luggage. When the visitors saw the Penans in the shack by my front door and inquired what it was all about, they listened to my explanation with increasing horror and agitation and rushed off to the bathroom to scrub themselves thoroughly. They seemed to think that it was irresponsible of me to have allowed these friendly Penans to help them with their luggage and to shake hands with them!

About the only time I wore my Colonial Service uniform was on the Queen's Birthday Parade, when I would put on my white tropical uniform: topi, jacket, with facings denoting my rank and my war medals, trousers, which were fastened under my boots so tightly that it was nearly impossible to kneel when at a church service, and my sword.

For the 1956 Queen's Birthday parade, I startled my lepers by appearing in my uniform as I stalked along the short path from my house the short distance to the Fort where the Police Guard was lined up as were the local dignitaries. Apparently my staff heard the Penans say "There goes our brave Tuan to war to defend us". After I had inspected the Guard, an ancient cannon was fired, then the dignitaries assembled for drinks and we all returned to our homes. There my staff told me that the Penans had run off into the jungle shouting "Our brave Tuan went to war to defend us but he has only a sword and the enemy have guns. He will be dead and we must flee while we can." It took a long time to find them and persuade them that I was alive and it was safe for them to return.

### **The Governor's Non-Visit to the Kalabits**

At Lawas the B.E.M. had a tiny one engined plane, with part of its framework's canvas covering fixed with zips. The plane could carry a pilot and two others. Sir Anthony Abell was the first head of state to go to the Kelabit area as, so far as I know, none of the Rajahs had ever visited. I went to Baareo overland, with the intention of meeting H.E. there. Once the B.E.M. pilot had got into his flimsy plane he always said a prayer for Bon Voyage. This was wise, as had there been engine trouble, there was usually no-

where to land along the routes of jungle covered valleys and high mountains and, had it got engulfed amongst the trees, it was highly unlikely that any plane sent to find it would have had a clue as to where it had gone down. At about midday on the appointed day, the plane flew over quite high, then circled and flew low, then circled again and flew even lower and the Governor took off his hat and waved at us and it flew off with him! Morton, the pilot had originally arranged to fly Sir Anthony to nearby Bah Kelalan, leave H.E. there, fly to Baareo to make sure that the strip was in good enough condition to land and, if so, go back and fetch him. For some reason he never went to Bah Kelalan. So far as I could see the landing strip at Baareo was in very good condition. Obviously Morton felt it was unsuitable for landing a person of the rank of Governor!

I later wrote a letter to H.E. to tell him about what had been arranged for him, so that he could write a letter of appreciation to Penghulu Lawai.

It was most disappointing you were not allowed to land. The Baareo people have asked me to tell you what you missed.

Firstly the local Kelabit Penghulus (and, for the Kayans Penghulu Jok Ngau) had come too and all the Tua Kampongs of the whole area were lined up and Pa Main school band of bamboo flutes was there, ready to play God Save the Queen. Even some Kelabits from Indonesia had come over to see you. As you stepped off the strip you would have found two orchids in full bloom planted there. The path to the house had been decorated and near the 'tangga' six more ground orchids had been planted. You would have been taken to the Penghulu's 'bilek' and on the floor ready for you was a huge pile of pineapples, bananas and oranges. The Penghulu would then, rather sheepishly, have produced 'borak' for you and some of the more hardened sinners were prepared to partake of it with you. Word had gone round that I had suggested that drink in moderation was not sinful and, indeed, Jesus Christus himself had indulged in wine. I noticed by the evening many respected persons (who had started off the evening as teetotallers) were joining in and you would have been sung to in three different types of Kelabit song by the maidens, one of whom had come from Indonesia.

After the reception you would have been taken to a decorated grandstand and photographed with two head of cattle tied up. The Penghulu had decided to give you the honour of shooting these two cows, but I warned him that he must not be disappointed if you declined this honour as I felt sure that only rarely did you shoot cows. I felt that they did not really believe that this might be your reaction. Since you did not turn up, the cows were not slaughtered.

On the return to the longhouse, you would have been startled by observing a panic. A Kayan coolie had attempted to commit suicide. After this, you would have gone to Sigan's room (she was Tom Harrison's Kelabit wife) for an excellently cooked lunch, including fresh new local potatoes planted by herself. After this, time was allowed to have a siesta and then, after coffee, it was proposed to take you for a walk through fields reminiscent of those at home, littered with cow turds and boggy at narrow places due to the cattle's feet. The weather was cool, crisp and bracing. However, local colour, not found in U.K. fields, included tree ferns, orchids and banana plants.

After a bathe in the icy stream, I would have suggested a whisky after dinner, which was to have consisted of those two cows. (To interrupt – I may say that I regretted that they were reprieved, as they were considered too expensive a meal to offer to a mere D.O. For me, they produced a buffalo, apparently killed shortly before being served up and extremely tough). I realised for the first time how inefficient my front teeth are for coping with a situation that was normal for my ancestors of 2,000 years ago. I was presented with the front leg of the buffalo and no knife and fork. I bit a piece, then holding it firmly in my teeth, I pushed the leg away from me with my hands until I had torn off a piece of meat, which I chewed and chewed to little effect. Mercifully, Eustace was conveniently near me. I repeated this procedure many times. I was reminded of what I had undergone, when, next morning, I woke up and started to yawn and nearly shrieked out with the pain as my jaw was completely muscle bound. I couldn't chew without pain till the end of the day after! The Penghulu had at least 400 visitors in his house to cater for, which on top of a recent W.H.O. visit, has meant no little expense for him and his people this year.

After dinner and the usual chat, we would have gone to the U.R.A's room and indulged in 'borak'. Sigan acted as hostess and a very good one too. She is by no means teetotal. She had a special song ready for you, which she sang to me instead. The festive spirit was getting quite noticeable and dancing was started. Later on a man did dancing representation of the sexual habits of dogs using various people as partners, starting with my boy Mat, who blushed furiously and later he included me and the N.O. in his repertoire. Though the dance was vulgar, it greatly amused the audience of both sexes. We later did the usual conga through the bileks and along the ruai with the special Kelabit choruses. There were also games such as catching a spinning plate before it falls, failing which you have to sing a song. I don't know at what time you would have got to bed. The night was not nearly so cold as the previous one had been. I had been well wrapped up but even so I had spent that night curled up like an animal, with the sheet over my head and shivered. To make matters worse, I had been awakened in the middle of that night by unearthly shrieks and yells from the Kayan, who was to try next day to commit suicide.

Next morning, there was a reserve of 'borak' available to while away the time until the arrival of your plane. Sigan gave me some new potatoes for my journey.

I am very sorry that you have still not yet experienced the atmosphere of a Kelabit house, which is so difficult to describe. I expect that you intended to give Penghulu Lawai Besara, B.E.M. (Military – not Civil Division) a photo. I am sure that he would greatly appreciate such a memento, even though you were unable to reach his house.

Bunty arrives in Miri on 21<sup>st</sup> May and we both feel very happy at the thought of this."

### **My Seridan Trip and a Penan Tamu**

I had asked for porters to transport my party as far as Seridan, where people from that longhouse would take over. In the old days it was the duty of a longhouse to take a Government officer and his party to the next village, but nowadays one gave them a

small sum for this service. At harvest time, providing porters was a most unpopular imposition, at certain other times, it was as welcome as would be a cash crop. On this occasion I had a most unusual request. A youngish man and his wife asked me if I would take them as porters all the way to Marudi. They had no cash, they had suspected T.B. and they had a four year old daughter who would have to accompany them. They had decided that if the opportunity offered itself, they would temporarily abandon their longhouse and farmland and opt to go to Miri for treatment. I was embarrassed. The type of journey I was about to embark on was very tough and certainly not recommended for suspected T.B. cases. I would have liked to take them free, but that could have offended them. I said that they could come with me and be paid as porters, where porters were necessary, and thereafter cadge a lift with us. Once again, it was a great and doubtless alarming adventure for these ulu farmers to leave their home for the unknown. In fact, it was extremely rare for any of the ill from such ulu areas to face all the manifold problems of going to hospital.

Setting off from Baareo, we spent a night at Kubaan. I was pleased to note that, on the return of a Kanowit Rural Training Centre student to Kubaan, he has persuaded the elders there to improve the ways they plant swamp padi. That evening borak appeared. I asked the Tua Kampong how this was, as the house was now B.E.M. Christian. The T.K. said that he was too old to change his ways and besides, there was no missionary present at this time. As the evening progressed and the Penghulu and I were sitting on a mat on the ruai, I suddenly noticed that I was getting a wet bottom. It appeared that the T.K., who was showing every sign of being affected by over consumption of alcohol, also could not control his bladder. I quickly moved to a neighbouring mat!

We reached the foothills of the mountain range. The husband and wife carried goods, just like anyone else, and the 4 year old daughter walked valiantly beside them. Then we climbed steeply up and at intervals the mother carried her daughter as well as the load. I then noted that father had taken some of her load. When we reached the top of the range, we followed along it all day, but this was far from being a level path, as it went up and down each side of valley after valley (usually steep sided), at the bottom of which we halted to recover our breath, have a drink of mountain stream cold water and wash our faces as we were now, I guess, at least 5,000 feet above sea level. About 5 p.m. it was decided to stop and, so far as I could tell without anyone telling anyone else what to do, some went off to look for suitable posts to build a shelter for us all, while others were looking for suitable roofing materials and yet others were preparing an evening meal for us all. On this first night in the jungle, I was upset to find that my whisky had been left behind, though the S.A.O's grenadine and orangeade had not. However, I managed to light my pressure lamp with half the glass broken. When I got out my 'skeetofax' (anti mosquito ointment) I found that I had a mere tube of lanoline!

The next day was similar to the last one, including sleeping out in the jungle. I liked those nights in the jungle. There were few loud noises, but there was the croaking of frogs, insect noises and a variety of sounds which I simply could not place. One of the easily distinguishable noises is one that only occurs just as the sun is sinking below the horizon. It is a loud whine, doesn't last longer than a few minutes and is made, I think, by one of the cicadas. At dawn one can often hear the musical gurgling of gibbon apes and watch the hornbills flying across the valley from mountain top to mountain top. I have often heard the sound of barking deer and argus pheasant. At night I have often

seen a small mushroom (1 cm diameter) that glows faintly with a cream colour, like a pale moon. I wonder why it does this?

We descended to Buyo longhouse. Cockroaches are wondrous survivalists. They were all over the longhouse two days after the W.H.O. Anti-malaria Team had DDT'ed it thoroughly. The next morning, we descended to the very isolated village of Seridan, which is out on a limb and which, at that time had no airstrip, though the B.E.M. later had one built there. Here we spent two nights.

Instead of providing porters, the people of Seridan provided us with paddlers and boats. Normally, they only used their boats locally as not far upriver or downriver were very scenic but lengths of nearly impassable long rapids in deep gorge after gorge. For our journey, the Kelabits put extra sides on our three boats. The rapids were such that they never tried to return home by boat but sold them, though after such a journey downriver the boats were in such a state that they usually got very little for them. On our journey downriver the porters took enough rice with them to survive the arduous journey home by land.

We were lucky that the height of the river (the Magoh) was suitable for us to do the journey. For the first day we alternated smooth water with the descent of exhilarating rapids – one after another. Before going down each rapid, we would pull into the side and the bowman would go to a vantage point to work out the best route onwards. Based on the height of the water on certain features he would decide which route we should follow on this special occasion. It was very exciting going down rapids, especially if, on this occasion, there was only a short length of smooth water between the bottom of one lot of rapids and the top of the next, as it was impossible to draw into the river bank facing downstream. On turning the boat to face upstream while the boat was being carried downstream at great speed, the bowman had to make sudden decisions and all our lives rested on him and all the paddlers working as a team. As the boat emerged from the turbulent water into the slightly smoother water, it was obviously desirable that during the manoeuvre, the boat spent as little time as possible going fast downstream while being paddled sideways on to the direction of the current while rapidly approaching the next lot of rough water. I could see perfectly well that the visible part of the rocks were very hard and frequently had tough sharp spines, which would do no good to a boat at speed that hit the visible or invisible part of such a rock, especially if the boat was sideways on to the rock. While broadside on, it was inevitable that the boat shipped in quantities of water and some paddlers had to switch to baling out. My relief was immense when I realised that the boat was beginning to face upstream, even though still going backwards, until very gradually the paddlers got it moving quicker than the current and we could tie it up to the river bank. I was always in the front boat and could then watch in turn the next two boats charging forwards and then begin the dangerous manoeuvre of turning to go upstream and join us.

Periodically, while studying the next route, the bowman would decide that the boat should be as light as possible. All the cargo and passengers had to disembark at the top of a rapid and the boats would go down with a skeleton crew. At the side of the gorges, there was no path and we had to clamber with all our belongings over and around huge rocks and boulders, often slippery. The journey round the rapid might be 500 yards or well over a mile. On two occasions, not only did we have to unload the boats, but we had to pull them overland – or rather over and between the rocks – a slow and very

strenuous process that did the boats no good. The T.B. couple helped out at such times and the poor little girl had to struggle as best she could to keep up with them. It was amazing that the little four year old never cried or became fractious, except when her parents left her for a moment. Some of the gorges were narrow with vertical sides and occasionally one could see a massive tree trunk some 100 feet above us spanning the gorge like a bridge. None of these was a tree felled to make a bridge, but a tree that had been carried down by flood water and wedged in that high up position! Occasionally too, we would suddenly tie up at the river bank where a side stream with lower water than us joined the Magoh River, allowing the higher water of the latter to flow into the side stream and so form a quiet pool at its mouth. Fish loved such pools and an expert fisherman would stand on a rock and cast his net into the pool. Then others would dive in and extract as much as 11 reasonably sized fish, which provided a very tasty supper.

At night, the boats would be drawn up on to a kerangan, where a shelter would be erected and a fire lit, and one hoped that one's sleep would not be disturbed by a rise in the river level. On one occasion my boy, Mat, on awakening found that he was sharing his mat with a snake. Normally he was very slow at rousing himself, but on this occasion he became mobile very quickly. We had been going down the Magoh River, which eventually joined the ulu part of the Tutoh River.

A day and a half were spent going down these rapids before we reached calm water, where we drew up at a grassy river bank and, while the extra walls were removed from the boats, I took off my wet smelly, sweaty clothes that I had worn for several days and laid them out on rocks to dry. The result was fantastic, as hordes of delighted butterflies appeared from nowhere to flutter around and then settle on my garments and feed on my perspiration. In the hot sunshine my clothes dried quickly, I put them on again and we set off downriver to the Tutoh River, which was now running more smoothly and arrived at Long Melinau, where there were some hutments as we had arranged that one of the periodic Nomadic Penan trade meetings should take place here, and two days later we were in Marudi.

Before leaving for the ulu for the Governor's trip to Baareo and my Kelabit plateau and Seridan trip, I had arranged for elderly Kapitan Ah Bah of Marudi to go up in my boat, pick up the even more elderly Datu Mohammed Zen Galau at his villa a little way upriver of Marudi and join me at the site of the Nomadic Penan trade meeting. Programme wise, this worked well. The Kapitan had brought with him a jeweller's sized 'daching', which turned out to be useful for weighing bezoar stones from the insides of monkeys, bears, procupines, etc brought in by the Penans because they knew how much the Chinese appreciated them to ensure good health or sexual potency. Both Ah Bah and Zen Galau, one for trading reasons and one as a Government administrator, had been used to travelling upriver – but this had been years and years ago, when they were younger and fitter.

On the way back from the Nomadic Penan trade meeting to Marudi, we spent a night at Long Linei – a Bukit longhouse. Datu Zen Galau was, originally, a pagan from here before becoming a Muslim and was greatly respected by the inhabitants. This longhouse was well known as providing the best percussion music in the district, if not the country. The usual guest-welcoming preliminaries took place and then we had a meal. As usual, the honoured guests were seated on mats at the centre of the ruai opposite the door to the headman's door. The planks of the dividing wall between his

room and the ruai were flimsy. Kapitan Ah Bah, as befitted his age was wilting under all the welcoming procedures and soon retired to the bilek, where, rather injudiciously, he



Arrival at Rumah Debu,  
1950

had put his sleeping mat with his pillow up against the dividing wall. Despite the general noise of longhouse life, he was soon asleep. In due course I noticed with interest some strong youths struggling towards us with one of the biggest gongs that I had ever seen anywhere. This gong was hung from a frame that had been placed close to the dividing wall, just the other side of which was the Kapitan's head. Near it was placed a massive drum stick reminiscent of that used at the start of Metro-Goldwin-Meyer films. In front of this gong were placed gongs, in descending size from right to left, each of which was hung on its own frame. In front of these were the 'gendang' (a rectangular frame on the ground on which were suspended, in descending order of size, smaller gongs) played by a man seated cross legged on the ground, with two drum sticks used as he would on a xylophone. There were also other minor percussion instruments. The orchestra players then arrived and took up position. The leader of the orchestra stood opposite the biggest gong, picked up his drum stick, paused dramatically, stick upraised in his hand, as he looked at us all and then struck a mighty blow on the gong, after which the whole orchestra started up. Very soon after this magnificent start to the musical evening, the door to the bilek was opened and a most irate Kapitan Ah Bah emerged. It showed his physical fitness that, though fast asleep, this sudden and unexpected thunderous noise close to his head had not caused him to have a heart attack. Dancing followed and despite his frailty and great age, the Datu danced gracefully and effectively and didn't retire until shortly before daybreak!

From Long Linei we set off for Marudi. On arrival, I sent the Kelabit T.B. family to Miri, having first telephoned the Divisional Medical Officer to meet them and look after them. I had carefully explained to him how far away they lived, the several days it had taken us to do the journey from Baareo to Marudi and how brave they were to have

undertaken this journey and that they were very poor people. He assured me that he would keep them happy. Next day he telephoned me and said he had arranged for all three to be X-rayed after which he had told them to go home and return to the hospital a week later, but they didn't seem satisfied! Despite all my efforts, this town-orientated man was totally incapable of comprehending the difference between dealing with a patient who resided in Miri and my three penniless patients whose home was in far away Baareo. It had not occurred to him to get help from the social services before casting them out of Miri hospital and leaving them to fend for themselves. He did not seem to realise that his job as 'Divisional Medical Officer' covered the whole Division – an area probably bigger than Belgium and Holland – not just being the officer-in-charge of Miri Hospital. Eventually, it was agreed that an exception would be made and the T.B. family was housed near the Marudi dispensary.

While discussing medical matters, I once brought down with me from the ulu two ladies with goitre. I thought the doctor would be pleased that once again he could do something for the ulu people, which no hospital assistant could have coped with. He was not enthusiastic and pointed out that goitre operations were not all that easy to do. If you didn't cut off enough, the goitre returned and if you cut off too much, the patient expired. I asked him how did he learn how much to cut off and he said "Well! The first time you do the operation you cut off too little. The second time, you cut off too much. After that you hope that for subsequent operations you have learnt what is the correct amount to remove." I hope I never suffer from goitre, but, if I do, I shall certainly ask the surgeon how many successful and unsuccessful such operations he has carried out, before I allow him to operate on me.

In the ulu in pre-war days, owing to heavy transport costs, salt was expensive. However the Kelabits of one longhouse were lucky, as near them was a small dirty pool filled by a bubbling spring of salty water. Birds left their feathers in it and animals came to drink from it. The solution was not strongly saline and had a dose of iodine in it. By evaporation, the iodine salt was obtained, compressed in bamboos and, when dry, the bamboos were split open and the resulting grey coloured cylinder of salt, about a foot long and an inch in diameter, was wrapped in leaves ready to be transported downriver. This salt was a financial boon to the village near the pool.

When Bunty and I left Sarawak, we brought a large supply of this salt with us and we used it as table salt, but only en famille (apart from the fact that guests might look askance at it, we did not wish to waste this unreplenishable asset on them). By 1990, despite our careful husbandry, we were running out of our excellent salt, so what was our delight when, in that year, our son Murdo returned from a visit to the Kelabit area, bringing with him a new supply of Kelabit salt wrapped in leaves – enough to supply our needs well into the 21st century!

A delegation from a Kenyah longhouse came to my office and asked me to incarcerate a man (who was with them) as he was a lunatic and might burn down the longhouse. I looked up what the law books had to say on this matter and found out that, where no doctor was available, a District Court Magistrate could temporarily imprison someone he thought was a lunatic until other arrangements could be made. I asked for evidence that he was a lunatic. They said that he often waived his arms about and that he talked to himself aloud. I pointed out that it was not unknown for me to act like this. They could give no evidence that he had started a fire or threatened to burn the house down. They

said that I should trust them as they knew him and I didn't and, if he burnt their house down would I provide money for rebuilding it? I pointed out that it was a very serious matter to detain someone and that in this case I did not feel the information they had given me justified such an action. They went off very dissatisfied with me. Some months later, he burnt the longhouse down and they were even more dissatisfied with me when I was unable to compensate them.

After dark on one of my trips upriver, I was sitting on a mat placed on the ruai in the place of honour and the Kayan Tua Kampong was next to me. We were lit by a pressure lamp. He was in the act of talking to me while pouring out 'borak' into a tumbler for me, when a hornet flew in, circled round and landed on the mat a few inches from his foot and started to drink some 'borak' that had been spilled on the mat. I was full of admiration when the T.K., without stopping talking or concentrating on his pouring out and without appearing to look at the hornet, raised his foot and brought his heel down hard on to the insect and raised it again quickly having most effectively killed it! For myself, I would have sought other methods of killing the hornet. Had I been told to use my heel, I would certainly have stopped pouring out while the whole of my attention would have been concentrated on the job in hand.

On one of my trips to the Kelabit area, I was at a longhouse near the Indonesian frontier. For ease of delineation, the frontier had been selected following the watershed between rivers flowing north (to Sarawak) and flowing south (to Dutch Borneo, now Indonesia) and ignored completely the fact that in many cases it separated people of the same race. While I was there, a delegation of Indonesian Kelabits, who mixed freely with the Sarawak ones and vice versa, came to see me and asked me to accept them into Sarawak. I said that I could do no such thing and in any case, I doubted whether the Sarawak Kelabits would wish to give up some of their land for the Indonesian Kelabits. "Oh!" they said. "We like our land and our longhouse. We don't want to move from where we are. What we want you to do is to move the boundary post so that we are inside Sarawak"! If I had moved the boundary, I wonder how long it would have been before the Indonesians realised what had happened and when they complained about it, what then would my future prospects in the Sarawak service have been? Nevertheless, this episode provides an unusual case of a group of people wishing to be governed by a colonial regime instead of by an independent state.

The Information Officer (Philip Jones, a bachelor) brought Lady Ravensdale (daughter of Lord Curzon, a former Viceroy of India) to Baram District. We travelled upriver to a Kenyah longhouse and I arranged for them, as guests of honour, to have their camping beds put up in the Tua Kampong's room and I would sleep on the ruai. An agitated Philip then approached me to say that this arrangement must be altered as what would people say if they heard that he had spent the night in the same room as Lady Ravensdale. I pointed out that the T.K. and his female dependents would be in the same room but that did not satisfy him. So his bed was moved next door and Lady Ravensdale was left (as I pointed out to him) at the mercy of a native chief! Needless to say, she was not in the least worried at what might happen to her.

The recently built Marudi Bazaar had few trees in the area between it and the river, so I arranged that a dozen or so Sealing Wax Palms (*Cyrtostachys*) should be brought from the swamps at the mouth of the river to decorate the bazaar area. These are tufted palms, i.e. the main stem sends out suckers from the base, so that in due course each

palm has become a group of palms. The stems of these palms develop an attractive stretch of bright red at the top of the trunk, hence their name. These young palms were delicate and so I issued an edict to the bazaar traders to ensure that none of their hens should perch on the growing trees. One day I was cross to see that the small palm, planted at the foot of the path going from the bazaar up the cliff to the fort was bent at right angles with the weight of a hen on it and other hens were scratching the newly dug soil around it. I rushed up the hill and told the police corporal to organise a party, surround these hens, catch as many of them as possible and impound them. He could return the hens to the owner once his name had been recorded. To my annoyance, only one hen was caught. About a fortnight later, it occurred to me that no-one had reported the owner's name. I asked my Senior Native Officer whether the hen was still being fed at Government expense. Abang Haji Adenan was an excellent officer, a plump happy man with a lovely smile. He looked at me without saying anything and then said "Whose is the house nearest to that palm tree?" I looked at him for a moment and then simultaneously we both burst out laughing, for the house in question was the S.N.O's. In 1984, on a visit, to Marudi, I was delighted to see many of the palms had survived. I know of no other bazaar decorated with Sealing Wax Palms.

Though Marudi had no metalled roads, there were wide earth paths around the bazaar area, one of which led up the steep path leading to the fort and on to the D.O's bungalow and another path rising equally steeply led to the flat plateau on which were the dispensary, clerks' quarters and some other buildings. Marudi also boasted one very dilapidated and elderly truck, driven for many years by a very diminutive Malay, perhaps four feet tall. He came to me one day and said that he wished to go to Miri and do some driving there and, as he had never had a driving licence, would I please test him. Once again I looked up my law books and found that D.Os. were empowered to issue driving licences.

One of the unusual aspects of testing this man was that there were no other motor vehicles in the whole District; still, there were handcarts, bicycles and pedestrians, who walked in the middle of all the paths. There were no 'Stop' signs, traffic lights and other modern aids to safe driving in Marudi. I found the driver in his vehicle with the engine on. I told him to set off up the hill to the dispensary and on the hill I said "Stop", but he didn't. I again said "Stop. At once". He did so by taking his foot off the accelerator and stalling with the truck left in gear. I then said, "Now do a hill start." He, "I can't because this vehicle doesn't have a starter and I can only start it by using a handle in front." Me, "Well, you can still put the hand brake on, get into neutral and wind up your handle." He, "My hand brake doesn't work". Me, "So what do you do to start on a hill?" He, "If I have a passenger, I tell him to pick up those two bricks there and put them under the rear wheels. If I am by myself, I go backwards downhill until I am on the flat!" I decided to put the bricks under the rear wheels, he put the car into neutral, got out started up the car, got in and did an excellent start on a steep hill. Testing a driver in Marudi was certainly unusual. I tried him out verbally on all the road signs and he knew them all. I gave him a driving licence and told him not to use his vehicle again until it was roadworthy. Incidentally, it turned out that it had never been licensed!

Not far from the foot of Mulu and Long Terawan in the ulu Tutoh River, water bubbles out of the earth forming a pool at a temperature of what I would call 'Hot bath water'. None of the nearby natives nor for that matter the Malays from Marudi would enter this water, though they were prepared to dip the tips of their fingers in it. I pointed out to

them that they could pick up rice in their fingers which had come directly from the cooking pot and that this pool water was not nearly as hot as that. They then quite sensibly said that they were quite used to eating hot rice with their fingers and putting it into their mouths, but their testicles were not in the same category as they had never experienced such temperatures.

Whereas my body was comfortable in a hot bath and my mouth could cope with hot food, it used to annoy me that I had to wait till the rice was unpleasantly cold before I could convey it with my fingers to my mouth.

### **Bunty Joins me in Baram District and her Trip to the Ulu**

When I was Private Secretary and took my leave in January 1954 in Malaya, I invited out Mary Browne, (later Godmother to my eldest child) who had shared a flat in Baker Street in London with my sister and whom I had met there during the war. She was a physiotherapist in Kuala Lumpur and Bunty Soulsby and she were in the same Mess. I arrived at approximately the correct time but Mary shrieked that I was early (she was, in fact, never on time) and asked Bunty, reclining on the veranda, to look after me. The reason she was reclining was that she had been involved in a car accident and was black and blue. She had a lovely voice and I liked her face and never noticed the ugly bruises. Reluctantly (to Bunty's relief, as she was getting tired and apparently I never stopped talking), I agreed to go off with Mary.

For Christmas 1955, I invited Mary to come to Marudi and travel to the ulu and to bring with her that nice girl, whose surname I could not remember. They came and, on the way, spent a night with the Resident (W.S.B. Buck), who took them on a tour of Miri. On a hill top with a good view, Bunty asked which was the road to Marudi. Bunny Buck said "Ian hasn't told you much about his District. There is no road to Marudi". After a day in Marudi, I took them up the Tutoh and the Apoh and they experienced life in longhouses – washing in the river, drinking 'borak', etc.

In January 1956 I took local leave in Kuala Lumpur and it was then that we got engaged. When Bunty's mother said, "The total number of days you have known him is not very many", she lapsed into silence when Bunty replied, "Well at least I have seen him in his pyjamas in the longhouse". Incidentally, many people in Britain wrote to us when they heard of our engagement and said "How nice that you are so close to one another". In a straight line (but remember that the travelling distance would be at least 1/3rd longer) Kuala Lumpur to Marudi was some 880 miles (1420 kms), equivalent to the distance between London to Cyprus.

Malaya was getting its independence and Bunty, a Government Radiographer, was told that, in June 1957, her post would be abolished and taken over by a local and she would be given a lump sum. She went to see an Establishment Officer (a Chinese) and said that we wished to get married in January 1957 but after her honeymoon, she would carry on in her job till June. Would that affect her abolishment terms? She was told it wouldn't. A fortnight before our wedding date in Kuching, she received a letter to tell her that a mistake had been made and that if she wanted her abolition terms, she would have to postpone the wedding until June. She was not the sort of person to accept such an ultimatum and went to see the Establishment Officer just before his office closed and he was going off to play a game of golf. He was adamant that nothing could be done. She burst into tears and said that she would not leave his office until he had re-

established his original decision. This, unwillingly, he did. We were married in the Cathedral in Kuching by the Bishop, went to Singapore for a couple of days and, because we could not go to Hong Kong as planned due to a strike, the Governor (who was also High Commissioner to Brunei) allowed us to have our honeymoon in the High Commissioner's lodge at Muara in Brunei. This lovely modern villa was on the edge of a Brunei cliff, with a path leading down to the beach. We could look across the sea to the island of Labuan (part of North Borneo) and, until about 10 a.m., when obscured by clouds, Mount Kinabalu (which means the Chinese widow) in North Borneo, some 13,000 feet (4,000m) high.

One morning, clad only in our bathing costumes, we returned to Muara Lodge to find two Sarawak Forest Department officers waiting there. B.E. Smythies and J.A.R. Anderson, stationed in Brunei, had called on the newly married D.O. and his wife. Forest Officers, like anyone else, can be of many types but these two men were of the type who loved nothing better than to go off into the jungle for long periods and commune with nature.

Bill Smythies had joined the Burma Forest Service pre-war and in 1949 had transferred to the Sarawak Forest Service. He was one of the most monosyllabic men I have ever met. No-one could claim that, when he was invited to a drinks party at Government House, he was adept at making sparkling conversation on subjects of no value whatsoever, as most of us tried to do. He was never rude but just kept silent unless he had something valuable to add to the subject under discussion, in which case he would be really fascinating. In 1951 he was heard to say "A new forest officer has arrived called Robb Anderson. He is a very silent man". It was difficult to imagine anyone more silent than Bill. J.A.R. Anderson, MC and Bar, who had done most useful work when spending very long trips alone in the undisturbed forest around the 8,861 feet Mount Mulu, was indeed just as silent as was Bill Smythies.

Bunty and I in our damp bathing costumes were abashed to find that our two guests were clad formally in dark lounge suits, hats and rolled up black umbrellas and sat stiffly upright, in the traditionally correct Edwardian style, with their umbrellas between their legs and their hands resting on the umbrella handles. We ordered coffee and Bunty put out dry towels on the chintz-covered furniture for us to sit on, while carrying on conversation with them and trying to ignore the fact that we were sitting down in our bathing costumes! They were both excellent men and forest officers, but it was a problem getting them to say anything or to rouse them to show any interest in anything. After they had left, Bunty asked me if there were many others in Sarawak who were so difficult to chat to.

It was in Bill's first year in Sarawak, when I was in charge of a district way upriver that bordered on to Indonesia, that I invited him to accompany me on a tour of the furthest upriver Dayak longhouses and we would do detours so that he could see some of the local jungle areas. Two men together on such trips really get to know each other well in a way that does not happen when just meeting each other socially. It was an excellent trip. While I was doing my work in a longhouse he would go down to the river and fish. In one longhouse that entertained us, a maiden, holding a tumbler of the local brew sang a song of welcome to him, which ended with the words "You, Sir, who stand at the water's edge, clad in bathing shorts with a fishing rod and an open umbrella and never manage to catch a fish – accept from me and empty the glass I am now offering you."

On this trip, Bill's silences were not in the least embarrassing, while, on the other hand, he sparkled as he talked about his life in Burma and his knowledge of the jungle was fascinating. I greatly valued his many good points.



Bunty Soulsby and Mary Browne, December 1955

In whatever country she was, Bunty took an interest in the people and the country, so I took her on a trip to the ulu. We went in the large Government outboard up the Baram to the mouth of the Patah River, left our boat there and went up that river to Long Daloh longhouse in three small boats with outboards. The water was rather low and in places the passengers had to get out so that the boats could be hauled round or poled up the rapids. Following my policy of getting headmen from one end of my district to travel to totally different geographical areas, we had with us headmen from other areas, namely Penghulu Enteri (an Iban from a lowland river the Bakong), T.K. Hussein (a Malay from Marudi) and T.K. Tama Udeng Sageng (a Kenyah from the ulu Tutoh). It took us most of

the day to reach Long Daloh. During the night it rained and so the river had risen a lot. It was Bunty's first experience of going down rapids and we reached the river mouth in just over an hour. She was truly alarmed that she would lose her newly married husband as I stood up in the rocking and bucking boat to photograph how the driver of the boat with the help of the man in front negotiated the huge rocks visible and invisible. The Government outboard then took us to Long Akah, where we spent the night in the Fort.

Next day Bunty began to develop what turned out to be Asian 'flu (it later spread to Europe), however we set off up the Akah in two local boats with outboards. The river was fairly high and there were lots of rapids. The river banks consisted of huge boulders and massive rocks. The outboards, with the help of poling by the crew, managed to go up some of the rapids. In other cases, inexperts like us and the downriver headmen, disembarked and crawled and slithered on the boulders and were often in imminent danger of slipping off a steep sided rock into the raging water. The local Kayans, however, were well ahead of the boats leaping from boulder to boulder and pulling hard on ropes while clinging with their bare feet to the sides of the same steep sided smooth rocks that we found so difficult to stay on. Others at the same time were holding on to the side of the boats, with their feet sometimes on rocks and sometimes on God knows what beneath the foaming water, and, while pulling, kept the boats from swinging on to the rocks or out into the stream. The outboard driver at the back was sometimes using his engine but at others had to lift it out of the water lest he broke a pin. At one stage, our boat was the one in front struggling against the strong current in the middle of the river with the engine flat out and the crew poling but only managing to go forward

slowly. In the middle of the river was a huge rock. Our bowman signalled to go right and around that side of the rock. As it turned out that the strength of the water on this side of the rock was phenomenal and before we had properly started the manoeuvre, the bowman and driver agreed (don't ask me how) to abandon this route and we slowed the outboard slightly, and so floated backwards under control (though waves were continually coming in over the sides and some paddlers had to start baling out vigorously) and made for the true right river bank and tied up. The boat behind us wished to do the same manoeuvre as we had wished to do and, in fact, with engine and poling, had enough power to go to the right of the rock about 9 feet away from it. It almost succeeded in going past the rock but then started slowing down and was merely inching forward, at which stage some paddlers had to stop to bale out and then the boat stayed stationary while waves started to come in at the front and at the back, so more crew had to abandon poling to bale furiously. There followed a most dangerous exercise – a so-called 'controlled' slow downstream movement of the boat backwards, without it turning sideways on to the current and all the while the odd wave of water was coming steadily in over the side. The engine had to throttle back to the 'correct' amount (a guesstimate by the driver) and the polemen had to stick their poles through the murky water and, though unable to see what was below, stick their poles into a suitable slot in an effort to help keep the boat from rushing backwards out of control. Incidentally, both going forwards (and for that matter when pulling a boat up the river bank or when poling it) the men gave encouraging sounds to each other but no-one (much less everyone) called out what was to be done. They knew and got on with it. The number who stopped working to bale out depended on the amount of water coming into the boat. The commanders of the boat were the outboard driver, who could not see too well forward, but could backward and the bowman who could see everything forward but not behind the driver. They understood each other and a shouted instruction from the one who could see was obeyed by the other. This boat remained parallel to the river banks but, because it was going backwards very slowly, had an unwelcome amount of water pouring into it. The crew however maintained control and it eventually drew into the bank and tied up close to us. No-one said a word while this drama was going on. It was a wonderful example of how to behave in an emergency.

We spent the night at Long Tebangan, Penghulu Jok Ngau's longhouse. He was an aristocrat, with the belly of a well fed man, and was a born leader, but one who took an effective part in helping to pull or to pole boats up a river. At sunset, Bunty went down to the rocky bank of the river, accompanied as always by a mixture of children and adults who watched her every movement – after all, it was rare for them to see a white woman close to. Apart from being in the public gaze, she had problems such as sitting on a rock to wash her face and yet not allow the soap to slip out of her hand and disappear. She had put on a brand new batik sarong (knotted above her breasts) for her ablutions and it was only after she had entered the water that she realised that this was a mistake as the wax, used in the process of making the design on the cloth, had never been washed out and so prevented the air inside the sarong from escaping through the cloth. As she sat down on her rock, the sarong ballooned up like an air cushion and added to her other problems of how to keep decent while cleaning the whole of her body. With one hand holding the soap out of the water, she used her other to push the sarong down as a woman would to her skirt in a high wind. Admittedly, where she put pressure on the sarong, it came under control at that point only, but the large bubble of air naturally moved elsewhere and the sarong would bulge out beside her or behind her. The time came when she wished to wash the soap off her body and she put her bar of soap on a

rock and plunged into the water. She lost her footing and had to use both hands to swim quickly to where she could regain a foothold, while the sarong, billowing out around her, scarcely helped her in her confusion. The water was nice and clear but, away from the bank, was flowing very fast. This didn't deter a whole lot of small Kayan boys who were enjoying being swept along in mid-stream. It seemed very unfair that I, as a man, had no difficulty in washing, as I was wearing unwaxed boxer shorts.

We continued up the Akah. During the night the water level had fallen and so in places non-working passengers had to get out and scramble over the rocks on the river bank. At one point, a fallen tree had got wedged about a foot above the surface of the water. The loads had to be redistributed to enable the boats to be pulled under the tree. What a nuisance it would have been had the water level been slightly higher. We entered the Lellang River and at Long Putok was a huge rock on which was carved (by some unknown people of ancient times) the figure of a man. Here for the first time we saw tree ferns that grow at this height above sea level. Similar ones grow in New Zealand but not anywhere in between! What is the explanation of this? At Long Datih we reached a Kelabit longhouse and were greeted by the school band conducted by teacher Lissah Arab. Most of the children were playing bamboo flutes.



Bunty and Olga in camp, ulu Selungoh, 1957

Next day, we set off on foot along a very rough path, and by 3 p.m. poor Bunty, much affected by the 'flu, had had it. I was told that in another two hours we would reach the sulap prepared for us for the night. I told the porters and Hussein, our cook, to go ahead and prepare for us and we would follow on slowly. We rested and then Bunty unwillingly got up and forced herself to struggle on. So what was our pleasant surprise in a quarter of an hour to find that we had reached the sulap. Hussein had laid out our sleeping mat for us amongst all the Kalabit porters and Bunty was able to deal with her Asian 'flu by drinking gin and lime juice out of a round Player's cigarette tin. The porters

had not been idle, some had gone off fishing and some hunting, and for supper we had some delicious fresh fish and a rusa that had been brought to the camp at dusk and was served up a mere hour later!

The following morning we started the long steep climb through the jungle. Sometimes this was a path, but more often it was misshapen steps made of roots and rocks. Sometimes we had to raise our body weights an inch or two, other times a foot or three, often while gripping branches with our hands to pull one's body ever higher, until at last we reached the watershed above Long Sait between the Tama Abu Range and Murud Kechil Mountain. Penghulu Enteri, whose jurisdiction covered an area that was low and swampy, and Bunty arrived together exhausted at the top. We enjoyed the rest at the top and de-leeches ourselves and Bunty removed leeches from Olga. Relatively fair skinned Nomadic Penans met us here. There was a magnificent view over the Selungoh River valley.

We went down the steep sided path in the jungle slipping and slithering from root to rock and rock to root. This time, we used our hands to clutch at branches to slow down an otherwise often uncontrolled descent and hoped that the branches that one had decided to grab hold off were not covered in thorns. We all, but especially Bunty, were looking forward on reaching the river to sitting in boats, but the few morose looking Kenyah porters there said that the river was so low that they had left the boats some way downstream. I paid off our Kelabit porters and by now it was my turn to realise that I was starting Asian 'flu. I doubt whether any doctor would have recommended as a cure to feverish Bunty the regime she had had to endure for the last few days, but, though not cured, she was by now on the mend.

We started off scrambling over the many boulders littering the middle of the Selungoh River as there was no path either side of it until, in about two hours, we reached the boats and were able to sit down while being poled down the river until we came to Rumah Kenyah Nyamok. From the river edge it was a long walk on narrow slippery planks to dry land above high water level. Lots of adults and all the children had come along the walk to see us. Olga, as usual, was in a hurry and brushed past people on the walk and neither they nor my dog fell off, but when she squeezed past us, we cursed her (which she did not seem to notice) and halted to ensure that we did not teeter off the edge. This procedure happened in reverse when we left the longhouse the worse for wear after having been very effectively entertained. As always, I admired the way the way the locals came effortlessly down the tangga, but it was the women with their pierced and elongated ear lobes who walked so elegantly on the level ground or down or up a tangga. Their heads never altered their level above the ground as they walked. Most of our heads move up and down and oscillate when we walk. If this happened with Orang Ulu women, their earlobes would soon break as their very heavy brass earrings would swing with the head movement. Indeed Orang Ulu women try to avoid turning their heads and, when talking to a person, either turn their heads slowly or if possible, not at all, in which case, they make very effective use of glancing out of the corner of their eyes.

At the longhouse where we spent the night, I had a temperature from my 'flu and decided to retire from the party earlier than usual. An hour or so later I was awoken by the sound of approaching damsels and my heart sank, but, on this occasion I was a married man and Bunty took charge and, to their chagrin, refused to let them pull me out of my bed. Travelling in the ulu, when fit, can often be a pleasure. Doing so when feverish is not.

Going downriver, we passed the longest longhouse in Sarawak (84 doors) which, in its hey-day, had had 100 doors. In the old days, each room's roof would have been of thatch. With greater prosperity, most of the family roofs were of corrugated iron and only the poor had thatch. Compared with thatch, corrugated iron intensified the heat in the room and rendered speech difficult in heavy rain and looked horrid, but admittedly it lasted longer – such is the advance of civilization.

We got home and there was mail to be read awaiting us, and Bunty then said to me "Not for the world would I have missed this trip. And not for the world will I do another like it". However, she did do many more.

We washed and changed into clean clothes and I went to my handkerchief drawer and found that last time I had gone there I must have unwittingly squashed a stink bug, whose repellent smell had affected everything in that drawer. It took several washes before the revolting odour was removed.

Surrounded by the usual low lying land about an hour downriver of Marudi by outboard, there was quite a large area of very different land, which was unique and that fascinated forest officers. It was an area of special peat land that started about 200 yards inland from the west bank of the Baram. It had only recently come to light as a result of aerial photography. I enthused over it so much that I persuaded an unwilling Bunty to accompany me on yet another overland trip. From Bunty's point of view the visit was scarcely a success.

There were no existing paths and the Forest Department guide had to cut a way for us from the river bank through what was for once, virtually impenetrable low jungle growing out of swamp land with us struggling after him. The trees were short enough to give but little shade from the sun but were high enough to cut out any breeze. To add to our pleasures, thorny creepers found this situation ideal and so were plentifully dotted around.

Suddenly, we emerged into an open area of most unusual peat swamp. The trees were by no means tall or close together and their trunks rarely had a diameter of more than six inches. Their roots were spread far out sideways. This meant that as we advanced into this area we were walking from tree root to tree root in the full glare of the sun. Our guide had brought with him a 12-foot (3.65m) pole and, scarcely using any force, he pushed the whole length of this pole downwards between the roots till it disappeared out of sight in the peaty swamp. Woe betide anyone who slipped off the tree roots. The poorness of what could scarcely be called soil (it was in fact a thick peaty liquid) beneath the roots explained why the trees were so low, added to which, it explained the large number and variety of beautiful pitcher plants hanging from the trees or growing out of what one could scarcely call 'the ground'. To live, these plants had to rely, not on their roots so much as on rotting insects that had slipped along the downwards facing hairs inside the pitcher and, being unable to get out again, had drowned in the liquid at the bottom of the pitcher plant. While admitting that she found the pitcher plants beautiful, Bunty regretted that she had broken her vow about not accompanying me overland and re-asserted that she would not venture on foot into the ulu again with me!

The trees survived upright by having strongly woody roots, which intertwined sideways with the roots of neighbouring trees as they floated on the surface of the thick peaty liquid and with a few hairy roots reaching down to draw up sustenance from the peaty substances in suspension in the bottomless swamp. No-one knew how far one had to go down to reach solid ground. In lowland Sarawak, road builders often met (to their great annoyance) such unexpected areas of peat swamp.

A site had been proposed for a Marudi airstrip but, eventually, it had been vetoed. I used to get much satisfaction combining work with pleasure by walking after tea through the nearby jungle on the flat land above Marudi and trying to establish whether there seemed to be enough flatness to justify the expenditure of proceeding with a closer examination of the proposed area. Before I left Baram District, John Seal, the Civil Aviation Operations Officer, and I tramped the area together. He was hopeful and, over

20 years later, after I had retired and flew into Marudi, I had the pleasure of realising that I had not wasted my time. It was amazing to look at the area I had selected, now without any jungle but with an airstrip and neighbouring development.

On one occasion travelling up the Baram, following a pre-arranged programme, I had reached a longhouse downriver of Long Akah, intending to spend that night at Long Akah in Temonggong Oyong Lawai Jau's magnificent new modern palace of a longhouse, with all mod. cons., which I had not yet visited. It was one side of the Baram River, as was the R.C. Mission with its school and dispensary. On the other side of the river was Long Akah Fort.

A message reached me that the longhouse had burnt down the previous night while the Temonggong was away visiting Kuching. Naturally, I found the people in a state of depression, shock and despair. They had moved into what rice storage huts and small shelters nearby that they could find and the missionaries were giving spiritual and what practical aid they could. In this aristocratic society, no-one could think of taking any steps to rebuild before the Temonggong's arrival. There was little that I could do and I carried on with my programme. I would have liked to offer Government cash to help start off a replacement house, but, unfortunately, it was one of the hazards of longhouse life that such a wooden structure could easily catch fire, and, while destruction of a family's home by fire in a Malay or Chinese village meant the loss of only one family's property, an uncontrollable fire in one bilek meant the loss of every other bilek in the longhouse. Longhouse fires were a not too uncommon occurrence and Government couldn't very well provide funds each time such a disaster occurred.

I heard later that on his return from Kuching, the Temonggong had been a tower of strength in consoling people and in organising the rebuilding of a new house. The only time he gave way to emotion was when he went to his own part of the longhouse and rooting around the remains of his property, he found the coalesced lumps of glass that were all that remained of his and his wife's remarkable prize collection of bead necklaces, which had been handed down the generations and which were in his trust to hand on to his children. Men knew the value of each bead, but whenever a bead necklace was produced, I noticed that it was always a woman who took over and told the name and importance of each bead, and which route it had taken down the generations to be now in their possession. They knew which beads were valuable and which purely decorative. Western experts in beads have confirmed that the valuable ones (according to local standards) were often Venetian, Phoenician, old Chinese or even, rarely, ancient Egyptian! The Temonggong's other property, even his old large jars, could be replaced but not his main inheritance, and when he saw the valueless transformation of the necklaces, he just sobbed and sobbed.

When I returned downriver a few days later, I found small boys shrieking with delight as they careered down river on rafts of newly felled bamboo, cut down by their elders, and which were being used to add to the partially raised frame of a temporary new longhouse.

Rodney Needham was one of the distinguished anthropologists sent to Sarawak. He was studying the Nomadic Penans and, while I was D.O. Baram, spent a night with us on his way upriver, where he spent a respectable time with them, doubtless learnt a lot about them and about their attitudes to life, and also learnt that, however interesting

they were as a people, life with them has more than its usual share of every day discomfort.

Naturally, I was most interested in the views of this experienced anthropologist on these fascinating people, whom I had studied in an amateurish way while D.O. Kapit and now in the Baram. Bunty had not seen them in their home areas, but she had met them several times in the ulu and was equally interested in their physical and mental differences and similarities when compared with the settled Kenyahs. Perhaps in 'Anecdotes' I have accentuated the good rather than the irritating aspects of these simple (this does NOT mean primitive) people, but, after listening to my views for a bit, he startled us both by saying "But you don't mean to say that you actually like the Penans?" It had never occurred to me that an anthropologist could give a worthwhile report on any people without liking them, while, of course also not failing to note down their exasperating habits and attitudes.

### **The Nomadic Penans**

I attended several trade meetings in the Baram with the Penans, on one of which, at Lio Mato, Sir Anthony Abell joined in. Personally, I have not heard that any of the Rajahs or other Governors ever met the Nomadic Penans en masse. One of the aspects of their life that interested me was why these people did not wish to be settled and the extent that their attitudes to this question enabled them to fit happily (if uncomfortably by my standards) into their jungle and mountainous environment.

Customs and traditions prevent the Nomadic Penan from felling big trees, though he may cut down small trees and branches suitable for acting as posts for the huts he makes for himself in the jungle and for the roofs thereof. Since his religion forbids him to fell big trees, he is obviously handicapped when having to prepare land for planting padi, rubber or vegetables. Also, he cannot produce the strong posts to support a longhouse intended to remain in situ for many years. He lives on and likes wild hill sago and other jungle produce that God has provided for him, supplemented by what game he can catch. All this means that when he has used up all the available food in a reasonable area around his encampment, he must move elsewhere until natural regeneration has allowed it to grow up again. This way of life, circulating from one used area to another regenerated one, which he well understands, means that Nomadic Penans rarely go around in large groups, otherwise either they would have to go very far from their encampment to find food for themselves or they would have to move house even more frequently. This way of life also means that their sanitary habits do not have to be as well organised as that of their settled neighbours. When a sickness affects many of them, they can easily move elsewhere and, hopefully, thus reduce the likelihood of the effects of infection or contagion. This is not usually an option for settled longhouses. It also means that they have little knowledge of the planting of crops and vegetables or keeping pigs and chickens.

Secondly, a Penan becomes sick when he goes into the sun for any length of time and suffers from fevers and headaches and his eyes hurt him. His avoidance of the sun coupled with his jungle life means that his skin is fairer than that of any other Sarawak race. What distinguishes a Penan even more from his neighbours than his light skin are his eyes. A Penan's eyes are placid and remarkably like those of deer – and like them, he can see in the dark. When the Temonggong's house caught fire, Hudson Southwell (a Borneo Evangelical Missionary) on a visit to Penghulu Jok Ngau saw the glow at

night on a moonless night. The distance between Jok Ngau's house and that of the Temonngong was about 20 miles in a straight line, but a straight line means nothing when the area between the two houses consist of steep sided, high jungle covered mountains, with, often, fast flowing streams in the valleys. The Kayans would never consider doing this journey by boat or on foot by night. By chance, there were some Nomadic Penans calling on Jok Ngau. They set off at once to cover the many miles going overland to find out what had happened and were back soon after daybreak bringing the news of the conflagration. Because Penans live so far in the ulu, most of the rivers they come across are small. The Penans do not have and do not need boats as their ulu rivers are usually shallow and, if in flood, it is unusual to have to wait a long time for the flood to subside. They have never learnt to swim, which would be a handicap to them if they decided to settle down beside a large river. It must be admitted that Penans, unlike other Sarawak races, do not feel the urge to wash frequently and, indeed, many of them are rather dirty.



Monkey looking for nits in Nomadic Penan girl's hair at Long Kenapuri. She has another monkey in her arms. Enghabang (Illipe) nuts in background, 1955.

A third reason that prevents Penans becoming easily settled is their tradition that, if a person dies, in some cases the body is buried and then the whole group moves on and in others, they burn the hut down in which the death occurred and flee elsewhere. From a health point of view, these acts may well make sense, but they are not options for people who are settled.

Like other pagan tribes in Sarawak, the Penans are affected by their dreams and by bird and other omens. Unlike the settled tribes, the Penan omens usually result in the desirability of moving house.

In Sarawak, and even more so outside it, whenever I start to talk about the Nomadic Penans, I find an expectation amongst my listeners that I will tell them the most sensational habits that these nomadic and 'animal-like' people undoubtedly must indulge in. Such listeners lose interest in what I am telling them when I recount that, though simple, they are very normal people. Unlike us, they need very few laws, there is very little crime and they have a very sensible attitude to life. A Penan knows nothing of Third Party Insurance but he also knows nothing (or almost nothing) of murder or suicide. I have yet to meet a Penan who has heard of such happenings. Penans have only the property they can carry and stealing is virtually unheard of. They do not know about registering Co-operative Societies, yet they co-operate wonderfully in their traditional manner. If one man kills a boar, the meat is divided amongst all the group, even though this means that each person gets only a small portion. They have a roster and men in the group take turns at going into the jungle to work the wild hill sago for food for the good of all. The sick and old are a burden to all races, but especially so to the Penans who have to carry them when moving house, but nevertheless they are properly fed and looked after by their fitter relations.

I have never seen a fat Penan. Are they hard working? They prefer relaxation to work but know perfectly well that frequently they have to exhaust themselves with hard work. In a country where there is very little difference between the seasons and when these people do not have to observe the discipline of planting crops, time does not mean to the Penans what it means to us. The Penans have few wants but they do hanker after salt, cotton cloths and, in modern times, a gun and ammunition. To obtain such goods I saw a Penan coming to a trade meeting at Lio Match with a load of damar weighing 163 lbs (74 Kg.) and his wife was carrying a load of 132 lbs (40 Kg.). I enquired and found that they had probably brought it from their camp some 30 miles away and had had to climb over 3,000 feet to fetch it from its source along precipitous, narrow and slippery paths to bring it to their camp. While it is not wrong to say that Penans are lazy or lack steady application at a job, neither is it wrong to say that they are capable of far harder work than people of most other races. It is no wonder with the often physically exhausting lives both men and women lead that they like to rest quietly when they can, and at such times are not mentally over active.

A Penan has very little need to know large numbers accurately. I have often been surprised when a Penan man has to count on his fingers how many children he has and even more so when his wife has to. The utmost patience is needed with these people. Having enquired if anyone else is ill or has anything else to trade and got the answer "No" and so we have put away all the medicines and other stores. When all these articles have been packed up and one is starting to say "Farewell", it suddenly turns out that an old woman had been unwilling to trouble us by saying that she was sick and a young man was bashful about telling us that he had a load of goods to sell! They are delightful people, but exasperating at times.



Nomadic Penan lad bringing his goods to be weighed at Long Melinau, 1957

Practically the only laws the Penans have for regulating offences are their sexual code. For taking another man's wife (a crime that doesn't happen unduly often and a crime that is easy to see happening when no privacy at all is possible with the lives they lead), the injured man will be given one spear and one parang. If a man finds another in bed with his wife, this does not lead to 'crimes passionels' as often happens in more civilized communities. The aggrieved man is allowed to hold down the villain while shouting for all and sundry to come and see the evidence of his wrong doing. Intercourse before marriage is normal, but there is no licentiousness and Penans marry young. When a couple feel they are really suited to one another (and a pregnancy, is often evidence of this) they get married. As there is no privacy, everyone knows what is going on and parents soon put a stop if they think a man's intentions are not strictly honourable. Marriage is done with the minimum of formality and so is divorce.

The Penans make magnificent blowpipes six feet long out of the very hard and heavy 'tapang' wood. These often have a spear head attached to the extremity. I could not visualise how they could go hunting in the jungle with such an unwieldy weapon and asked to go on a hunting expedition with them. The first matter to become clear was that their chance of catching anything as long as I was with them, blundering along, was nil. The next was their ability, without looking at the ground, to walk swiftly but absolutely silently on various ground covers, including dry leaves. They never got their blowpipes (or themselves) entangled in the vegetation, even when they left a path. In other words, they are completely at home in the jungle. On our hunting expedition I thought there were three of us – myself and two Penans ahead of me. I almost leaped out of my skin when, suddenly, I heard the voice of a man apparently less than a foot behind me starting a conversation to the men in front of me. It turned out that he had caught up with us and had been close behind me for at least a quarter of an hour! I never saw the men in front of me look behind them, yet they knew when he had joined us and never looked round when he spoke to them.

Shotguns are replacing blowpipes now, but the latter are still used. The Penans put wooden darts in the blowpipe for catching birds, squirrels and small mammals and steel tipped darts for piercing the hides of large animals. Apart from blowpiping very small animals and birds, the Penans usually put poison (obtained from a variety of trees) on the tips of their darts. However, they have to range far and wide to find the tree with a poison suitable for killing big animals. This latter poison is very effective and if the dart penetrates the skin and stays there, a wild boar will be dead within 200 yards of being pierced. Many of the peoples of Borneo are terrified of being blowpiped by Penans. However, if group of Penans becomes upset with other races, the Penans' reaction is usually to move right away, well knowing that other races will be unable to trace them.

I was told, long before I ever saw a Penan, that their women suckle puppies, piglets and monkeys. Due to their way of life, Penans cannot keep domestic fowls or pigs. They have a few dogs, which are half starved, undersized and usually mangy. They are very fond of these dogs. They also occasionally capture a baby monkey or wild piglet, whose mother has been killed. I guess that suckling a captured baby animal may, rarely, occur. I have seen a Penan followed around by a tame hornbill with a red ribbon tied to a leg so that, as it flew through the jungle it would be recognized and not harmed. Presumably it had been captured as a chick and had identified itself with its master. Some Penans became so fond of their rare chickens and pigs that they refused to eat them and said to members of other tribes "Why laugh at us about this? After all, do you eat your dogs?" British readers had better not comment on this. A logical view about what is eatable would ensure that dog, cat and horse were frequently on our menu. After all some other races eat them with pleasure and impunity. Logic is a poor guide to what various races will or will not eat.

When I first came to Sarawak, the upriver pagan women were bare from the waist up and wore very skimpy skirts. With improved travel between upriver and down river, with the encouragement of missionaries and because the girls themselves began to feel bashful as men from downriver went upriver to ogle them, the inevitable happened and the maidens first began to wear bras and later on they replaced their skirts with Malay style sarongs.

I was travelling amongst the Ibans of the Bakong and a general discussion started, including about an unmarried girl who had suddenly been found to be about six months pregnant and had successfully concealed her condition. No-one knew who the father was. A grandmother then complained, supported by all the older women present, saying "I wish the girls were still dressed as we were at their age. With this new fangled fashion for wearing sarongs, I can no longer see, as early as I used to be able to do, when a girl has become pregnant!"

### **Baram and the Regatta**

At the end of Ramadan fasting, the Malays used to make a courtesy call on the D.O. No invitation had been issued and so no time for the visit had been mentioned – not that mentioning a time would have solved the particular problem of this annual community visit to our house. Buntly and I knew roughly how many would turn up and that they would probably arrive after the end of the morning assembly in the mosque. We had got ready large quantities of soft drinks, sweet biscuits, etc. and as many glasses as we possessed. It would have been nice if our visitors had arrived in driblets and drabs and we could then, with the help of our two servants, have easily coped with serving them and,

when they left, their glasses could have been whisked away, washed and returned upstairs for further use.

Sure enough, they did wander up in dribs and drabs to just outside our gates, but there they stopped. As a result of my experience of this behaviour the previous year, on the next occasion, when I saw the first batch at our gate, I left Bunty in our reception room, rushed downstairs and out to the gate and encouraged them to come in. They smiled, giggled said "yes" but did not move on to my property. They (and I) were embarrassed by my request. They knew what was the proper way to behave on such occasions. I, clearly, had made a faux pas. I sidled away from them and watched them from the house. Further Malays arrived in small groups. It was not until they thought that all who would call were present, that they then advanced en masse, moving at a slow pace according to proper decorum, with the senior citizens in front leading the rest upstairs, where Bunty and I greeted them one after another. This procedure meant that we could play no part in entertaining them and our two servants had to rush round attending to their needs. We ran out of glasses and cups were produced. The glasses of those, who had been served first, were empty while others were still unserved. We asked those with empty glasses, if they would like some more and they usually said "No", but it seemed rude to whisk the glasses away from them. Suddenly, the senior citizen got to his feet and the whole lot then rose and we stayed at the top of the stairs shaking hands with them as they left. Seen from our vantage point upstairs, they were a most colourful group, walking slowly, solemnly and, as Malays do, gracefully and one and all were dressed in their very best clothes. For many, this consisted of a brightly coloured Thai silk shirt and a sarong (probably from Brunei), worn from the waist down, of beautiful silk heavily embroidered in a traditional pattern with gold or silver thread, over their trousers. Many of them I did not remember ever having met before. Others, I decided, I had not met before until, as we greeted them, an expression or the sound of the voice clicked and I realised that this regally dressed man was for most of the year a cooly or poor rice farmer or rubber tapper (and usually dressed in a pair of shorts and perhaps a vest). Such a person, although normally doing a lowly job, might well be one whose personal name was prefaced by an aristocratic title such as "Abang" in Sarawak or "Awang" in Brunei or Indonesia and had inherited these garments from his ancestors – garments which he could not possibly have afforded to purchase with his present standard of living.

One weekend Bunty was looking out of our living room towards the approach to our house from the bazaar and the Fort and saw a small procession approaching. As they came closer it turned out to consist of Chinese. At first she rather panicked as, not unreasonably, she thought they must be calling and she had not prepared for such a visit. They entered on to our land, came fairly close to the house and turned their backs on us. We now realised that it was a beautifully dressed and rather coy looking bride and bridegroom, who thought that as a background to their wedding photograph, the D.O's. bungalow was better than their bazaar shophouse. Weekends were the best time to be married and after lunch appeared to be the best time to be photographed. Both Bunty and I enjoyed a week-end siesta in the tropics after lunch. We would be unpleasantly aroused during our siesta by the loud shouting of instructions during the wedding photograph procedure in this and most of our other Sarawak dwellings, especially so in the lovely D.O's. bungalow of Rowland Hill in Kuching. We were rather touched that the poorer part of the Chinese community wished to record their marriages photographically on our property. Apparently they felt that it was better to do so without

asking our permission and perhaps suffering a rebuff. There is a lot to be said, if you expect the answer to your request to be "No", to get on with what you want without first asking permission!

One of the reasons that we were both so happy in Sarawak was that there was a friendly atmosphere between the people and the expatriate officers in the senior posts of the various branches of Government. This used to surprise people who were transferred to Sarawak from places like Africa. Nevertheless, I suspected that certain events were, by general consent "concealed for the good of all" from Government officers. I never enquired into how much that was concealed from overseas officers was known to local officers or to missionaries. On one occasion, I did ask a B.E.M. minister (The Rev. C. Hudson Southwell) who had been in Sarawak pre-war, whether, for instance, he knew of any murders that had not been reported. He was careful not to tell me the location or the time of a certain event but, as an example, he did relate to me how on visiting one Kayan longhouse he had been happy to be able to congratulate one of the women on being pregnant. Some months later he was back at this house and asked the lady whether she had had her baby. She looked very sad and said that unfortunately she had had twins and what else could she do but put salt in their mouths until they died?! There was no record of this event in the births or deaths registers. In the view of the inhabitants of the longhouse, this happening would not have been considered a murder.

Lord Medway, later the Earl of Cranbrook, was interested in all aspects of the environment and was a periodic visitor to Sarawak. He had reached Marudi after a trip to the ulu and I had asked my Cadet Officer, Geoffrey Barnes, to fix up a flight for him. Through the thin walling between my office and the outer office I heard the following one side of a telephone conversation with what turned out to be a locally educated clerk of the Borneo Company in Miri, with Geoffrey's tone of voice getting increasingly loud as his exasperation increased:-

"I wish to book a flight for Lord Medway from Miri to"

"No! Not Mr Lord Medway, just Lord Medway.

"No. Lord is a title like Duke"

"No. He is not a duke but a lord.

"Well, in fact, his name is Gathorne-Hardy but his title, which he is known by is Lord Medway.

"No. he is not a mister"

"No. He is not a Mrs. nor a Miss.

"No. He is not even a midwife".

At this stage, I went in and suggested that he abandoned the call and tried again later, having asked to speak to a more senior person.

Geoffrey had told me that he was engaged to a certain lady and my impression was that he hoped in due course that a marriage would take place. At this time, I was newly married to Bunty, who had returned to Kuala Lumpur to finish off her agreed period of service with the Malayan Government. I went on a trip to the ulu lasting about 10 days and arrived back about 6 p.m. and found several letters from her. I went and had a shower, got into my sarong, got myself a drink and feeling clean, refreshed and in a mood of great contentment, relaxed in my arm chair and opened the first letter and, at

that moment, the last person I was thinking about was Geoffrey. However, there he was and far from cheery. He told me over a drink that his fiancé had written that she wished to cancel their engagement. He was, not unnaturally, very depressed and showed no signs of leaving me but wished to discuss ad nauseam his unfortunate situation. I felt that perhaps a change of air might help and told him that it would improve his knowledge of the district to take a few days off and go up the Tutoh River and then climb Mulu Mountain (a little under 8,000 feet) and would he please go off now and start organising his trip. I was then able to get on enjoying reading Bunty's letters.

In those days, Mulu and its now famous caves, had rarely been visited. Even now, when a well-defined path exists to the top, climbing up the steep mountain side through dense jungle is an exhausting affair. Anyway, on his return Geoffrey was a much nicer man to know. The clear mountain air appeared to have cleared his brain and he was reconciled to the fact that his engagement was over.

Mercifully rather rarely for a D.O. but more frequently for a Resident and quite usual for a Governor, the visitor to an ulu and rarely visited longhouse would find, at the top of the tangga, that a pig had been tied there and it was his job to kill it. Probably it was because Bunty was with me, but one ulu longhouse did face us with this problem. Bunty had little faith that I could kill a pig with a spear quickly and noiselessly. I suggested that she, with her experience of anatomy as a nurse, should do the deed, but she firmly declined. She didn't realise that when I had been P.S. to the Governor, I had often seen how it was done. The spear must be sharp. You ask the local headman to place the tip of the spear on just the right part of the pig's neck to, you hope, pierce its jugular. Thereafter you must not be reticent or squeamish, but press as hard as possible on the spear and contort one's expression into an imitation of delight at carrying out this unpleasant deed, while all around are enthusiastically applauding you.



As part of his efforts to stop the Ibans and Orang Ulu from indulging in head hunting, the Second Rajah had decided to start regattas at which the young men of longhouses could deflect their urges to show off by competing in more acceptable ways than by getting kudos through obtaining heads. The Biennial Baram Regatta is one of the best known in the country.

A mixed party at Baram regatta, 1950.

An extract from *Natural Man* by Charles Hose, published in 1926, reads:-

Some thirty years ago it was my privilege to be present at a meeting at Marudi in the Baram District, and in the presence of an overwhelming force of the tribes loyal to the Government of Sarawak, of all those tribes whose allegiance was still doubtful, and all those who were still at variance with each other. The object was to abolish old blood feuds and to persuade the tribes to aid the Government in keeping the peace. In calling this conference, I felt that in order to suppress

fighting and head-hunting, the normal young Bornean's natural outlet, it would be well to replace them by some other equally violent, but less disastrous activity; and I therefore suggested to the tribes a sort of local Henley, the chief feature of which would be an annual race between the war-canoes of all the villages. The proposal was taken up eagerly by the people and months before the appointed day they were felling the giants of the forest and carving out from them the great war-canoes that were to be put to this novel use, and reports were passing from village to village of the stupendous dimensions of this or that canoe, and the fineness of the timber and workmanship of another.

During the Japanese occupation regattas ceased and it was only slowly that they started up again in various parts of Sarawak. In the old days, there were boats so long that they could take 80 paddlers. Nowadays, the lack of suitable trees, the different ways of life of people in longhouses, and the problems of storing such long boats between races and getting them down river to the scene of the regatta and the greater problem of getting them up again, mean that it is now rare to see a boat of even 60 paddlers.



Song Regatta,  
1950

Though inter-community longboat racing is the most spectacular and important part of the regatta, there are nowadays races for small canoes with eight or single paddlers, canoes with outboards and speedboats. Sideshows include an agriculture show, a trade fair, go-kart racing, hockey and land sports, native dancing (with the appropriate musical instruments) and water sports. The people from the ulu are dressed in all their finery and the women bring handicrafts to sell and recoup some of the vast expense entailed in racing these boats. The long war-canoes have large, fantastically carved bowsprits. The headman of such a boat stands in the middle giving the beat to the paddlers by

dipping and raising his large flag on its pole, and urging them on with his shouted encouragements.

Marudi cannot provide accommodation for all the foreign visitors, so Sarawak Oilfields and Government send to Marudi what launches, with cabins, that they can spare and so, following behind each race, is a large concourse of launches with tourists on board. The D.O's bungalow is full. Since my time as D.O. Baram, the airstrip has meant that many people are now able to come just for the day.

When we left Marudi to go on long leave, I sold our big refrigerator to Haji Wan Yubi, an aristocrat and one of the few successful Malay businessmen in the bazaar. There was no bank in Marudi and the Haji had paid me in cash. Very stupidly, when I went to bed, I left the money in the pocket of my jacket, slung over the back of a chair in the living room. Next morning, the money had gone. The most likely culprit was my houseboy, Mat, but he denied very convincingly that he had had any part to play in the theft.

The Haji heard of my loss and came and offered not only his condolences but also practical help. He pinned on to the back of the chair where my jacket had been a piece of paper with writing in Arabic script on it and paraded up and down the room incanting in a mixture of Arabic and Malay quotations from the Koran and curses on the evil doer. A couple of hours later, Mat came and admitted that the previous evening he had had a drink with a policeman friend, told him about the money and they had stolen it and divided the cash between them. I wonder whether such a curse would have worked later on, when I had a house in Croydon, if items had been removed from it by a burglar?

## 14 – DISTRICT OFFICER SIBU 1958 – 1960

During our leave, it turned out that Bunty was pregnant. Personally, my knowledge of medical jargon is negligible and since our marriage I have relied on her in all medical situations. She pointed out to me that she had never had a baby before and she was now 36 and at such a late age in starting a family, it was desirable that we should be posted to a station with suitable medical expertise. At her dictation, I started off my letter to the Establishment Officer with what I thought she had said to me "As my wife is an elderly primate..." I had seen nothing wrong with this as a human being is, after all, one of the primates.

When we reached Kuching, I was startled to be asked whether my wife was an archbishop or an ape. I hadn't a clue what it was all about. I had never heard the word "Primipara" or its shortened form "Primip". How uneducated can one be? Apparently my personal file had been pushed round various of the Secretariat and Medical Department branches and was now full of witty and amusing comments.

It had been decided to post me to Sibü. As we left the Rest House in Kuching to go to the boat, it was pouring with rain. P.W.D. had sent an open truck for our luggage and I asked that it be covered – this was done. We got on to the 'Meluan', a dirty little tramp steamer belonging to the Sarawak Steamship Co., that plied regularly between Sibü and Kuching and from the ship we watched the P.W.D. truck arrive. It appeared that the sides and back were relatively waterproof, so the rain water had collected at the bottom of the truck, which was awash to a depth of about half an inch. Thoughtless P.W.D. loaders had placed our suitcases on the truck's floor hinge side down! As the suitcases were lifted up, we could see rusty water pouring out of each of them. Quite naturally, Bunty, as the D.O's. new wife, wished to make a good first impression on arrival at Sibü. In our tiny cabin, we unpacked. On such a tiny boat there were no facilities for drying clothes much less washing them. Each garment, that had a fold near the hinge, was 90% unaffected, but unfortunately the remaining 10% was stained with rusty water. Bunty was far from amused (and who can blame her) and even threatened to sue the Government – in those days, unlike now, scarcely ever done.

My predecessor as D.O. Sibü and I overlapped, enabling us to have a longish hand over/take over, but this meant that, until he had left the D.O's. house, we were housed in temporary quarters – a small house on stilts beside Racecourse Road. Sibü and its immediate surroundings were completely flat. Parts of the town were only flooded when spring tides coincided with flood water from the ulu, but the land under our house flooded frequently. The Malay Field Rat is nearly the size of a rabbit with a great big humped back. Bunty was far from calm, one evening going into the kitchen, she turned on the light and found several of these rats running around and showing little fear of her. The land had flooded and the rats had climbed up our stilts for protection.

To discourage the rats, we needed a cat and a Malay produced for us a tiny kitten, whose eyes had only recently opened but whose mother had been killed. Initially Bunty fed it with a pipette. When we went out, we either shut the kitten inside the mosquito cage to protect it from the rats or Bunty took it with her in her handbag. Naturally, the kitten bonded with us and thought of itself as a human.

The bathroom of this house had walls made of some thin and brittle man-made fibre, probably chosen by P.W.D. for its cheapness. Buntty was eight months pregnant and we were larking around on the wet floor and she slipped and her elbow shattered a panel of the wall. Next day from my office I 'phoned the Divisional Engineer and said that I had slipped and caused this damage and could someone please come round to effect repairs. I came home for lunch and told her what I had done. She then recounted how, in the bazaar, she had seen the Divisional Engineer and told him that she had slipped. He gave her a peculiar look as he looked at her well advanced figure.

We were glad to leave that house for our very nice bungalow on low stilts beside Telephone Road. The garden only flooded in extreme conditions. Our staff consisted of Masseneh, a cheery, plump, Melanau Islam lady who hailed from the local kampong and was our house amah/cook, and Nuyab, as thin as Masseneh was fat, to be our baby amah.

In due course Murdo was brought into the world in the Lau King How Hospital by Dr. Wong Soon Kai. As Murdo's arrival had had to be helped with the use of forceps, Buntty was lying far from comfortably on her bed with her baby beside her. She had not fully come round from her anaesthetic when one of her first visitors arrived, a very happy Datu Tuanku Bujang, the senior Malay officer in Third Division and later to be a Governor of Sarawak. He was delighted to see the baby and then rushed off to return with his wife. Neither of them spoke English and so in her dozey state, Buntty had to cope with speaking in Malay. We have a nice photo of the Datu with the newborn. Later, we had a photo of Murdo in the arms of Temonggong Jugah, the Paramount Chief of the Third Division Ibans and later still to be given many further titles and be a state cabinet minister. Over 30 years later, when Murdo returned to the land of his birth, he took with him the photo of himself with the Temonggong (who by then was dead) and it acted as a wonderful letter of introduction amongst the Ibans.

There was no Anglican church in Third Division and so Murdo was christened by a visiting priest in the Methodist College chapel and the font was a washing up bowl!

Dr Wong Soon Kai was an unassuming quiet man with a magnificent brain and a twinkle in his eye. From a poor background, he had worked as a laboratory assistant in Singapore and then been accepted by King Edward VIIth College (later part of Singapore University) and qualified as a doctor – and a very successful one too. The Sarawak Medical Department sent him to U.K. and, in less than a year, while in the University of Wales, he upset people by saying that, as he wished to gain experience of what exam taking was like, he would sit for the surgeon exams of the Universities of Wales and Edinburgh and then successfully passed them both! After 1963, when Sarawak got its independence within Malaysia, he abandoned medicine and entered politics. In due course he was elected to the Council Negri (Sarawak's state parliament); for a time he was a Minister in the Malaysian Federal Parliament in Kuala Lumpur and then, for a long time, was Deputy Chief Minister of Sarawak. His wife, Jane, who was also a doctor, specialising in gynaecology, had an equally good brain and both of them ended up with being awarded high ranking titles. Her history was interesting. As she was being born she urinated and her mother was incensed at such an unfilial act and said "take her away, I never want to see her again." The poor midwife (a very practical woman, but with no qualifications) adopted her and, with great determination, managed to get her educated and qualified as a doctor. Many years later, when Jane was

successful and well off, her brothers and sisters contacted her and she said how pleased she was to see them, but in no way could she feel sisterly affection for them.

Sung Kai's story reminds me that Dr. Subandrio, an eminent Indonesian medical officer, became Foreign Affairs Minister of the newly independent Indonesia. In 1950 or 1951 he was in London and gave a lecture to us Colonial students on the Devonshire Course. In a monotonous voice, he dully read out a treatise written for him by the Indonesian Information Officer. It was such a boring and awful speech that, when we were asked if we had any questions, there was, embarrassingly, not a single one. The convener of the talk hurriedly asked a question. Dr. Subandrio took off his spectacles and, for the first time, he smiled at us, put his lecture papers ostentatiously on one side and started to speak well and, this time, from his heart, saying "Firstly, I am a doctor who happens to know English, so with no other training, I was made Minister for Foreign Affairs and I am finding my job very difficult indeed". From then on, questions poured in. As a result of his obvious sincerity, we were now receiving a picture of Indonesia as it was and not the picture that an Information Officer would wish us to have had. He talked ably about Indonesia's struggle during the Japanese occupation and the subsequent return of the Dutch Government and described movingly the parlous situation of the people post-war.

While Dr. Subandrio was struggling, for the good of his country, to be a Cabinet Minister, he was not enjoying himself. Dr. Wong Soon Kai, on the other hand, was enjoying the life of a politician. I have sometimes wondered whether both of them would not have been happier if they had carried on benefiting many people by making use of their medical aptitudes.

The Colonial Secretary, Mr Creech Jones, decided that Sarawak should have trade unions and a Sarawak Ordinance was enacted to permit their formation and subsequent control. The wharf labourers at Sibu were virtually all Heng Huas. Like the London dockers, they formed a closed shop, the Wharf Labourers Union, and being prosperous, built themselves a large and magnificent headquarters three stories high. The ground floor was a café cum restaurant, which brought in a nice revenue for them. Much money was spent on the opening ceremonies of the building, including several long strings of fire crackers hanging from the roof to ground level. They had been put up the day before the opening and, at the appropriate moment, the bottom fire cracker, of each strip was lit. There was great satisfaction amongst all concerned at watching the explosions and the loud bangs as the chain of exploding crackers rose ever higher up the strip. The building was temporarily obscured by the cloud of smoke and falling cracker debris; all the signs were that the deities would be well satisfied with them. When the atmosphere had cleared, it was found that some foolish people had parked their cars close beside the building, and the roofs of the said cars had not been improved by the arrival of burning debris on them.

As part of helping Sarawak to advance into the modern world, a British trade union leader came to Sarawak to help the local unions to improve themselves. He was astonished at the luxuriousness and spaciousness of the Wharf Labourers Union building, which, as he commented, surpassed that of many union buildings in Britain's biggest cities. I don't think that at first he had taken in the implication that this building was also the headquarters of the Heng Hua Association. The Heng Huas had just as good a monopoly of the working of the Sibu wharves as did the dockers in the Port of

London. It was Lee Kuan Yew who thanked the London dockers for enabling Singapore to so rapidly overtake the Port of London.

The British trade union leader did not make much headway in Sibu. He asked the Wharf Labourers when they had last had a strike and was appalled to find that they had never had one. The Heng Huas agreed with him that their conditions of service ought to be improved. They agreed that if they had a strike, there would be no Heng Hua strike breaker but, they pointed out, there would be plenty of Foochows and others who would be delighted to take on the job of wharf labourer and the Heng Hua monopoly would have been broken. He visited a small sawmill run by Malays and asked the labourers there when they had last had a strike. Once again, the answer was "Never". When asked "Why?", the answer turned out to be that they were all the sons, nephews, cousins or in-laws of the owner. They were grateful to him for giving them their jobs and it was quite out of the question to humiliate their boss by going on strike to influence a relative. It became obvious that adopting the behaviour of British trade unionists in Sarawak just was not on.



Off Lanang Road, Sibu at low tide, 1959.

Sibu was a geographical and climatological horror. As so often in such places, the people got on very well with each other and we had lots of friends there. At this time, there was a lot of entertaining and the same people – mostly Chinese (of various races) businessmen, rubber dealers or timber dealers – would take turns in throwing parties for each other and for Government officers of all races. Unfortunately, there was a lot of heavy drinking at these parties – not only beer but whisky and brandy. In the heat of Sarawak, it was undesirable to hold one's chilled glass in a hot clammy hand. If it was a stand-up party, it was advisable not to let go of one's glass. When one was sitting at a table, it was wise to keep a hand over the top of one's glass, which was almost always a tumbler. On arrival one could insist that one wanted just a small whisky or brandy and that the tumbler should then be filled with iced water, cold soda or cold ginger ale. As the level in the glass began to go down, no host ever asked if you would like a refill, but when you were not looking

and without telling you, he would most generously top up with neat whisky or brandy and occasionally manage to top up your whisky with brandy or vice versa.

The fact that Bunty was obviously pregnant when we reached Sibu did not affect their generosity to her over drinks, for the Chinese considered brandy as a most desirable pick-me-up during and after pregnancy. While Bunty really tried hard to insist that, if she had another glassful, it should be a repetition of the same weak drink that she had initially asked for, she was sometimes unsuccessful with the result that, when breast feeding her babies at night they must have absorbed some alcohol. Perhaps this was the reason why our children rarely kept us awake at night and so the two of us and our children were all much nicer people to know next day than would otherwise have been

the case. I am glad to say that of my three children, now grown up, one is nearly teetotal and the consumption of alcohol of the other two is low to moderate.

On this tour, Bunty became pregnant again. The time came when she went into hospital and was longing for the baby to decide to come. I asked Masseneh when this would be. She thought for a moment then said "As the tide has recently started to go out, it will not be for a few more hours. Babies are only born when the tide is rising." Alexa did arrive with the rising tide.

## **The Missions**

The Dutch head of the Roman Catholic Mission in Sibü, Father de Vos, was a most worthy man and we thoroughly enjoyed his company. As there was no Anglican church in Sibü, Bunty suggested that he should christen Alexa. His reply was that he would be delighted to do so but he feared that the Anglican Bishop would be displeased. On a visit to Kuching we arranged for Alexa to be christened by the Bishop of Sarawak. We wanted our good friend Alastair Morrison to be her godfather. We were startled when the Bishop said "While I feel that Alastair is a most estimable man and I am a friend of his, as he never comes to church, I cannot approve of him as a godfather. I suggest that you find a more suitable person". The Resident Third Division, A.F.R. Griffin, happened to be in Kuching and was most acceptable, so we roped him in to please the Bishop but told him that we would not expect him to carry out his godfatherly duties. Alastair was a kind godfather to Alexa and, more to the point, his views on life were thoroughly to be emulated, and so Bunty and I were well contented with our choice.

Still on this tour, we had a mistake and the last thing we wanted was another pregnancy so soon after Alexa's arrival. Bunty asked Masseneh what could be done. Her advice was "Eat six pineapples a day for a week". Very excellent pineapples are easily come by in Sarawak. Bunty followed the regime and was very grateful to Masseneh as a successful result to our problem was an early miscarriage. I would never suggest to a staunch Roman Catholic that there is something to be said for contraceptives. However, pineapples are not contraceptives and surely if a woman has a yearn for pineapples, the Pope could not object to her eating more in one go than most of us do.

The R.C. Mission at Sibü ran two Old Folks' Homes, one for men and one for women. The money for running these homes came not only from public donations but also from the hard work put in by busy leading citizens pulling a handcart and asking people to put food or clothes in it. As D.O., I was on the visiting board and, while the old people seemed physically healthy enough, they were far from merry – indeed they were slovenly and showed little sign of wishing to carry on living. After discussion with Father de Vos, it was decided that the Old Folks should be rehoused with a communal central day room and separate boarding wings for each sex. The result was dramatic. The women instead of looking unkempt, put ribbons or a flower in their hair and mended their dresses. Instead of going round in an old pair of underpants, the men put on shirts and decent shorts and they shaved regularly. Morale had been raised a lot.

The Mission also ran a boys' and a girls' school (the latter was combined with a convent). The nuns were kind disciplinarians. They also grew vegetables and had hens. At this time there was a fad amongst the girls to wear several rubber elastic bands as bracelets at the wrist. It was the done thing to stretch their bracelets and let them spring back on to the wrist. One nun noticed that instead of listening to her in class several

girls were playing with their bracelets. She told them not to do so. After a bit, some disobeyed her and started again. She ordered that every elastic band should be handed to her and she threw them out of the window. From then on she had good control of the class.

The convent hens, one after another, suddenly decided to die without showing any external signs of trouble. The vet was called and found that each dead hen had a elastic band in its stomach. Presumably the hens thought the wriggling elastic bands were worms.

Our good friend Father de Vos, was reclining on our sofa, when our tiny kitten, Isidore, now a cat jumped up on to the sofa. Father de Vos fondled it and then Isidore jumped up on to the back of the sofa and started to suck the rather fleshy lobe of the Father's ear. I do not remember any book on etiquette saying what one should do in such a circumstance. Snatching the cat away might hurt the ear. Pretending not to have noticed what was happening is very negative. The Father tried quietly to move his ear but Isidore hung on.

The R.C. priests, mostly but not entirely Dutch, were granted home leave once in about every seven years. The nuns, however, never got any home leave. After Sarawak gained its independence within Malaysia, the influence of Islam became strong and it was felt that foreign Christian priests and nuns could be a menace and so none should be allowed to stay in Sarawak longer than eight years. In fact, it takes longer than eight years for a missionary to do his job properly, learn the language and get to know the customs and ways of thought of the local people, who is on good (or bad) terms with whom and who is related to whom. Some of the nuns had come to Sarawak aged about 20 and were now in their 70s and 80s. They had completely lost touch with anyone at home and the change in climate on arrival in such a place as Ireland was a horrid shock for them. It was very cruel to expel from the country such people, who had devoted so many years to Sarawak and these ladies were certainly not the scheming sort of people who had any interest in politics.

One of the R.C. priests was old enough to have been born an Austrian and German was his mother tongue. After the First World War, his part of Austria became Italian and he was given an Italian passport. When the Japanese arrived and interred all the Allies, he was not put into a camp as Italy was on the same side as the Japanese and so he could carry on living in Kuching. He said what a miserable period this was for him as most of the population did not like the Japanese or their friends. When Italy changed sides, he was quite glad to join the internees in their camp! At the end of the war, he sailed for Italy and then went in a small plane, (in those days naturally not pressurised) and flew over the Alps into Austria. An unexpected bonus of this trip was that the height at which the plane flew apparently killed off all the malaria bugs that were in his blood!

Because Bunty had been a girl guide at school, she became quartermaster to the Sibuguides, who were due to be visited by Lady Olave Baden-Powell. Drawn up on the edge of the tarmac were Mrs. Bomphrey (Chief Guide of Sarawak), Mrs Ann Anderson, Madam Lillian Wong and Bunty who were all committee members of the Third Division Guides. All four of these ladies were seven months pregnant or more. Bunty was in maternity clothes and the other three had had to adjust their uniforms. As the plane came to a standstill, the four ladies approached it just as Lady B-P started to come

down the steps. She stopped halfway and, rocking with laughter, said "What a fine example to and great advertisement for the Girl Guides movement".

In 1953 a new Cadet Officer (let us call him Matthews) arrived in Sarawak and was posted to Sibü. He was born on Christmas Day, the son of a Kent rural vicar and brought up as a strict Christian. On board the liner on the way to Singapore he mentioned to the other cadets coming to Sarawak that he had heard that a lot of hard drinking went on in Sarawak and he had never touched a drop of alcohol in his life. What should he do? On their advice, he started on the downward slippery slope by having a ginger beer shandy.

One day the Resident Third Division (Denis White) was visited formally by a group of the leading ladies of Sibü. They said that they fully understood that bachelor young men had certain needs, but they thought it excessive that the new Cadet Officer should have set up house with three young ladies, one Chinese, one Iban and one Malay. The Resident questioned Matthews, who answered "I thought it was all right in Sarawak to have a sleeping dictionary". I am learning the three languages at the same time"! My mind boggles at learning three languages (one of them Chinese) at the same time and coping with the problems of living with three women of different races in the same house at the same time.

As a result of his upbringing, Matthews did not know how to hold his drink and over the next two years there were various unfortunate situations that Government didn't approve of, ending with, after he had handed over Lawas District to his successor, going on leave with the key to the safe in his pocket. Government told Matthews that if he cared to put in his resignation on health grounds, this would be accepted. He took the hint.

Matthews' father died and he inherited some £30,000. In 1958 he re-appeared in Sarawak, apparently intent on dissipating his inheritance with riotous living. He turned up in Sibü. One evening, a policeman was walking along the pavement outside a rather shoddy hotel, when a pocket knife with a sharp open blade landed immediately in front of him, having just missed piercing his hat. He took umbrage at this and went upstairs and found that Matthews and his Iban girl friend were having a fight and she had thrown the knife out of the window. Matthews told the policeman that he wished to marry her! For this public scene and other disreputable actions, it was felt that Matthews was an undesirable resident and his permit to stay should be revoked. Meanwhile, over lunch I told Buntý that Matthews had disappeared and the police had no idea where he was. Jokingly, Buntý asked Masseneh where was Tuan Matthews? To her astonishment she answered at once that he was in her kampong, two houses away from hers and living with the Malay lady of his earlier Sibü days.

Matthews had been sent to Kuching and was waiting there for the next boat to Singapore. John Seal found him wandering around in a sad state and, being a very kindly man, offered him hospitality. Two days later, John received a request from the Manager of the Chartered Bank to go and see him. John didn't think his account was in the red but certainly was surprised when the Manager asked him if he could do something about Matthews. Apparently, Matthews had been visiting brothels and paid for the service in cash. He then realised, that during his time in the brothel, he would be made drunk after which his wallet would disappear. He then decided to take no cash

with him on his nightly jaunts and paid for any services by cheque and apparently he was not satisfied with just one girl a night. The well brought up bank ladies behind the counter would arrive for work in the morning to find several prostitutes waiting there for the doors to open to cash Matthews' cheques and the bank ladies didn't like this.

The hitherto sad story of a brilliant and well brought up Christian gentleman's unhappy descent into a dissolute way of life ended surprisingly. Matthews, having wasted most of his father's inheritance, became a Muslim and changed his name to a Muslim one and married his Malay girlfriend, who happened to be the sister of Azahari, one of the leaders of the future Brunei Rebellion. Matthews got a job as a local authority teacher in a rural village in West Malaysia, gave up his bad habits and became a prominent member of the local community. In due course he went to Mecca and became a Hadji.

Bunt and I enjoyed watching processions through Sibu on the occasion of Chinese weddings, when the bride was taken to the bridegroom's house. She was preceded by a vehicle carrying a brass band (the larger instruments had to be held out of the car's window while being played). All her trousseau, including her contributions to the wedding feast were carried round the town in litters in front of the bride's car – it was nothing to witness a full bedroom suite, complete with the traditional puce pink pillow cases, bolster and sheets, embroidered in lurid colours, a treadle sewing machine and a whole leg of pork (uncooked).

### Boat Transport



The Sarawak Steamship Company ran the Rajah Brooke on the Singapore run and various small boats up and down the coast. The Straits Steamship also had cargo cum passenger ships that were small enough to get up the Borneo rivers and were shallow enough to get over the bars at some of the river mouths. Dutch and Norwegian tramp steamers also periodically tied up at Sibu.

Hewick and Bruas at Sibu,  
October 1958

For most of the Straits Steamship and Sarawak Steamship Companies' ships, the Captains and Chief Engineers were British (in the latter case, mostly Scottish). They were a specialised Conrad type of ship officer. They (especially the Chief Engineers) drank more than was good for them. Nevertheless, the engines were always beautifully cared for and the record of safety of passengers was excellent. The officers knew the local seas and the weather conditions, so it was rare indeed for a ship to go aground

and even more so for the engines to stop. These officers were, to some, uncultured but within their limits they were the salt of the earth. They loved their jobs. Somebody like John Fisher, an excellent D.O. Sibü and later Resident Fourth Division, was a person who, on occasions, drank perhaps more than was good for him, but had a first class relationship with the leaders of all races in Sarawak and could cope in the friendliest manner with the British staff of these ships. At the start of the Japanese war the plane, in which he was escaping from Singapore, was shot down on its way to Australia and fell, I think, into the Timor Sea. He swam several miles to land. For some reason he refused thereafter to travel by air! Periodically, one of the Straits Steamship ships arrived in Sibü and the Chief Engineer, Fergusson, shut down his engines and then called on John Fisher. Occasionally the enjoyment of each other's company went on until it seemed a bit late for him to return to his ship. John told me that he had asked Fergusson if he would like to be woken with tea or coffee in the morning. The answer was neither but if you have Crème de Menthe Frappé, that would do very nicely.

Pre-war the Sarawak Steamship Co. had had a tramp steamer, called 'Angby', that could take a few passengers. When the Japanese attack started, this ship escaped to Trincomalee, though it did have a very narrow miss from a bomb, as it proudly flew the Sarawak flag. As it approached the harbour, all telescopes were focussed on this strange flag as pages of the manual were turned over to find out whether she was friend or foe. When the time came for the Royal Navy to help with the re-conquest of Burma, a convoy set off from Ceylon, escorted by the R.N. The ships' captains had been told that, at a certain point during the night, they should all assemble and receive their orders. At daybreak, the fleet would, led by the Royal Navy, sweep into Akyab, capture it and the convoy could then move in. The Captain of the Angby, either because he misunderstood or more likely because he was not going to be told what to do by a naval officer half his age, failed to stop. The morale of the Japanese was low and at the sight of the arrival of a British tramp steamer, flying the Sarawak ensign, they capitulated and the Royal Navy arrived to find that the Angby had done the job for them with no casualties. I don't know when the Angby was retired, but she was still going strong in 1954.

Life as a deck passenger on board these ships was far from pleasant. There was an awning, but it was not very effective as a protection against the sun or rain and certainly did not shelter passengers from the waves in really stormy weather. Families would huddle together in little groups on the deck, the early ones having bagged the few areas of the deck that afforded a modicum of protection. The only comfort for deck passengers was that they travelled cheaply.

The pigs that were exported to Singapore were also on deck and even less happy. They were enveloped in strong net bags, which meant that they could not move at all. Would this be a 'pig in a poke'? From the lorries that brought them, they were laid out on the wharf to await the battening down of the hatches before being transferred, several at a time, in a strong net by a crane from the wharf to the top of the hatches, where the net bags were piled up as close together as possible, side by side and then a second layer would be laid above the first and often a third layer above that. The pigs were then left alone during the journey, except that, to discourage them from dying, they had the hoses turned on to them from time to time. The pigs and the hatches were in a horrid mess by the time the shipment had reached its destination.

Obviously, it is annoying to go out not expecting rain and then be unexpectedly caught in a drenching thunderstorm. Many Sarawak people especially disliked getting their hair wet, even though in the Sarawak climate the hair soon dries when the rain ceases. It used to amaze me how, if there was no-where to shelter, affected people seemed somehow quickly to find a banana leaf (pulled off a plant in someone's garden?) and carry on walking with the leaf held over the head. It was quite useless in keeping one's clothes dry and not very efficient at keeping the hair dry, especially if the rainstorm was accompanied by a strong wind.

The Second Rajah had been a naval officer and had much enjoyed a certain game of indoor bowls that used to be played in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century by the navy when visiting West Indian islands and some other naval stations. From before the First World War, the Island Club Sibu had one of these bowling alleys. The alley consisted of a long gently sloping wooden floor at the end of which the pins were placed. The wooden bowls were of various sizes and weights from about two to five inches in diameter. There were two methods of using the bowls. The easier way was to pick up a bowl, stand facing the pins with the feet splayed apart on the starting line. The player would then bend down holding the ball in two hands, slowly raise his hands as he looked at the target to get the desired line, lower his hands quickly to between his legs and bring them forward again while releasing the bowl. This method was fairly accurate but the bowl did not have a great velocity and it did not encourage much perspiration. The other and much more dashing method was to pick up one of the larger bowls, stand some five yards behind the line, with the body slightly twisted as the bowl is held to one's side at hip level, take several deep breaths, then gallop to the starting line and launch the huge bowl with panache and as much velocity as one can. The result is devastatingly successful if the bowl follows the desired line, but very often the bowl jumps over the side of the alley and spectators standing there have to be quick to get out of its way. In that climate, the launcher's shirt is soon clinging to his body with sweat and he finds it necessary to go to the bar and replace lost liquid. Murdo, aged about two, and I were at the starting line watching the proceedings. He had a very small rubber ball in his hand. It was the turn of a very overweight bowler to perform. Naturally, he chose the first method. With the bowl held in front of him he made sure his launching would be straight by raising the bowl and then putting it between his legs several times before deciding to launch the bowl. The second time that he picked up a bowl, he was much disconcerted when, as he was just ready to launch it, a small rubber ball appeared from between his legs and rather erratically zigzagged down the alleyway and, with much spectator clapping, knocked over one pin. Meanwhile, I had quickly collected Murdo from behind the player and removed him from the room.

### **Visits by the Sultan of Pahang and the Tuan Mufti**

Danny Lascelles, the Judge stationed in Sibu, was away on circuit. Tony Shaw, the Resident could not be found, and so a disturbed Joy Lascelles arrived at our house, waving a telegram addressed to the Judge. It read "Sultan of Pahang his family and suite arriving in two days' time for two nights". The telegram originated from Brunei, where the Sultan (with many other notabilities was celebrating the official opening of the magnificent new Brunei mosque). It appeared that Danny had met the Sultan in Malaya and had casually said to him "Come over to Sarawak sometime and stay with us. We will take you to a Dayak longhouse." When we found Tony Shaw, he said to Joy "What a pity. To-morrow I'm going travelling for a week on a fixed programme. The Sultan's

visit is not an official one and so I won't cancel my tour. You can make use of the Residency's two guest rooms."

We knew the Sultan had four wives and lots of children and wondered how many of them would be accompanying him and how big is a Sultan's suite? Bunty and I had no spare room. The senior Malay in the Division, Datu Tuanku Bujang, could accommodate one person. I offered to take the royal party by launch the day after he arrived to a longhouse, which would fill in the time from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. and it was up to Joy to fill in the rest. A telegram was despatched to Brunei asking for the numbers to be accommodated. It wasn't as bad as it might have been. There was the Sultan, his second wife and their small boy and two other people. Joy and I went out to Sibu airport to greet the Sultan and Joy took him home. It was clear from what Joy said, that when she next saw Danny, his reception would be more than frigid for involving her to cope alone with this situation.

The next day the Sultan received dignitaries, especially from the Malay community and Bunty politely rustled up a few words of courtly Rajah Malay to speak to His Highness in his own tongue, though he spoke flawless English. In the afternoon the Sultan, the Sultana and their six year old son embarked on the launch and we sailed down the Igan River then up the small Aup River to the longhouse. His Highness was a commanding figure, being about six feet tall and well developed. Theoretically, he was not allowed to touch alcohol but he also understood the necessity of not causing offence by refusing hospitality. He was charmed by the damsels (bare breasted) in their finery and pretended to sip their tuak. He ignored the pigs wandering around. He climbed effortlessly up the 'tangga' and, with his son and wife, sat down with ease on the mats on the floor and closely watched all the goings on as a 'pirieng' ceremony was laid out in front of him. He waived a cock over the plate and then got up and waived it over the crowd then helped to put the plate in a suitable place for the spirits. Then the singing began and, once again, he took tiny sips of tuak. He was fascinated by the subsequent traditional warrior style dancing of the young men and then wandered along the ruai and looked into the room of the head of the house. He was most interested in everything and was charming.

Sim Ah Bee was my elderly, cultured, distinguished looking chief clerk. I heard that the Tuan Mufti (the head of the Moslem religion in Sarawak) was visiting Sibu. I went to the wharfside and greeted him as he stepped off the Meluan. I presumed that he would be staying with Datu Tuanku Bujang, the senior Malay in Third Division, but no, to my astonishment, he said that he would be staying with Sim Ah Bee. It appeared that Mr Sim's wife's sister was the wife of the Tuan Mufti. She had been adopted by Malays as a child and so brought up following the Moslem religion. It was not uncommon for Malay couples, who could not produce children, to adopt Chinese girls, as poor but large Chinese families felt that they could well dispense with a girl, while at the same time making a financial gain. To the Malays, it was most desirable to adopt a non-Moslem and by so doing converting a child to Islam.

Sim Ah Bee was the traditional type of Chinese head of his family, believing in strong discipline as he brought up his family. His son, William, was an official in the Sibu Municipal Department. Even on William's wedding day, Ah Bee did not relax his principles. As William had upset his father in some way, the latter told his son to bend over and he beat him!

## Relationships

It was well known that Ken Kay, the Divisional Agricultural Officer, had for years been living with a Brunei Moslem lady from the Dusun tribe and had several children by her. She and her children lived in the kitchen quarters. She was most discreet and was never seen in the front rooms when Ken was entertaining people. One day Ken came to our house and, speaking to Bunty in a roundabout and very embarrassed manner, asked her if she knew about his liaison. She said that of course she knew he had his Mitsy. It then appeared that he had given Mitsy a Necchi sewing machine and he knew Bunty had one and would she mind explaining to Mitsy how to use it. Bunty said she would be delighted to help and Ken was very relieved that his mission had been successful.

Some time later, Ken came into my office and asked me if I would immediately marry him and Mitsy by Special Licence, so that he would not have to go through the correct routine of publishing the banns etc. I said that I was delighted to help but such weddings could only take place where it was absolutely imperative that it must take place without delay. To justify his request, Ken said that Hermanus Assan (an Iban, who at that time was the D.O. Kapit) and his wife were staying with him. Ken and Hermanus had gone out. Mitsy knew them well and she was entertaining Mrs. Assan in the front room of Ken's house. Mitsy had gone off to the kitchen area for some reason and, while she was there, Joy Lascelles had come in to chat with Mrs. Assan. Not knowing that Joy was there, Mitsy returned to the front room. Joy took one look at Mitsy and her 'impertinent' intrusion and stormed out of the house. Ken was incensed at her action, hence his arrival in my office to request me to make an honest woman of Mitsy. I pointed out that I could not consider this situation as sufficient justification for an immediate marriage. However, perhaps Ken had noticed that the public notice board at the entrance to the office building was chock a block with notices, that no-one ever looked at them and that in any case, if I put up the banns on the notice board for the requisite period, it could happen that other notices might partly overlap this one. Furthermore the District clerical staff leaned their bikes against the wall under the notice board, thus making it extra difficult for the public to read the notices during office hours. When the statutory period of publication had elapsed, I removed the notice of the banns. I suspect that no-one had read it.

Next day, Tony Shaw, as Resident, married Mitsy and Ken in his office and Bunty and I were the witnesses. For that evening, Ken had invited a great many people to his house for drinks and nibbles. The house had a small outside staircase that led immediately into the large living room. Bunty and I arrived early and positioned ourselves near the top of the stairs to watch the proceedings as Ken and Mitsy stood there and received the guests. Naturally, all of them were astonished to see Mitsy there. Most were polite enough to show no surprise. Quite a few clearly were upset at this situation but did at least shake hands with Mitsy. When Joy and Danny arrived, Joy swept past Mitsy without shaking hands and glared at her, while Danny did the opposite and spoke politely to her before passing on into the room.

Joy got hold of a little group of ladies and said that it was disgraceful that Ken should flaunt his concubine like this amongst respectably married ladies. She then said "Danny, come along, we're going off to the cinema". Danny however was enjoying himself and to her annoyance refused to come. On the way to the cinema, a Chinese lady expressed her surprise to Joy that she had not known that Danny had that day

married Ken and Mitsy. This information increased Joy's fury. When she got home, she found that Danny had gone to bed and was fast asleep. Ever since he had been in internment camp, it had been impossible to wake Danny up once he was soundly asleep. Next morning, Ken was awakened at 6.30 a.m. by Danny banging on his front door and saying "Ken! Joy tells me that I married Mitsy and you. Did I?"

The Third Division Marine Officer, Sandy MacKenzie, went to Sarikei near one of the mouths of the Rejang and spent the night with the D.O. (Mike Foster). Sandy was a Scottish Presbyterian and had not been long in the country and was beginning to realise that life in Sarawak was not entirely like that he was used to in Aberdeen. Mike and he were sitting chatting in the dining room, and when he turned round to help himself to soup from the tureen held by the servant, he was somewhat disconcerted to find that his face was very close to a pair of shapely lady's bare breasts. A further look showed that the servant was an Iban young lady from the ulu Second Division and was clad in the skimpy skirt, which was all that such ladies wore at home and was furthermore beautifully tattooed on her neck.

Later on, Mike became Resident Third Division. The Residency's main living room was upstairs. Mike returned from an evening at the Island Club accompanied by some friends, including Mair Rees a Health Sister. At the top of the stairs was a table with various objects on it, including a bosun's whistle. Mair picked it up and, not noticing Mike's agitation, blew a call. Shortly afterwards, a door opened at the other end of the room and the Iban lady entered and Mike called out in Iban "No. No. Sorry an error. Not yet" and the lady disappeared.

In due course, Mike went on home leave and the Iban lady returned to her home and then returned to the Dayak Resthouse in Sibu to await Mike's return from leave. Meanwhile, Mike had got married, had not told his bride about his previous liaison, and had not made proper arrangements to pay her off. Danny Lascelles heard of this and went to the Dayak Resthouse on several missions to mediate between Mike and the disappointed upriver Iban lady and eventually the situation was sorted out without, one presumes, the new bride knowing anything about it. Meanwhile, in the way that happens amongst ladies, various ladies, with great pleasure, informed Joy Lascells that they thought it was their duty to tell her that Danny had been seen frequently going to the Dayak Resthouse to visit a shapely Iban lady.

### **Visit by the Duke of Edinburgh**

In February 1959, the Duke of Edinburgh visited Sarawak. Apparently, it was felt necessary that the Queen should be asked if it was all right for him to see Iban girls bare from the waist up. She very sensibly answered that if this was their usual dress, then, of course, there was no objection. I will say that I did not notice the Duke looking in anyway put out when he was greeted by bare breasted Iban maidens.

For the visit, Sibu was decorated by the various communities with very fine arches with masses of flowers on them and suitable messages, though 'Edinburg' (sic) was misspelled in one or two locations. The Melanau Kampong Nangka in Sibu had, in addition, built an 'Itot'. This was used in a traditional and rather dangerous Melanau sport, which I had never witnessed and which, since the war, just seems to have lapsed. An Itot needed a piece of land about the size of a tennis court. In the middle of the field, a very high arch was erected, made of bamboos. It had to be very stable and strongly



Melanau children of Kampong Nangka, playing their traditional game of Itot, Sibu 1959.

built to cope with the strain and stress to which it would be put. A long and strong rope hung down from the middle of the arch. At each end of the court, at a suitable distance from the arch, a frame was raised, made of bamboo verticals and cross pieces. This had to be strong and stable enough to withstand the weight of several young men standing on the cross pieces at various heights. Young men climbed on to the frames at each end of the field and positioned themselves at suitable levels, standing on one cross piece and holding on to a vertical or on to the cross piece above them. The performance started with one young man picking up the end of the rope as it hung down in the middle of the field and then, while holding it, walked across the field to the frame at one end of the field and, still with the rope

in his hand, then climbed up the frame from crosspiece to crosspiece, like climbing a ladder, with it until he had reached a suitable height, where he held on to the frame with one hand but now holding on to the rope with the other hand about 7 feet from the bottom of the rope. He then launched himself hard from the frame, and at the same time entwined his legs round the rope, while holding on to it with both his hands above his head. If he had pushed hard enough, the rope would swing downwards and then up the other side until it was close to the other frame and several feet above the ground. At this stage, one of the many young men gripping the frame would release his grip on the frame and push off from it with his feet and, like a trapeze artist, would fly a short distance through the air and hold on either to the rope or to the first man on it. With the extra weight and extra shove on it, the rope would swing back to the first frame and reach a higher height than before and somebody else would launch himself into space and clutch the rope or one of the men already hanging on to the rope. It would swing backwards and forwards between the two frames until perhaps twelve men were on it – several of them were not holding the rope but clutching one of the bodies holding on to the one man who had first caught the rope. Sometimes, someone on the rope released his hold, as the rope swung, and, grabbing wildly, returned to the frame. In fact, I never saw anyone fall off the rope or fail to return to the frame, but clearly there were plenty of

chances for someone to misestimate when to jump or for someone to find that he no longer had the strength to hold on to the rope due to the weight of the men holding on to him and each other.

The Itot that the Duke witnessed lasted for several weeks after his visit and was then dismantled. I doubt whether any others have been erected since then. While on the subject of the Duke, a well off Chinese timber merchant, Mr. Ling Beng Siew on a visit to London, met the Duke and was introduced to him as "Mr. Siew". The Duke shook hands with him and said "How do you do Mr. Ling, isn't it?"

Bunty enjoyed doing her own shopping, especially in the colourful Sibu market. On one occasion, she had just asked the stall holder for half a kati of the Sarawak equivalent of French beans, when she was well and truly ticked off by Mrs Chew Geok Lin who had just arrived behind her. Mrs Chew was the wife of the owner of the Wah Tat bank. She had decided to buy three katis of beans and proceeded to show Bunty how a good housewife should do so. Squatting down, with her fingers glittering with large diamonds, she picked up a bean at a time from the pile and then bent its tip. If it bends, it is o.k., if the tip breaks, it is old and you put it on one side. Using this method, it took a long time to accumulate her three kati's worth, but it left Mrs. Chew feeling that she had got value for money. The Sibu stall holder made no comment as he watched his beans being fingered.

We took a week's local leave and, on the Sibu launch, went down the Igan, through the Kut canal at high tide to the Oya River. We sailed down river to its mouth, where we were met by a Landrover that took us along the beach to Mukah, where we stayed at the Government resthouse. One afternoon, Murdo, aged just over one year old, was clearly unwell and had a temperature. By the evening his temperature was dangerously high and he was delirious. It was horrible hearing this baby who couldn't yet speak emitting such strange sounds. There was no doctor in Mukah District. The Hospital Assistant had gone travelling and it was doubtful in any case whether he would have known what to do. There was no way of calling a doctor or getting to one. We asked for help from the R.C. Convent and a Sister came along, but she hadn't a clue what was wrong and so didn't know what to prescribe. As we watched in despair what we feared might be the death throes of our beloved first born, we were in the same position as thousands of Sarawakians in the ulu so often were – helpless in the face of disaster and unable to call on expert help. By the morning Murdo's delirium was abating and then he began to get better. We then noticed several teeth had come through all at the same time. Bunty had several times commented on how strange it was that Murdo had not yet produced his first teeth.

### **Development of Local Government**

For some time, the Government had been progressively introducing the public to the idea that Sarawak was going to develop Local Government. In 1958 the Town Clerk of the London Borough of Hornsby took time off from his usual duties to look at Local Government in Sarawak and then report on his findings. I was instructed to show him Sibu Urban District Council and Kapit District Council. Personally, I did wonder to what extent experience in Hornsby was relevant to Sarawak. The Town Clerk was pleasant enough but as all his life had been spent in local government, it was not surprising that he found much to startle him as the Sarawak scene was gradually being unfolded before him.

Bunty, who was eight months pregnant with Alexa, decided to accompany me and the Town Clerk. We set off on the Government launch very early in the morning upriver to Kapit. He was clearly astounded that Bunty was coming with us and pointed out that his wife would not have liked to come and, in any case, he would not have allowed her to come on such a trip. We looked at the Government office in Kapit Fort and at the District Council office there and then went downriver and we anchored at the wharf of a longhouse. Here he was faced with the usual reception of bare breasted maidens and found himself being forcibly given tuak by these apparently weak retiring females, then taken into the longhouse. The Penghulu of this group of longhouses was the area's District Councillor. The people in the longhouse knew that he was their representative but, beyond that fact, not one of them seemed to know much about local government nor indeed to care about it. If their Penghulu couldn't sort out their problems, they went, as they had always done, to lodge their complaint with the District Officer, Kapit. The Town Clerk opined that the situation in Sarawak was very different from that in Hornsby! A lot of money had been spent for him to learn this fact – I would have thought, this very obvious fact.

We then went downriver and tied up, as dusk was falling, at the wharf of the bungalow of the District Officer, Kanowit, Humphrey Harlow. A steep path, with many steps, led up the cliff face. Bunty, naturally, took her time going up and the Town Clerk once again gloomily reminded us that his wife had been very careful not to indulge in anything strenuous when pregnant.

As we were reaching the top we heard a noise and I said that it was Humphrey Harlow's pet hornbill but Bunty, quite correctly, said it was the sound of a newborn baby. We were greeted by Humphrey and Valerie Harlow, the latter clad in a dressing gown. She excused her unusual garb by saying that she had had a baby that morning. The look on the Town Clerk's face was a picture. We said that we would return to the boat but the Humphreys said that all the preparations had been made for us to stay with them – so we did. Once again, he was learning that things were different in Sarawak from the London Borough of Hornsby!

We were sitting having drinks and Humphrey suddenly said "Quick Valerie! Back to bed. Mother Jerome is coming." Mother Jerome, an Irish nun probably in her 60s, came in and looked suspiciously at Valerie and said "I told you not to leave the bed. Did you?". She was assured that this had not happened. She was about to leave when Humphrey asked her if she'd like a whisky. She was quite clearly taken aback, then a delightful smile came over her face and she said "The last time I had a whisky was when I left Ireland, aged 19, and I have never been outside Sarawak since then." It was a joy to see her sitting there slowly sipping her whisky as it brought back memories to her of so long ago.

I have no idea how useful the Sarawak Government found the Town Clerk's report. Certainly, none of his words of wisdom were passed on to me.

With the progressive introduction of Local Government, District Councils were formed and, as an interim measure, the D.Os were the Chairmen of the new councils. I was Chairman of Sibu Urban District Council and of Sibu Rural District Council.

On the occasion of Chinese New Year I used to call on distinguished members of the Chinese community in their homes and I now added to my list all the recently elected Chinese District Councillors. Accompanied by a Chinese S.A.O., I set off early to call on those whom Bunty did not know and then returned with her and the children to call on our personal friends.

One of the S.U.D.C. elected members was a young, enthusiastic and very left wing bachelor Foochow, who was continually submitting quite impractical motions or amendments to motions. He spoke no English and not much Malay. It was always interesting to see the inside of people's houses, when hitherto one had only met these people on official occasions. This Foochow Communist councillor lived in a shophouse. About 9 a.m. we called there and were non-plussed to find that no-one there seemed to know him. Then we saw him. There was all round embarrassment as clearly it had never occurred to him that he would be called on. He was clad only in his underpants and had just been woken up. His accommodation consisted of a table top on a couple of trestles, on which he slept and he had a box for his few possessions. When the working day started, he took his 'bed' and box out of the shop and hid them somewhere out of sight and when the shop was closed to the public, he was able to re-erect his bed on his bit of floor for which he paid a small rent. The fact that I now knew of his very poor background, often helped me to understand and be more sympathetic towards some of his attitudes when speaking at Council meetings.

S.U.D.C. managed the Rumah Temuai (Dayak Resthouse). There had been a Dayak Resthouse since before the war – a building on stilts built on what had initially been a shallow tidal waterway but bit by bit was getting filled in. At rare intervals this building had been slightly modernised. Sanitation had been a hole in the floor, a service which Dayaks were used to and which worked, provided there were pigs to roam underneath the building, or as in this case, the tide used to flush the mess efficiently away. The rising level of the ground level and, with modern communications, the increasing numbers that used the Resthouse meant that the sanitary position was unpleasant except at spring tides or flood water from the ulu coming down the Rejang. The building was roofed with belian shingles, an excellent roofing material, as belian wood was extremely hard and did not rot in water, but it was brittle and splintered easily. Eventually, a pull-the-plug had been installed but nevertheless sanitation was still a problem as all rubbish was chucked under the house and Dayaks were not used to flushing water.

I was amused to read S.U.D.C.'s. rather Rabelaisian paragraph in the minutes: "Arising out of minute 101/58 para (4) the Council health coolies were given one period a week to clear the rubbish from below the Rumah Temuai. This help proved unavailing as more rubbish was thrown in than could be got out. On one occasion the fire- brigade pump had to be used to flush out the latrine chambers choked with belian shingles torn out of the roof for use as toilet paper. It has not been wise to send men below the house to clean up too often because the risk of tetanus and worm infestation. The solution to this is to fill up the ground to floor level so that there is no "baroh rumah" [underneath the house] to throw rubbish into. Unless there is a full time care-taker keeping the premises clean, is apt to be very difficult."

A further para under 'Sanitation' read, "nor is there a latrine in the old shophouse, these people goes everywhere to let go their motions. As no night soil is available in this station."

In 1955, Hubert Earnshaw was Director of Education. He was a burly, direct, down to earth, blunt Yorkshireman. He spoke the Queen's English with a Yorkshire accent – but one that would have been easily understood anywhere. He had little patience with people that he considered had airs and graces, fancy ways and who were unconventional. He was on his farewell trip to Sibü before retiring and had specified that he wanted a room to himself in the Resthouse for one night and would then fly back to Kuching.

Education Officer, Robert Nicholl, was a complete antithesis to Earnshaw. He was a very unconventional man, who spoke beautifully clear, well enunciated English, in a manner that was approaching being affected and tended to use rather archaic words. He had been upriver, had specified that he wanted a room to himself at the Resthouse and next day would fly back to Kuching. Earnshaw used his considerable weight and burly manner to barge through obstacles. Nicholl would insinuate himself, usually successfully, to get round obstacles. Both men were greatly irritated by the other.

The Sibü Resthouse had two double bedded rooms, one occupied by Earnshaw and one by Nicholl. Great was the annoyance of our two Education Department officers, when they were told that two lady travellers had unexpectedly arrived and Nicholl would have to move into Earnshaw's bedroom. Neither man received this information with any sign of Christian toleration and understanding that one would expect from members of the Education Department.

Robert moved in, accompanied by a pet monkey, took out his tobacco pouch and promptly rolled up and then lit a 'biddi' (a local type of cigarette reminiscent of but even stronger than a Gauloise) and acrid fumes pervaded the room. Earnshaw was a non-smoker. Without speaking to each other, they seemed to agree that it would be best if they turned out the light as soon as possible. Nicholl went out to do his teeth and later told me that on returning he heard Earnshaw shouting "I will not have a bloody ape in my bed" and the poor animal was hurled across the room. Speaking annoyingly calmly and accentuating his cultured voice, Nicholl said "Tut tut, Sir, one must be kind to our innocent animal friends. By the way it is a monkey not an ape".

Next day Earnshaw left by plane. That same day, Nicholl cancelled his flight and returned to Kuching slowly by sea on the Meluan!

In 1960, we left Sibü to go on home leave.

## 15 – DISTRICT OFFICER SERIAN 1960

On return from leave I was transferred to Serian District in First Division. There was a metalled road connecting Kuching to Serian. From Kuching the road started off going over mostly level ground and then winding up to climb amongst small hills and then higher hills, one began to see areas covered with pepper vines until it zigzagged down to Serian, where there is a bridge over a river known to the Land Dayaks as Batang Kayan and to the Malays, Chinese and Sea Dayaks further downriver as Batang Sadong. Serian consisted of a fairly large Malay kampong, a Chinese bazaar, Government offices and quarters and the D.O's house built on a hill near the river. The town was situated in a large valley between two ranges of mountains. On the other side of the bridge the road was unmetalled and construction of what would eventually become a trans-Sarawak road had begun. From Serian an earth road led to a place called Tebakang and further to the ulu was Tebedu, where there was a small police station and a much used track leading to Indonesia. Instead of the pre-war bungalows of charm and character that were so suitable for the Sarawak climate, we were saddled with an atrocity of a house built apparently by a P.W.D. engineer recently arrived from U.K. His contribution to adapting to an equatorial climate was to provide the house with a great many Crittall windows (very fashionable in suburbia pre-war) and several French doors downstairs, each of which had its own key that fitted no other door. The house was painted white and, as no shade at all had been provided, except for a tiny English style overhang at roof gutter level, the glare was tremendous and in rainy weather all the windows and doors had to be kept closed, so there were then no cooling draughts indoors. Water was a problem as we relied on rainwater from the roof, which was stored in a large (but not large enough) tank under the house. We had electricity, but only from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m.

To cope with the lack of 24 hour electricity, we had a rather unique gas refrigerator but we also had a lot of electrical equipment, such as a washing machine, a food mixer, a vacuum cleaner and a floor polisher and, of course, there was the electric pump to fill the small water tank in the roof. At 5.50 p.m. all these machines were switched on and somebody was near each of them ready to use them as soon as our electricity arrived. When shortly afterwards it became dark, the lights were switched on. Later an iron or a toaster might come into use. It was some time before I was told that when 6 o'clock arrived, due to our sudden huge electrical consumption, there was not enough electricity further down the line in the government quarters for much more than a weak light and often they were all blacked out when the fuse at their distribution box failed!

The lack of water was a great problem. Rain bearing clouds were frequent but as they advanced down the valley of the Batang Kayan towards us, they usually split apart about a mile away from our house and we watched the rain pouring down on to the mountains either side of our valley but not on to our roof, which in any case was much smaller than that of traditional bungalows.

On one occasion, I came in hot and sweaty at dusk after vigorous exercise, undressed in the bathroom and, to avoid wasting water, soaped myself all over with my perspiration. I stood in the bath, turned on the shower and was greatly alarmed to get a severe electric shock. Luckily, I was able to wrench my hand away from the shower tap. I leaped out of the bath and watched our precious water flowing away. I did not dare touch the tap, especially as I was soaking wet. I quickly dried myself, then put on

my rubber soled gym shoes after which, working very quickly I managed to turn off the tap, getting another shock as I did so. I reckoned I was now clean as I had dried off all the sweat and soap very thoroughly with my towel. The electrician was called and found that his workman had connected the earth to the water pipe system, which, at no point, entered the earth due to our basement water tank being made of concrete!

Even though a rain gauge on our roof top would have shown only a modest rainfall, the Batang Kayan valley had its full share of rain and at times the river flooded. After one prolonged period of flooding, when I went to my office by perahu, the Malays became fed up with all this water around them and, deviating from the Moslem injunction to worship no god but Allah, they reverted to the pagan customs of their ancestors. They fixed up a 6 foot long toy boat on the edge of the river and filled it up with rice, eggs, tobacco and even tuak (for they did not expect the spirits to be teetotal). Then accompanied by many old fashioned incantations they prayed (by the Imam amongst others) for the water level to be lowered as the boat was pushed out into the flooded river and disappeared downstream. That afternoon the clouds began to clear and by next day the river level was getting lower!

When we were in England and heard that we were due to go to Serian, we wrote to the head of the R.C. Mission in Serian and asked if he could kindly find two respectable late teenager girls, whom Bunty would train, one as a baby amah and one as a house amah. They were waiting for us and we were startled to find that one was a pagan Land Dayak, was heavily made up and was doing her best to look like a prostitute (it turned out that Gina's morals were good and she became an excellent baby minder) and the other was a Seventh Day Adventist. We 'phoned the Mission to enquire if we had the right girls as we had presumed that they would be R.Cs. The practical R.C. Father said that we had not asked for R.C.s and so far as the Mission was concerned, they made sure that their house servants were Moslems, whose day off was Friday, as Sunday was the priests' busiest day and the last thing they wanted was a servant wanting a day off then. He pointed out to us that the pagan would have no preference as regards her weekly day off and the Seventh Day Adventist's day off would be a Saturday.

As well as forbidding alcoholic drinks and such dreadful drugs as tea and coffee, the Seventh Day Adventists forbade the eating of those beasts that scavenged on the land or in the sea. As edible wild animals near longhouses became ever scarcer and as the rivers were over fished, protein for the ulu peoples of Sarawak mainly came from occasionally killing one of their own pigs or chickens and from dried prawns and prawn paste, which were cheap to buy in the bazaar. It was sad therefore for the Seventh Day Adventist Land Dayaks that they could not get Vitamin C from rice beer and missed out on the protein provided by pork and prawns.

I will mention here how wonderful it was, after my marriage, that, wherever I was stationed in Sarawak, Bunty and I saw so much more of each other than do most British families, as my office was usually within walking distance of my house and so I usually came home for my lunch and then had a short siesta. Whereas in Britain a commuter and his wife lead two separate lives – in his working life he deals with the people he meets at the work place and who are mere names to his wife, and in his other life at his home he associates with a different set of people who are family friends of both the husband and wife. With us, Bunty met people in the bazaar and kampong and many of the Government staff that I dealt with at work. So she was in the picture when I talked to

her about whom I had met in my place of work and we would often become acquainted with their spouses and children.

Just before Christmas, we gave a drinks party for the Serian District Councillors and Government staff. Eighty were invited, 42 replied and 75 turned up, which made catering somewhat difficult. As the party coincided with floods in First Division, it was problematical whether the hundred sausage rolls and curry puffs would arrive in time from Kuching. In fact they did – but not till the afternoon of the party – as en route they had had at times to be switched from a motor vehicle to a boat and back again. What we would have done if they hadn't arrived and what we would have done had they arrived after the party was over, doesn't bear thinking about.

The R.C. nuns had a convent at Tebakang and were largely self-sufficient for food. If you visited their vegetable patch in the morning, there was a strong smell of urine, but by 4 p.m. this perfume had disappeared. This regime produced very fine vegetables. The nuns also had turkeys and, on one visit, they presented Bunty with a bag of turkey eggs. She much appreciated their gesture but we insisted that we could not deprive them of their eggs. As we left, they put a bag of oranges in our car and we felt that it would be rude not to accept these. On arrival at Serian, I unloaded the car, dumped the bag of oranges on the kitchen table and there was a peculiar crunchy noise. The oranges were turkey eggs.

We were going off to Kuching for the day and wished to lock up the house and not a single key could we find for each of the many doors. The keys were normally left in the key holes. Murdo agreed that he had taken the keys and he accompanied us, trying to be helpful, as we hunted in every likely place where small boys would put keys but he still couldn't remember where he had put them until we reached the ornamental pond and found them in the mud there.

It was strange that Murdo was always car sick when going to Kuching but not on the reverse journey. We assume that this was because, on leaving Serian, the road immediately started winding up and down steep hills with frequent sharp bends before travelling across a plain to Kuching, while in the reverse direction the road was on the flat and had few bends and so Murdo had got used to the car's motion by the time we reached the hills.

Alongside the hilly part of the road were large areas under pepper. Like most crops, the value of pepper on the world's pepper markets oscillated a lot, but for most of the time the cultivation of these vines was very profitable. Pepper growing had one great disadvantage. The vine was easily killed by pouring a little kerosene around the stem – a job that could easily be carried out unperceived at night. It was essential therefore for a pepper grower to make no enemies!

The Land Dayak villages were quite different from those of the Ibans. While the Ibans usually built their longhouses near good sized rivers, as there were very few rivers of any size in the Land Dayak areas, their villages usually consisted of several short longhouses close to and at various angles to each other. Their outside verandahs often joined up to each other so that people could walk from one part of the village to another without touching the ground. Again, unlike the Ibans, the Land Dayak bachelors slept in a central rectangular or round house on stilts. In this house were stored the heads.

The two races were very different. The Ibans were extroverts. The Land Dayaks were fairer skinned than the Ibans and had smaller bodies. They were delicately featured and a much quieter race altogether. The Land Dayaks had long ago learnt to plant swamp padi and so it was not necessary for them periodically to move their villages. As a result of this, the paths between villages were much better defined than in Iban areas. It was also worthwhile for them to build bridges to join each side of narrow steep sided gullies. These bridges could be very alarming. They were high over the stream far below and built of a mixture of bamboos and creepers. Land Dayaks did not seem to suffer from vertigo and pranced happily across their bridges, which were not only swaying from side to side but were bouncing up and down in the middle and, of course, it had never occurred to the bridge builders to ensure that, if one slipped, one's leg or indeed one's whole body might disappear downwards through various large interstices. Added to all this, many bridges were old, their components looked and sometimes were rotten in places – naturally, the Land Dayaks knew where these places were and, in any case, a European's weight was usually much more than that of a Land Dayak.

In 1947, when I first travelled the Land Dayak areas, there were plenty of women with several heavy brass rings around their necks, which were thereby made much longer than nature intended; and they had several brass rings above their ankles, which resulted in their calf muscles also being higher up their legs. The first brass rings would be put on a girl when small and periodically other rings would be added. Because the Land Dayak villages were usually sited near mere streams, few of the people knew how to swim. Thus if a Land Dayak woman with brass rings fell into deep water, she would sink like a stone. The putting on of brass rings has now stopped, but a woman with brass rings has to be very cautious about removing any, as her atrophied neck muscles would not be able to support the weight of her head and until her leg muscles had reverted to normal, walking would have been very difficult.

Because most Land Dayak villages had remained static for a very long time, it was worthwhile for them to plant clumps of bamboos on their land and they had become adept at splitting bamboos lengthwise and making pipes out of them and thus bringing water from a suitable high point to the village.

I was travelling in one Land Dayak area when we came to a flat part in a saddle where several roads met and where for generations the travellers had rested. There, they used to unpack some fruit, eat it and throw the stones over their shoulders. The result was that this rest area, though grassy, was covered with a large number of huge and small fruit trees. On the occasion when I was there, it was the durian season and all the Land Dayaks rushed off leaving me alone, but soon returned carrying newly fallen durians. Fresh from the tree, these durians had not yet had time to develop their distinctive odour. There were oval and round durians, big and small ones, reddish, green, yellow and brownish ones. These durians were split with a parang and laid around me. I had a gluttonous time gorging on the fruit of each type of durian, and what a variety of textures, flavours and colour of flesh there were! It was a very happy revelation to me. Smooth fruit, stringy fruit, sweet fruit, astringent fruit, soft buttery fruit and hard fruit. We all thoroughly enjoyed ourselves indulging in this banquet. It was a highlight in my life and it seems highly unlikely that I will ever be favoured again with such an embarrassing amount of choice of delightfully varied tasting durians.

I was startled on approaching one Land Dayak village to see trees with pineapples growing out of them. I took some photos of these pineapple trees. Since then I have mentioned to several people about pineapple trees and, if they are sceptic, I have confounded them by producing my photos. Of course, I never tell them that the Land Dayaks liked pineapples but their pigs always got them first. They therefore had the bright idea of building a mound of earth (rather as we do with hanging baskets) in the forks of trees near their longhouse and planting their pineapples therein.

In Serian were several examples of kapok (or silk cotton) trees. The hairs that covered their large seed pods produced a light, silky, waterproof fibre that was used for stuffing pillows and lifebelts and for sound insulation. The kapok tree had a peculiarity in that the trunk did not develop branches in a higgledy-piggledy fashion as do most trees. With almost mathematical precision and at regular intervals along the trunk, there would be points in the trunk from which perhaps four branches would jut out, all at the same level above the ground and at all the four quarters of the compass and further-more each branch stretched out at right angles to the trunk. The kapok tree was rather malevolently known in Sarawak as 'the P.W.D. tree', on the grounds that if an engineer of the much maligned Public Works Department had been asked to design a tree, this is what he would have produced!

In late 1960 I was transferred to Kuching.

## 16 – DISTRICT OFFICER KUCHING 1960 – 1963

Kuching District covered the area of the Sarawak River and its tributaries from the sea to the high mountains on the Indonesian frontier. There were Malay villages downriver of Kuching and in and around the district. The population of Kuching town was predominantly Chinese. Chinese and a few Ibans lived in the flat lands inland from Kuching and Land Dayaks lived in the hilly areas of the interior.



View from the Astana of the Panghor arriving at Kuching, 1953.

Being D.O. Kuching was different from other jobs that I had had. Apart from the fact that Kuching was the centre of Government, the town was run by Kuching Municipal Council under its own Chairman and the rest of the district came under the Kuching Rural District Council, of which I was the Chairman.

Around the several mouths of the Sarawak River was a vast area of mangrove swamps. Until around the 1960s, mangrove bark was processed and made into kutch (cutch), a liquid for tanning and for staining nautical ropes and fishing nets with the old fashioned dark brown colour and equally old fashioned strong smell, which so effectively preserved them, even if regularly dipped into the sea. A factory for making and exporting cutch was built in the delta downriver beside the left bank of the main Sarawak River at an empty place, where the subsequent village, built around the factory, became known by the strange name of Goebilt. It was founded in 1910 by the British Malaysian Corporation with funding from American millionaires Robert Goelet and Cornelius Vanderbilt. After the war, cheaper products became available and killed off the various cutch factories in Sarawak. This means that nowadays, when people walk along a harbourside quay amongst fishing nets and ropes being used to tie up ocean liners or fishing boats, they will no longer be aware of that typical acrid smell that

used to pervade the atmosphere – a smell that I always associated as part and parcel of walking on a quay.

Our house in Kuching was called Rowland's Hill. What follows is an extract from our letter home to our friends and family:

"We think our house (called Rowland's Hill) has the nicest position of any in Kuching. It is conveniently in the centre of the town on the slope of a slight rise with the land falling away towards the river front, which is about a quarter of a mile away. Until the new port was opened downriver in 1961, we could see, across the roof tops below us, the superstructure of the Rajah Brooke as she arrived to tie up. Between us and the shophouses, which stand alongside the river, and next to us as we walk down the hill from our house is the Red Cross Centre and, as the downwards slope levels off, the "padang" – a large grassy area which does duty as Hyde Park cum the Horse Guards Parade in London. At our end of the padang is the War Memorial and a little closer to us is the children's playground with swings, etc. We have a grandstand view of all that goes on here, such as the Armistice Day Service, the Queen's Birthday Parade, Sunday evening walks by the local pas and mas and their children and, arm in arm, future pas and mas (without children), and Chinese funerals and wedding processions, and on one occasion to the excitement of our children, they were able to watch a helicopter flying low over the rooftops and landing on the padang during a military exercise. All these events, the children could watch comfortably from our upstairs drawing room windows instead of standing or sitting for long hours amongst the crowds in the boiling sun or driving rain.

"On the far side of the padang is the Anglican Cathedral and to the right the land slopes up towards the Museum and its lovely gardens. Actually, the proximity to the Cathedral can be a disadvantage, especially as the Mosque is diametrically opposite it and behind our house. We are now accustomed enough to be able to sleep through the drum banging and the Imam's call at 5.30 a.m. and the Cathedral bells at 6 a.m. and even, if the wind is in the right direction, the chorus from the R.C. Cathedral at 6.30 a.m., but our guests find the early morning religious calls somewhat disturbing.

"Incidentally, pre-war the dome of the Mosque had been embedded with thousands of beer bottle tops and shone as though it had been covered with gold. Unfortunately, with time and the Sarawak weather the beer bottle tops have tarnished and give the dome an unusual look. I never found out what method was used (by presumably teetotallers) to collect and store such a huge number of bottle tops until they were wanted.

"Our house is a wooden one on stilts and wood is one of the best insulating materials there is. It is delightful to have all mod.cons., including 24 hour electricity but also because it is traditional colonial style, except for a flight of whimsy on the part of the architect, who added a gabled bay complete with diamond leaded windows which might have come straight out of Grimm's fairy tales. Downstairs we have an enormous L-shaped entrance hall cum living room cum dining room. The walls are thick, the windows barred and shuttered and the whole effort reminds us of the Arab style of architecture. The ground floor

consists of genuine red tiles instead of concrete ones. You only get this here in old houses and it is such a joy not to have to polish the floor with cardinal red and then find that we are walking it wherever else we go. From downstairs the staircase goes up to emerge into another more personal but just as large a sitting room, off which are two bedrooms, one over 30 feet long with 9 windows on three sides and a door to the balcony. The upstairs sitting room is designed on the good old colonial principle that coolness is desirable. No glass windows to attract the heat but wooden louver style shutters (with the louvers adjustable at different angles) from floor to ceiling that can be closed during the day and opened at night to let in the cool breeze if any.

"We are also lucky in having a pleasant garden (but it has difficult soil problems) in which we have dug a large lily pond (pink and white lilies that open at night and close by 11 a.m. and blue ones that open by day and close at night). To keep down mosquito larvae, we have put in some tilapia fingerlings. Tilapia grow rapidly and we're hoping to be able to eat them in about 8 months. What with the fish, our bananas, a rambutan (a type of hairy skinned lychee) and durian trees, we are on the way to being self-supporting. Unfortunately, it often appears that during the ripening season, young kampong Malays "happen" to be loitering near our boundary day and night and when there is the noise of a falling durian they are remarkably swift at purloining it!

"Close to us going uphill from our house is the pre-war, magnificent and large Government Resthouse, constructed of belian wood. It is a delightful building on stilts on the top of our hillock in the centre of the town and it also overlooks the padang, the war memorial and beyond that to the Anglican Cathedral, where we had been married and also looks across Rock Road (the road going south to Serian) to the Sarawak Museum, built by the Second Rajah as a copy of a Normandy town hall, which he had admired".

At Kuching, the Sarawak River was tidal and so all the roads on the flat land were fringed with monsoon drains from four to six feet deep and about a yard wide. Opposite the entrance to each shophouse there was a narrow stone bridge enabling people to walk from the road to the 'kaki lima' (which means "five foot way"). The terraces of shop-houses all had a covered five foot wide verandah, behind which were the shops and above which were the residential areas of each shophouse. These kaki limas acted as an arcade parallel to the road and gave shelter from the rain and the sun.

None of our family managed to fall into a monsoon ditch, except once, when we parked outside a general store that we often used. Three year old Alexa managed to fall in at low tide. Theoretically the tides kept the ditches clean of all the detritus that was thrown into them. Be that as it may, Bunty fished Alexa out of the ditch and she was not a nice girl to know. Covered in an unmentionable mixture of mud and God knows what, everything stopped as the audience watched the D.O. carrying the screaming child straight through the shop (watched by startled customers) to the busy kitchen area in the back where everything stopped, as the weeping Alexa was undressed and hosed down in front of the interested audience.

In the traditional Moslem calendar, the day begins at 6 p.m. The Moslem month of fasting, Ramadan, follows the movements of the moon and so each year it is at an

earlier period in the year than it was in the previous one until, in due course, it returns to where it started. At the start of Ramadan, the moon rises just above the horizon for a very short time and sinks out of sight again. In fact, no-one is supposed to start fasting until a religious leader has announced that he has seen the moon and if, on the expected day at 6 p.m. he has not seen it, then to everyone's consternation the people have to wait and hope that it will be seen the following day, when it rises a little higher in the sky. In olden times, the actual starting date could vary from village to village. This had its inconveniences. In Arabia the weather is not as fickle as in Britain or in Sarawak, when it can well be pouring with rain at 6 p.m. on the desired day and for several days thereafter. Obviously, it is desirable, if possible, that within a single country Ramadan should begin and end on the same day. When modern communications reached Sarawak, it was decided that the Mufti in Kuching would take a boat downriver and out to sea and, to help him to see the horizon even better, he would stand on the highest possible part of the boat that he could find and peer hopefully in the desired direction. There was great joy when he announced that he had seen the moon. There were times when no-one else on board had managed to see it but that did not matter as, after all, the moon appeared above the horizon for only such a very short time and, of course, the Mufti was higher up than other viewers. The boat would radio back to Kuching that the moon had been seen and the good news would then be passed on throughout the state. This meant that the public holiday at the end of the fasting period could be held on the day already published in the local calendars.

A strict Moslem will not swallow anything, even saliva, between sunrise and sunset. Exceptions can be made to this rule. Small children do not fast. Soldiers in battle and the sick or people whose job will be adversely affected can be excused, though to make up for this exemption the adults concerned are expected to give donations to charity. Even so, the very strict will not avail themselves of these exemptions. Bunty had a female patient in Kuala Lumpur who had cancer and it was essential that she should drink at least six pints of water a day to offset the adverse effects of the radio therapy treatment. Even though Bunty got a senior religious leader to tell her not to observe the fasting, she refused to listen to him. The treatment had to be discontinued and she eventually died.

Bunty and I took her parents, who were visiting us from UK, up the Bau Road on a trip to the neighbouring District H.Q. of Bau, where amongst other things we visited the gold mines. These had flourished well before the time of the First Rajah and at that time were run by Chinese who had come over the frontier from the Dutch Borneo town of Pontianak. With the peaceful conditions that followed the activities of Rajah James Brooke, the gold was exported down the Sungei Sarawak Kanan via Kuching and brought in valuable revenue to the infant state. The Chinese mined this gold using effective but rather primitive means. In due course, the B.C.L. opened up mining there using more modern means until the strata of easy extraction ran out, when the Company abandoned its mining activities and the Chinese, who were prepared to use the B.C.L's. tailings and seams with low amounts of gold in them, took over in a rather desultory manner.

Part of the process of extracting the gold from the rock containing it, included the cyanidation process involving mercury, whereby the mixture was heated in a crucible over a charcoal burner in a fierce heat for a week or more. We were astonished to see Chinese ingenuity most effectively combined with a British high standard of workman-

ship. The charcoal had been lit and kept going at the necessary fierce heat under the crucible of the gold mixture by means of using the wrong end of an ordinary household Hoover carpet cleaner, so that instead of sucking in air, the machine blew air into the fire, thus acting as a bellows. This machine, designed pre-1961 to be used for periods of not more than an hour a day, was functioning properly continuously for 24 hours a day for a week or so and had apparently been doing so periodically for several years before we were there to admire it! To our great pleasure, Bunty's wedding ring was made of Sarawak gold.

So far as our children were concerned, we led and continued to lead a very peripatetic life and we often wondered what the effect of continually changing our homes would have on them. When we arrived in Kuala Lumpur on holiday we put our luggage in our hotel room and went out to visit some Malay friends. While we had dinner with them, the children slept in a bedroom. Eventually we woke up the children, got into a car and returned to our hotel. As we got out of the car, Murdo looked around him and said "Ah! We are home now." I asked him why he called the hotel 'home' and he answered "Because our suitcases are there."

A Forest Reserve had been formed at Bako on the coast in the estuary of the Sarawak River. It was a delightful place as it had one of the rare sandy beaches of Sarawak's coastline. Near the beach was a tiny resthouse, where we stayed. Bunty and I went down to the beach after putting the children to bed and swam in the calm sea under a full moon. The sea was full of phosphorescence produced by plankton. As we splashed about this phosphorescence was running off our bodies. As we were going to bed, there was a great clatter in the outhouse behind the kitchen. I opened the kitchen door and a six foot monitor lizard scuttled off into the dark, having knocked off the dustbin lid. The Reserve had been formed to be a home to baby orang utans, who were collected by Tom Harrison when their mothers had been killed. He nurtured them in his Kuching garden until they were old enough to be sent to grow up in the Reserve. The staff there would encourage them to forage for themselves, but for a certain time food had to be provided for them. We were walking along the beach when we stopped, as we suddenly saw a four foot high adjutant stork standing on one leg about 30 yards away. Four year old Murdo (being a boy) couldn't leave well alone and rushed forward towards the stork making rude gestures. The bird watched him, then put down its raised leg. Its next action was to lower its head and stick out its long neck and its very long, sharp and vicious looking beak parallel to the ground and then suddenly with large wings flapping and its beak clapping open and shut, it charged Murdo. I have never seen a small boy abandon foolhardy bravery, as he quickly turned and showed a remarkable acceleration as he sprinted back to us. He reached us before the bird could attack him.

Sometimes we took the children to call on Tom and see the baby orang utans. There were Arthur, Cynthia and Baby George (who wore nappies). Alexa became less keen on going there after Cynthia lifted up her skirt to see what was underneath.

A Moslem charity had been formed to safeguard the protected Green Turtles by controlling the sale of turtle eggs. Off the coast of Lundu District (First Division) were two islands known as Talang Talang. These tiny paradises each had one palm fringed golden sandy beach (of the sort that turtles delight in), sloping steeply into the blue

aquamarine sea, beneath which was a coral reef with the usual complement of brightly coloured fish, anemones and sea weeds.



Turtle at Talang Talang 1953, raising her head and summoning the strength to begin the final few flips to cover her eggs.

Tom Harrisson had his turtle development project on Talang Talang Besar, the bigger of the two islands. No-one was allowed ashore on these islands except with Tom's permission. Especially when high tide coincides with nightfall, female turtles, weighing three to four hundred pounds, would lumber up the beaches pausing frequently to recover their breath and, with their flippers, dig a hole six inches wide and up to 18 inches deep in the sand above high water mark. Once a turtle has started to drop her leathery ping pong like eggs, nothing will deter her from continuing the process until her hundred or so eggs have been laid. Then surprisingly quickly she fills in the hole and no trace is left

of where she made it, except for the marks of her heavy body and flippers in the sand as, in a very tired condition, she makes her way back to the sea. In due course the baby turtles emerge and rush as fast as possible back to the sea. They are still soft skinned and a large number of them are caught by birds before reaching the sea, and a further number are consumed by fish lurking in the waters off the beach. A few escape and make off in the direction of the Indian Ocean and those who can survive long enough will return, many years later to the beach where they were born.

The bigger island had a simply furnished hut on it, where people could stay. Tom had built a large shallow pool filled with sea water. Near it, he had built a chicken wire fence on the beach, all of which were higher up the beach than turtles normally come. A couple of Malays also lived on the island. Their job was to watch the laying turtles and put a stick in the sand where each turtle had laid her eggs. Later they would dig up all the eggs that the turtles had laid and bury them again (less a proportion, which were handed over to the Trust to sell) in the sandy area surrounded by the fence. When the tiny turtles emerged and dashed desperately to the sea they were caught and put in the pool. In due course, when they had grown a bit and their shells were somewhat harder, they were collected in buckets and taken way out to sea to start their long journey. Each baby turtle had been labelled so that it could be recognized on its return.

You either like raw turtle eggs or you don't. For those who do, they are a real delicacy and fetch a good price. The Chinese consider they are effective aphrodisiacs. We used to take an egg, make a small hole in the top, put in a drop or two of Worcester Sauce and then suck out the raw egg.

The Governor had found in the Astana a set of the crested china that the Rajah used to use and this he had handed over to Tom, presuming that it would be put on display in the Museum. There was a row when, on a visit to Talang Talang, he found that Tom had taken this china to the hut to be used there by him and his friends.

From Talang Talang Sir Anthony, John Barcroft (the Financial Secretary) and I had seen manta rays leaping head first high out of the shallow water near Sematan and falling back into it on the flat side of their bodies, and in so doing making a big smacking sound. No-one knows why they do this but it may be to knock off unpleasant animal life that has clamped itself to the fish's body. We set off in an outboard to look more closely at them. Manta are the same shape as other rays but they are huge, reaching seven metres from wing tip to wing tip. We followed a manta which was clearly visible to us not far below the surface of the shallow water. It was swimming quite fast, though actually 'swimming' is scarcely the right word to use to describe its method of propulsion in the water. It has a long but weak tail and, seen from above, seemed to be 'flying' through the water instead of using its tail as do most fish.

The Sarawak Club in Kuching is a fine building on top of a hill, surrounded by a golf course and with a magnificent view of Penrissen Mountain (1326m) on the Indonesian border. The club had a good swimming pool, where our children soon learnt to swim in the warm water.

A fancy dress party was laid on for charity at the Sarawak Club. After it had been going for a bit, everything stopped as two very large Ali Baba jars were carried in by several strong men and deposited on the floor and then out of them stepped two Vestal Virgins, dressed in very mini mini-skirts and white stockings and a white drapery over their chests. They proceeded to prance around as they indulged in ancient Greek dancing. One looked remarkably like the Governor, Sir Anthony Abell, and the other resembled Nancy Blake, an Australian Secretariat girl.

On another occasion Buntty and I went to the St. Andrew's dinner dance at the club. In the hot, damp tropics, Scottish dancing should not be indulged in, unless the object is to emulate being in a Turkish bath, as this vigorous exercise leads to the discharge of an inordinate amount of perspiration followed by an irresistible desire to have a long drink, which immediately re-appears as sweat, making one's clothes very obviously cling to one's body. I was due to wear my kilt and carry in the Haggis. Dinner was delayed because, when the club's Malay cooks were due to start cooking the haggises, they decided that they were pork and so could not be touched. A disastrous situation was averted by bringing in the much respected and trusted Chief Secretary himself, a former Rajah's officer and a Scot called Aikman. The cooks were prepared to accept his word.

Doctor Marjoribanks, a Rajah's officer who had married locally and retired in Kuching, used to come to the club. He used to be a great rugby player but by now had put on a considerable amount of weight. When he met new people and the conversation turned to his earlier life, he told the newcomer that he still had remarkably effective muscles and to show this, the Doctor would bend down and invite the newcomer to kick him as hard as he liked. Although often embarrassed, the newcomer would do as he had been told and the Doctor, very pleased with himself, would walk away unhurt, while the newcomer was left nursing a very sore foot and leg as though he had kicked a brick wall!

I found it sad how many government and business expatriates came to Kuching and made little effort to get to know the country, the language or meet the local people, as their routine was limited to moving between their home, the office, the western orientated cold storage food shop and the Sarawak Club. Although eligible to join the club, not many Sarawakians did so. Thus the social intercourse of these people was largely limited to gossiping, drinking and playing bridge within the same small circle of expatriates and they knew next to nothing worthwhile about Sarawak and its people.

Alec Bisset was Director of Music of the Sarawak Constabulary Band and spoke with an educated Scottish accent. He lived 'across river' (i.e. on the same side of the Sarawak River as was the Astana), which meant that he had to be paddled across river if he wished to go into the town. The Constabulary H.Q. was, however, also 'across river'. One morning, as Alec was setting off to go to his office, his wife said "For our party this evening I would like a leg of lamb. Please order one from the cold storage shop to be here before lunch." Alec ordered a 'leg o' lamb' and got on with his work. When he got home for lunch the leg of lamb had not arrived and his wife was getting anxious. By 2 p.m. he was back in his office, contacted the cold storage and was told that the order was on its way and was going by the bridge. This surprised him as the first bridge over the Sarawak River was a good distance upstream and meant a journey of several miles for the packet to reach him. However, he was busy and did not enquire why the usual cross river ferrying paddle perahu had not been used. About 2.15 p.m., Maggie Bisset was startled when two men struggled up the drive with a radiogram. They were annoyed when she refused to accept it and she was even more annoyed that as yet she had nothing to give her guests. To the Chinese clerk, a message from the Director of Music himself, spoken with a Scottish accent and using the words 'leg-o-lam' could only conjure up one picture and that was a 'radiogram'!

William Nais was a Land Dayak, who had been appointed a Native Officer in 1946 and, in 1960 became an Administrative Officer. When he returned from a trip to London, I asked him how he managed to find his way about. To my surprise he said he preferred bus travel to the underground. He found out what was the number of the necessary bus and, once on it, he took out his compass and, if it was not going roughly in the right direction, he got out, crossed the road and took the same bus going in the opposite direction.

The Director of Education, Murray Dickson, had a brother Alec who started up the Voluntary Service Overseas. Because of this relationship, it was Sarawak that received the first ever batch of British Volunteer Students Overseas. They were mostly keen school leavers, willing to do a job helping out in an under developed country for a year or so before going on for training in their chosen career or going to university. They knew that the job they would be doing should have been done by a local Sarawakian, but as yet none was available to do it. They knew that the conditions of work would often seem strange and be, by their standards primitive, and that their pay would be that of a local and with no expatriate allowance. They were carefully chosen for their ability to mix well with people of all kinds and for their willingness to adapt British expertise to suit Sarawak's conditions. They expected to be guided in carrying out their relatively junior posts by more senior officers, who would sometimes be a Sarawakian. They were warned that they would often be working in an area where they were the only person of their race. Perhaps the main characteristic that was sought by the selectors was a well-balanced personality, good common sense and a willingness, if need be, to take on the

responsibility of managing their post on their own, imbued by a belief that their behaviour should be that of any truly Christian gentleman. Many of them came from independent schools, but by no means all. I came across an excellent V.S.O. who, having left school at 14, became a carpenter. He got on well with his colleagues, his pupils and the people he met in the town of Miri where he had been appointed as an instructor in a technical school and he was doing a first class job. The volunteers received the minimum of training in what Sarawak was like and certainly no long induction course. They were asked if they had any questions and then told not to worry as it would all sort itself out in the end. They were a cheerful lot and if they had any, worries, they kept them to themselves and prepared to cope with what would be demanded of them. They arrived, were told what to do and then left to go to the ulu and sink or swim. The selecting team were so good that they all swam and very well too! Many found that, after a pitifully short period with their boss to guide them, he would come in one day and say "Well, I am so glad you are here. I have long been due to go on leave and now that you have arrived, I will take it. In a week's time I'm off. I will start handing over to you now." Some volunteers were sponsored by the Anglican Church to help in their schools.

Sometime after the arrival of the first V.S.Os., the American Peace Corps and Columbo Plan equivalent of V.S.Os from such countries as Canada and New Zealand arrived in Sarawak. The bumbling British method of selecting candidates and running the scheme on a shoestring couldn't have been a greater contrast than was the way the Americans worked, who had plenty of cash to run the scheme and train the candidates. First of all a well-trained and charming married couple (Joe and Gay Fox) arrived in Kuching and set up a H.Q. there. They were an excellent choice and soon fitted in very well into the Sarawak scene. They sensibly travelled all over the country and got to know the bosses of the young men and women who would eventually arrive to start their jobs.

The Peace Corps personnel were usually a few years older than the V.S.Os. They had undergone a much more thorough selection procedure and then been sent on a long induction course to learn a lot about living and behaving in strange environments and, above all, how to self-analyse themselves. When they reached Kuching, they had a further short period of training. By the time they were sent away to their various jobs they were a very serious lot of people who were terribly worried about how they would cope with all the pitfalls that were awaiting them. In the Sarawak Club I met a Canadian woman sent out under the Columbo Plan to the Teachers Training College. She asked me about what training I had had before coming out to Sarawak and was quite astonished when I told her "None, except that I successfully survived living in India and Burma as a soldier for five years". She then surprised me by pointing out that, before being finally accepted for the Sarawak post, she had had to undergo a psychology/psychiatric course. She had by now been in Sarawak a few weeks and asked my advice on two matters that worried her terribly. She had been told that whatever happened she must not 'go native' nor must she offend the locals by failing to join in with their activities. She had also been warned how easy it was to succumb to the demon 'drink' and as a result she had played safe and gone teetotal. She did admit noticing that the locals seemed more at ease with expatriates, who behaved in the same way as their hosts, including accepting all that was offered them. She also admitted regretting at having to refuse some of the food offered to her as she couldn't be sure that it met her standards of hygiene. She thoroughly disapproved of Bunty and me because we wore sarongs of an evening when travelling in the ulu and often when in our own house. The

fact that this garb was by far the most comfortable to wear in the climate of Sarawak was insufficient reason for us to go so native. At the end of our conversation the poor woman was even more introspectively worried about whether her behaviour was too relaxed or not relaxed enough. She didn't last long in Sarawak.

Perhaps it was due to the difference in selection and training between the V.S.Os. and Peace Corps personnel in the field that, after only a few months in the job, a Peace Corps man would signal from Fifth Division that he must return to Kuching at once because he had self-analysed himself and felt that he might be going round the bend or because he was unsure whether he was not going too native. Not a single V.S.O., that I can recall, ever asked to return to Kuching for rest and recuperation or ever talked about the problems of going or not going native. If they self-analysed themselves, which I doubt, they never mentioned it.

The best Peace Corps helper in Sarawak was a grandmother, whose family was off her hands, and she felt she wanted to do something worthwhile. She was a sensible, practical 'Mum' and she viewed a lot of the facts told her on her course with a healthy scepticism. The Peace Corps had found an inspired post for her as house mistress of a government boarding school at Mukah for secondary children from the ulu. She treated them as she had treated her own children and made sure that they washed behind their ears, changed their underclothes regularly and ate up their food. She was a strict but kind disciplinarian. The children treated her as their temporary mother and used to take their worries to her. She listened, would give advice and, where necessary, would open her arms, clasp the pupil to her breast and say "Put your head on my shoulder, have a good cry and tell me all about it".

I was asked to give a 30 minute talk to a new intake of Peace Corps on how to fit in the ulu (see Appendix B). I was rewarded by a dead silent audience and then by a flood of questions. At the end I was told that this one session with me was of much more use to them than their long induction course.

One of the stories I mentioned to them was how I had been upset on first arrival in the ulu to find that some of the people there never thanked me for anything I had offered them. The Malays and Chinese did but not the upriver peoples. Indeed, if the upriver people did thank you, they did so with Malay words as there was no equivalent in their own language. In the ulu when a person made a normal everyday offer, it was hoped that it would not be refused. If it was accepted, that was agreeable evidence that your offer was appreciated and no further action was expected. Many white people going first to the ulu used to cause offence there by refusing food, a drink, a cigarette or a gift by saying, "No thank you". This was not understood. The correct way of refusing an offer was to touch the article offered (thereby conveying that you were not disdaining it), while at the same time making a remark showing appreciation of the offer. If you were sitting down on the floor, you could refuse an offer, without causing offence, by stretching your hand out towards it as though you were trying to reach it to touch it.

On one occasion Penghulu Jok Ngau held out his hand to help Bunty move safely from a slippery rock on the edge of a rushing river into a rocking perahu. She said "Thank you" in Malay. The Penghulu paused surprised and then said "Why did you say 'Thank you?'" and was quite astonished when she said that she was showing that she appreciated his kind and helpful gesture.

For a Governor, Resident or D.O., travelling together with his underlings in the constricted space of a small boat, walking side by side or in single file through swamps and up and down mountains and, above all, relaxing in the informal atmosphere of ulu life is a wonderful opportunity for him to get to know the staff accompanying him and for them to get to know him. On one occasion, travelling overland with a Eurasian S.A.O., aged about 22, I asked him whether he had considered matrimony. He said that he was madly in love with a Chinese girl, who was beautiful and who had been very well educated at a mission school, but he could not ask her to marry him as his family (and notably his two sisters) would look down on her and be beastly to her. It appeared that he had one grandfather who had been a Resident and another who had been the Manager of the Borneo Company and he would be considered to have let down the family by marrying a Chinese. The fact that his two sisters were not so well educated as the Chinese girl was immaterial! I doubt if I would have found out about this S.A.O.'s dilemma if I only saw him during office hours.

We laid on a barbecue for people of all races. I guess that several of the male locals had scarcely ever done any cooking, so it was interesting to see their reactions when told by Bunty that on this occasion, wives were to have a rest from providing meals. To cope with the Moslems, we had a separate barbecue area for them, where pork would not be available. Bunty saw a high ranking Malay at the non-Moslem brazier with bacon and a pork sausage, so she rushed over to him saying "Wan, Wan, these are pork meat. Over there is the cooking area for Moslems". He answered that in England he had got used to eating pork and liked it. It was a long time since he had had any and he wasn't going to miss the present opportunity. At the same party she happened to be following our houseboy, Bujang, into the house just after he had collected an empty tumbler from the Tuan Mufti. She was horrified to see Bujang pour in a goodly dollop of gin and then fill up with orange juice. Bujang smiled at her naivety and said that "Surely you know that the Mufti likes his noggin and for appearance's sake, he drinks gin because it is the same colour as water."

The Resident, Graham Lloyd-Thomas, gave a multi-national party. His wife, Joan, was a dab hand at making gin prunes and a plateful of these highly alcoholic prunes was laid out amongst the other goodies. She suddenly noticed that a very respected Malay haji, who never touched alcohol, was enjoying these prunes and had taken several, one after another. She felt that by then it was a bit late to tell him what it was he had been eating, however she led him away to another part of the room. He told her he had never enjoyed prunes so much and would Joan please tell his wife how to produce them!

The taste of cold storage meat at Kuching was such that many people suspected its journey from Australia or U.K. had not been trouble free. It was likely that, on arrival in Singapore, the meat had been partly defrosted before reaching cold storage there and that the same had happened on transfer from the Singapore cold storage to the boat for Sarawak, and perhaps again for a short period from the boat to the Kuching cold storage. Through her father during his trip from Australia to Sarawak, Bunty had made contact with a butcher in Sydney who, whenever a tramp steamer left for Sarawak, would put a dozen veal kidneys (unobtainable in Kuching) on the boat and send a letter airmail giving details of what he had done so that Bunty could go to the quayside and take her meat directly home. On one occasion, she got a letter (which had been despatched after the boat had left) saying he was sorry that no veal kidneys were available so he had sent a dozen ox kidneys instead. Bunty was alarmed at having to

deal with 14 lbs of kidneys. The children were not keen on offal at the best of times and were soon fed up with frequent kidney and steak pies instead of the usual steak and kidney version. Bunty went through each of her large number of cookery books for recipes that would suggest how to use up large quantities of kidney. We had kidneys grilled, fried, stewed in beer, marinated in sherry, as kebabs and done in French, Italian and Spanish styles. It was made quite clear to us that the children were not prepared to accept ox kidney as their staple diet!

Amongst the Chinese it was not always easy to identify who was married to whom. A Chinese man or woman had a family name which came first and was followed by, usually, two personal names. If they were Christian, they had a personal Christian name prefixing the family name. Thus Joan Lim Bee Yiang's family name was Lim. She would be used to being called either 'Joan' or 'Bee Yiang' by people who knew her well. Traditionally, when she married, she kept her maiden name, which didn't make it easy to know who was her husband. In English speaking circles, if Joan Lim Bee Yiang married Henry Yong Chan Wei, she could be known as Mrs. Yong or Madam Lim. Sarawak never had to face up to the difficulties (as did the Hong Kong Government) of what should be the title of the three wives (one principal and two secondary ones) of a Chinese, when he was given a title and brought all three with him to his investiture.

I set out on a four day walking trip to the Land Dayak villages close to the Indonesian border. Surprisingly such trips were more strenuous than trips in the far ulu Kelabit area as the villages (for ancient defence reasons) were built near the tops of small but very steep sided mountains. Although some tracks went through virgin jungle, which offered shade, most of them traversed secondary jungle which was quite successful at keeping away any cooling winds but quite ineffectual at providing any shade from the tropical sun. When walking across lalang grass covered hills, one had the extra discomfort of dazzling glare. Furthermore, in Kuching District one started walking uphill at close to sea level while in the ulu Rejang or ulu Baram one might start walking at a cooler 4,000 feet. Before leaving on one journey I happened to mention to Bunty that in the across river Malay kampongs there was the usual break out of diarrhoea and vomiting tummy troubles that often seemed to occur at this time of the year and doubtless it would, as usual, die down quickly.

I hadn't been gone two hours when Bunty received a telephone call to say that cholera had broken out and an appeal was being made to all trained nurses to turn up at the godown beside the river, and join a conveyor belt there of nurses giving injections to the whole population of Kuching. The first thing Bunty did was to inject our children and our staff. She and various other local and expatriate trained nurses had an exhausting time coping, from early morn till dusk with the rush. The news that cholera had broken out went round the town in a remarkably short time and in an equally short time the Chinese part of the population were queuing up to be injected. The Malays were, at first, very suspicious of having a needle stuck into them, but eventually they too joined the queue. There were, of course, no disposable needles at that time and it says much for the efficiency of the nurses that the work of injecting went on steadily and quickly, but so did the putting of used needles into boiling water and getting them out again for re-use. Remarkably, no-one later complained of getting an infection.

It was long pre-war that Sarawak had last had a cholera epidemic. The source of the infection this time was found to be holy water brought back in a bottle by a pilgrim who

had gone to Mecca. Some people wondered whether the annual diarrhoea and vomiting in the past had, in fact, been a mild attack of cholera. Be that as it may, it was estimated that 75,000 people had been injected in three days in Kuching and the surrounding countryside and the Medical and Health Department deserved great praise for speedily and very effectively containing this epidemic.

On Friday, 7<sup>th</sup> December, 1962, Bunty and I were invited to a dinner dance by the Sarawak Constabulary and at 7 p.m. that evening we were 'phoned up to be told that an emergency had occurred and the dance was off. It was not till next day that we heard that the Brunei Rebellion (with ramifications in Sarawak) had broken out. A year later on, I was able to spend time in Limbang interviewing Kedayan prisoners, and so I will postpone my comments on this rebellion, the concomitant Indonesian and Communist 'Confrontation', and on how the Brunei Rebellion hastened the formation of Malaysia.

One of the consequences of the outbreak of the Brunei Rebellion, the subsequent Indonesian Confrontation and the increasing activity of the Chinese Communists was that the fence sitters in Sarawak and the 'Couldn't-care-lessers-about-politics' were jolted into taking an interest in the development of Sarawak's future. Government took precautions and detained some known active Communists. In my capacity as a member of the Prison Visiting Board on a routine visit, I was unexpectedly faced with the social problem of how to greet an inmate, who had been a colleague of mine, when we had been Sibu councillors together. "How nice to see you here", while true, seemed inappropriate. "Are you putting on weight, while holidaying here?" might sound rather flippant. I ended by saying "Well, well, well" while shaking hands with him.



Murdo and Alexa at the Sarawak Club,  
August 1962

Murdo (aged 4) and Alexa (3) were getting on fine after frequently enjoying themselves in the swimming pool. Both had survived their first and most important lesson, which was to be brave and put their head under the water without holding on to their nose. It wasn't long after this that Murdo could launch himself from the side and do the crawl with his nose under the water until his breath gave out. He would then raise his head, take a quick deep breath before his legs had time to sink and carry on. Alexa would launch herself from the side, with her ring on, and swim to us waiting to lift her up

about five yards away from the side. On one occasion, I told Alexa to stop swimming and on no account come into the pool, and I got on with enjoying my swim. Suddenly, I saw Bunty waving at me from the far end of the pool. This was unlike her but I waved back. Then she swam her fastest (in her case far from fast) breast stroke towards me, stopped and waived. Rather puzzled at this sudden sign of affection, I again waved back. I could she was saying something but with the noise going on couldn't hear what. Then she pointed and I became mobile, as I looked behind me and saw Alexa about three yards away in the pool. The ring had moved to around her hips and her head was below water and her legs kicking wildly! Interestingly enough, though the pool was full of people, not one of them had noticed Alexa's accident.

Sarawak's Rajah Charles Brooke Settlement and Memorial Hospital for lepers had been erected about 13 miles from Kuching beside the Serian Road and the D.O. Kuching was head of the visiting board. The father-in-law of our Land Dayak amah, Gina, was a patient there. The doctors, having assured me that most of the patients were not contagious (and, in any case, leprosy is not passed on all that easily), asked if I would take Gina, Bunty and the children, when I went on a visit there, and we made a point of us all shaking hands with non-infectious patients.

It is strange how opposites sometimes get on so well together. We had arranged a mixed party, including Miss Duncombe, the very capable and erudite headmistress of the Anglican girls' school. Small talk was not her forte. She dressed dowdily with her hair drawn back tightly into a small bun. Clearly she would disapprove of swearing or lewd stories. At the last moment, Tom Harrisson telephoned that a mutual Orang Ulu friend was in town and would like to see us, so we invited them to the party. Tom had many good points but in no way could we imagine Miss Duncombe and Tom having anything in common and we determined to ensure that they should be kept apart. We failed. I suddenly saw Tom sitting at her feet and gazing up at her as he oozed charm and behaving in anything but his normal way. Somehow, she too had altered. She welcomed his attentions, her eyes sparkled and she was clearly attracted by him. They spent the whole evening together and had succeeded in bringing out the best of each other!

Fanny Storr had been a missionary in Korea and was told that she could not go back there as there was no available suitable person to chaperone her when alone amongst the locals. So she was sent to Padawan, an ulu Land Dayak village in Kuching District, as an Anglican missionary cum nurse. She was the only white person there and in inclement weather was completely cut off from Kuching and, of course, there was no one there to chaperone her! She was tall, lanky, very fit and very capable. She lived in a small hut near the village school and toured the Land Dayak villages in her area regularly. This was an extremely exhausting business as the villages were mostly perched on the top of very steep sided mountains and the paths between them were often devoid of shade. She travelled by herself, carrying her personal and her medical possessions on her back. Sarawak owes a great debt to such expatriates as Fanny, who devoted themselves to doing good in the ulu and who made countless friends there.

After Indonesian Confrontation had started, British Army troops used to patrol the Land Dayak areas near the watershed with Indonesia. A British patrol arrived at a village (and found Fanny in it issuing out medicines) and set off to the next village. Exhausted, they stopped half way for a rest and were mortified when Fanny, who had left the village half an hour after them, strode past them without stopping and, when they reached the next village and were looking forward to another rest, she had nearly finished her work there and was ready to move on!

I was sound asleep in my bed at Rowlands Hill, when I was awoken by Bunty shaking me and telling me in a quiet conspiratorial voice that I was not to argue or ask questions but to get out of bed, put on my ankle high mosquito boots and follow her. Still not knowing what it was all about and wondering what awful problem I would be faced with, I did as I was bid, and, as we crept downstairs, I nearly crashed down when my leather soles slipped on the highly polished belian steps. I could hear some snuffling and

whining from Olga and then I saw that she was dancing around on the tiled floor keeping a respectful distance from a big black scorpion. I asked Bunty why she had troubled to wake me and the answer naturally was to kill the scorpion. I then asked her why she had not picked up a chair, held it over the scorpion and put a leg of the chair on its back instead of waking me.

While in Kuching, I used to take the Straits Times and noted how the wording of death notices was often so strangely different from what one has become used to in The Daily Telegraph or The Times. Doubtless, the grief felt at the final departure of a loved one is as genuine in Britain as in Singapore, whatever the wording used. The following two examples illustrate what I mean.

"LATE MRS TAN GUAN KEE (nee Agnes Tay Sai Kim) age 63, passed away peacefully in 1st Class Ward, General Hospital, Johore Bahru on 27-8-62 at 3.10 p.m. after a long illness. She left behind 7 sons:- Tan Teck Seng, Teck Ann, Teck Yong, Teck Joo, Teck Wang, Teck Oheng, Teck Yam. 2 daughters:- Mary Tan, Lucy Tan. 5 daughters-in-law, 40 grandchildren, 1 adopted son, 2 adopted daughters to mourn her loss. Due to Merdeka [Independence] Celebrations on 31-8-62, funeral was on 29-8-62. The grandest funeral in Muar. Beautiful hearse rented from Singapore left 95, Jalan Arab at 3.10 p.m. Very long procession. All on foot for 2 miles. The mourners wore white socks only [sic] followed behind the hearse. Late Mrs Tan was a great ideal woman, kind friendly, loved. Admired by every-one managed educated all children well after her husband's death. Deeply regretted."

and

"IN MEMORIAM

NINTH MOON NINTH, 1958, era decaying inchoate, Madam Lee Goon Neo (72) divinely flew to Golden Reincarnation Space. Assunder, in dreams we meet always, seance, talkie. This evil-smelling earth, dirt, dust full, inhabits beasts, devils, sooner inflame, better. Fond memory, refrain: "Di segala dunia, chari, pileh, padu, dimana sama bonda sa'orang" [Translation from Malay - In the whole world, seek, select, united, wherever the same mother is one person]. Ma, Omi Thor Futt (Pang Nai Cheng)"

In February 1963 we went on leave. We took in cash the value of our return first class P&O passage entitlement between Singapore and Britain and then bought a round the world Economy Class air ticket travelling eastwards from Singapore. The total was £90 above our entitlement. When we set out Murdo was aged four and Alexa was three.

Our route started at Singapore by flying to Perth. Amongst other visits there, we had lunch with Philip Jacks (now a retired Resident from Sarawak) and his wife Phyl. They had no children and we looked with alarm at the several spindly legged antique tables with huge Ming vases on them – just waiting to be toppled over by a slight inadvertent knock. We were in the garden having pre-lunch drinks. The children said that they wanted water. "No-one can have just water in my house." said Phyl and produced two tumblers of lemon squash. While Bunty and Phyl were talking I noticed that the children appeared not to have started their drinks. "Come on! Drink up!" I whispered to them. They both said that they didn't like the drink. I whispered, "Nonsense. It's rude not to

drink what you have been given." Murdo screwed up his face, took a deep breath and drained the tumbler at one go with a look of great distaste on his face. Alexa was made of sterner character than her brother and began to cry. I then whispered to her that I would drink some of it for her, took a big swig and then called out "Phyl! This is neat gin." Gordon gin bottles are a very good shape to fit into fridges and people use them for holding chilled water there till required. Phyl was mortified that she had put a gin bottle with water in it in the drinks cupboard and a gin bottle with gin in it in the fridge. Then she said "Oh my God! Yesterday I must have given the Air Vice Marshal water and tonic instead of gin and tonic". Anyway, Murdo suddenly took off, jumped up, swung himself around the rotary hoist and then rushed into the house running amongst the spindly tables, and then mercifully fell asleep. And he still enjoys a gin.

After Perth we flew to Adelaide and Mount Gambier, where we were met by an ex-military friend and taken by car to stay with him on his sheep farm at Caramut, Victoria, (where a great uncle of mine had been killed gold digging in the previous century). He took us to Melbourne. On a Friday at 5 p.m. outside Flinders Street railway station during the mad start of the weekend rush to get home, we went into a nearby cafe and then found Murdo was missing. We just dumped our luggage at a table, shouted to three-year old Alexa to look after it and rushed out of the cafe with me turning right and Bunty to the left. I found Murdo standing perfectly still on the pavement a few hundred yards away, just as we had told our children to do in such a circumstance. Rush hour crowds were swirling past him and taking no notice of a small distraught boy saying "Where is my Mummy and Daddy?" I took him back to the cafe to find a weeping Bunty arriving from the other direction. That evening we took the ferry to Launceston, where we were met by Bunty's cousins and taken to Hobart. We next flew to Sydney, on to Christchurch and then to Wellington, from where we took the train to stay with old friends at Napier. Our next plane journey took us to Auckland, Fiji, Hawaii, Vancouver, Montreal and London. So far we had NOT missed a single connection or had any sickness whatsoever! A week after reaching our home, the children developed a virulent form of chicken pox, presumably caught in New Zealand. Our return trip was by Copenhagen to Stockholm, where we stayed with an old friend, a few days in Moscow and then on to Delhi, Agra, Calcutta and so back to Singapore. Alexa's fourth birthday occurred in Moscow, but as we couldn't find such a thing as a birthday cake, 'Madam' refused to be 4 and we had to send a telegram to Kuching to have a birthday cake ready for us before she accepted her new age.

Despite their young ages our children were not always a handicap to us and indeed could be a valuable asset during our travelling. As we had to carry both winter and summer clothes around with us, our luggage allocation was quite inadequate for our purposes. We were unable to book seats in many of the planes that we took, so, when we assembled at the gate to go to the plane, Bunty and I were lumbered with a lot of cabin luggage, and also a strong clothes hanger each on which were such items as a dress or two or a suit in a plastic clothes bag and also a light and a heavy overcoat. We were in no position to run to the front of the queue to get into the plane. When word came to join the plane, Murdo and Alexa, with a small bag each, had been strategically placed near the front of the gate and so could set off like greased lightning and arrive first and say to the startled air hostess "Mummy and Daddy have told us to ask you if we may please have four seats in a row in the non-smoking area?". Without unduly exerting ourselves, we would arrive to find everything nicely arranged for us as we asked the air hostess if she could please hang up our clothes hangers for the journey!

## **17 – SOME SARAWAK DEVELOPMENTS 1947 TO 1965**

This point in my narrative is as good as any other for me to interrupt my chronological story and describe aspects of various events and developments, without knowledge of which, it could be difficult for the reader to follow the changes taking place in Sarawak during my time there. Some of these processes started as early as 1946 and were still incomplete when I left Sarawak in 1965. Others were started and completed during my 18 years there.

### **A Summary of the Development of Education**

I have chosen to put 'EDUCATION' first as, until the new Colony of Sarawak had produced a nucleus of suitably educated people, the country would be unable to run itself and all aspects of development would continue to have to be run by expatriates, as was the case in the early Colonial Government years.

It is important that later generations should realise what was the disarray and the appalling country-wide standard of education in Sarawak when the Colonial Government took over in late 1946, so that those generations can all the more appreciate what were the great advances that had been made by the time Sarawak gained its independence within Malaysia in 1963 – a mere 17 years later.

The Sarawak Government and people owe a great debt of gratitude to the wise decisions made by the expatriate Directors of Education and their staffs in solving the problem of how, in as short a time as possible, to provide locally educated people for all sorts of jobs in and out of Government, when, at the take-over by the Colonial Government there was only a pitiful number of schools, very few local teachers and not one local person qualified to instruct in a brand new teachers' training college, added to which Sarawak had very little money available in the Treasury. Thanks are also due to the British Government who passed the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts, which provided considerable funds for the British colonies, in the case of Sarawak (as a result of the war time destruction) getting more than its fair share of money for financing various development schemes. Sarawak also benefited immensely from countries such as Australia, Canada and New Zealand, who provided help under the Colombo Plan.

The Rajahs had provided funds for a few primary Malay schools in the bigger centres of population, with the main emphasis being on religious teaching. The Rajahs were grateful to those Christian missions that provided schools for people of all races and religions, with English as the medium of instruction, but these schools were woefully few in number and did not go beyond secondary education. The Chinese communities provided primary and a few secondary schools with the medium of instruction being the Chinese dialect of the parent community. There was little Government control over how and what they taught, and certainly within these schools there was little attempt to integrate the Chinese with the other races of Sarawak. They did not teach the Malay language and their standard of English teaching was quite inadequate. When the Rajahs looked at the products of schools in other colonies of the world, they were not always favourably impressed with the results and felt that the ulu natives for the time being would be happier carrying on their existing ways of life, rather than feeling dissatisfied with their lives as a result of being launched into the world only semi-educated.

The Japanese wished to abolish the teaching of English in schools and had destroyed all the teaching manuals that they could lay their hands on. When the war ended, the Government, the Missions and other bodies had to start virtually from scratch. There was no Sarawakian, when the Colonial Government took over, who had a good technical qualification or university degree, except for one Hokkien Chinese, who had a qualification in poultry rearing. Nearly all the indigenous population were illiterate.

One of the first steps was to convert the Batu Lintang Japanese internment and prisoner of war camps (which did at least have primitive buildings), into a Teachers' Training Centre, manned by expatriates and with English as its medium of education. It was decided that priority should be given to those ulu communities that showed that they wanted a school and in such cases both sexes were encouraged to attend. The problem of providing schools for the people living in scattered longhouses or villages, with perhaps only eight or even fifteen children of primary age in each village, is obvious. Age six was reckoned to be the right time to start a primary education. As there was no such thing as a register of births for most of the people of Sarawak and parents had little idea how old their children were, it was decided that, when a child could put an arm over the top of its head and touch its ear on the other side of its head, then it was aged six!

Somehow or other, after only a year and a half of Colonial rule, the number of non-Malay natives attending school was already four times the figure for 1940 – an impressive improvement, even if four times a small figure does not amount to a lot. By 1955 there were 576 schools with nearly 60,000 pupils, though 60% of these were Chinese. Most of these schools were primary standard. The Cobbold Commission produced figures showing that in 1960 (only 14 years after Sarawak became a Colony) out of a total population of 492,323 aged 10 years and over, 124,420 could read and write a letter. Of these, 77,198 were Chinese, 20,989 were Malays and 11,549 were Sea Dayaks.

Government was grateful to the Chinese communities for relieving it of the cost of running these schools. Gradually, however, it was realised that these schools were not only teaching very poor English, no Malay and scarcely any of the Chinese national language, but they were concentrating on the glories of Communist China, while doing nothing to make the Chinese think of themselves as Sarawakians. Added to which, they were not in any way helping to heal the differences that existed between Foochows, Hokkiens, Cantonese and other Chinese races. So gradually, Government began to offer grant aid to help teach better English and from 1954 onwards it was working steadily to provide ever more grant aid in return for more Government control of their curriculum. This met with some resistance from the Communist section of the population. Eventually, better late than never, Government largely succeeded in taking over control of Chinese schools and making young Chinese think of themselves as Sarawakians.

Later figures showed that there were seven Malays, one Melanau, one Land Dayak and 205 Chinese who had obtained a university or technical college qualification. These figures show up two problems. Firstly it was usually only the Chinese who had the income to pay for advanced education and secondly, if there was a vacancy in a university or college, it was unlikely that there was any non-Chinese with the necessary qualifications to fill it. I have seen it mentioned that the Malays were not as clever as the Chinese. Murray Dickson (when Director of Education) told me that in his opinion

there was no difference at all between Malay and Chinese males up to the age of 16 to 18, but that at that age a lot of Malays gave priority to sex over education while the Chinese, while certainly not ignoring the pleasures of sex, did, at that age, realise the long term importance of getting a good qualification. It should be said too, in this context, that by tradition a poor Chinese family would be more likely to struggle hard to help his child get a good education than would a poor Malay family and the Chinese child would make strong efforts not to let down his parents who had sacrificed so much to enable him to be educated. The first Native of Sarawak to get a Master's degree was Ahmat Zaidi, who joined the Education Department in 1955.

In 1954 the Government decided to introduce a huge increase in the cost of Trade Licences so as to produce revenue to meet the costs of education and social services. As most of the people who paid for a Trade Licence were Chinese, it was on that community that most of the burden fell. Between 1946 and 1962, according to Vernon L. Porritt, 513 Local Authority schools had been established.

By the time I left Sarawak in 1965, I could tell any visitor, who spoke none of the local languages, that he need have no worry, as however ulu the area he was in, by approaching a teenager it was highly likely that he would find that he had some knowledge of English.

My above statistics are mere bald figures, though they are valuable in illustrating the rapid way education advanced in Sarawak. However, I consider that my next Anecdote 'J.K. Wilson and Budu' illustrates in a much more sympathetic way than can statistics, the romance involved in helping to advance ulu peoples in a country like Sarawak.

### **J.K. Wilson**

J.K. Wilson, O.B.E., D.F.C., A.F.C., came to Sarawak as an Education Officer in 1949 and it was as a result of his activities that Bunty and I gave an evening meal to some young Sarawakians, which I shall mention hereafter.

On first meeting him at a drinks party he made little impact and one's immediate assumption would be what an unassuming – indeed boring – man he was; quite uninterested in the latest scandal and quite unable to take part in the light banter and superficial chitchat that is de rigueur at drinks parties as one floats from group to group. Only if you showed that you were interested in and knowledgeable about a matter that he considered important did he sparkle and, if you were duty bound, as for instance was the private secretary, to move from group to group, you would then find it extremely difficult to get away from him.

He was a tall, gaunt and serious Scotsman, who became an excellent principal of the Batu Lintang Teachers' Training College. He eventually developed a gut feeling that a lot of what he was imparting to the young trainees was inappropriate in the circumstances that reigned in ulu Sarawak. So he went on a tour of the country to see how his newly qualified teachers were getting on and his worst fears were confirmed. For instance, in communities where only the old were supposed to reach decisions, a young whippersnapper of an educated teacher did not go down well when he started telling the elders how to manage the community's affairs. In 1953 he resigned from his well-paid post in the Education Department and took a job as a local authority teacher at Budu in the ulu part of Saratok District amongst some of the poorest, most traditional

mindful and backward Ibans that one could find anywhere. They had resolutely refused to cooperate with Government in the setting up of a school for their longhouse. He settled down in this inauspicious setting, living in a locally made hut and on the lowest pay that a teacher could earn. It wasn't long before his evident sincerity, coupled with his ability to fit in with Iban life and his enthusiasm to help the locals to raise their standard of living, caused a turn-around amongst the people and he persuaded them not only to build a school but willingly to ensure that their children attended it regularly. John was nothing if not a stickler for discipline and efficiency (not usually considered typical attributes of ulu Ibans). He had a very clear idea of what was necessary to raise the standard of living of the people and he did not mince his words or gloss over the difficulties that had to be faced now, so that the Iban children in the longhouse would eventually be able to cope with the modern world. He had a steel-like determination that brooked no refusal as he dragged his Ibans into the 20th century.

Rural longhouse dwellers had a relationship (often quite friendly) with a shopkeeper in a local bazaar or with a boat hawker. These were nearly always Chinese and took their boats up and down a portion of a river, trading with the longhouse people. These hawkers would often live with a local girl and learnt the local native language. A boat hawker could spend several nights at a longhouse but was not allowed to have fixed premises in a Native Area. They kept accounts (in Chinese) of their trading activities with ulu individuals, showing who owed what to whom. The natives were not clued up about the undesirability of getting into debt. The normal picture therefore was of each native always being in debt, sometimes to a small extent but usually to a greater amount. What rubber the natives planted was of very poor quality and so not of much use as a cash crop, and, if the price of rubber was low, it was of no use at all. The natives often thought of their hawker or shopkeeper as being extortionate. In some cases, this may have been the case but these Chinese played a useful part in supplying the ulu peoples with goods. It must also be remembered that in time of economic recession the hawker's efforts to recover the sums owed him by the natives were like trying to get blood out of a stone, yet at the same time some other Chinese creditor in a big bazaar was pressing the hawker to pay up.

John Wilson knew that, to achieve any kind of improvement in the standard of living of the native peoples, it was necessary that they should first cease to be in debt to the local Chinese or Malay shop keeper or boat hawker. The Budu Sea-Dayaks had enough confidence in John for them to agree to set aside small sums of money or goods to help them to bypass the Chinese or Malay traders by setting up a co-operative society and ensuring that its rules were rigidly adhered to. In due course he asked Government to recruit on behalf of the people of Budu two suitably qualified assistants to help him in the running of Budu. Government asked the Crown Agents to help. This worthy organisation, with singularly little imagination, advertised repeatedly in the papers for someone with para-medical and handyman qualifications to go to Budu (a place that could not be found on any map of Sarawak) and work there on a tiny salary. It was not surprising that no-one applied to be considered for the vacancies.

John then, very unwillingly, took leave and, at his own expense, busied himself in Scotland in various ways to help Budu. After considering various establishments, he decided that Nairn Academy in northern Scotland was suitable for speedily turning ulu Iban children into well qualified citizens of the modern world. He advertised in the Glasgow papers for well-balanced young men who would be happy to help in the

socially rewarding job of raising the standards of living of tribesmen in Sarawak, in thoroughly primitive and unpleasant conditions and with only a tiny pay packet. Immediately, he found himself with a worthwhile number of applicants to enable him to select exactly the right kind of person he needed. (It turned out that both his choices were excellent. They were McBride for practical engineering and carpentry and Thwaites, who was a trained nurse). John had a healthy ability to disregard, when necessary, the slow, cumbersome and sometimes inefficient correct Government routine channels. He sent an airmail letter from Scotland to the Secretariat with 'by oversight' a seamail stamp on it, requesting permission to recruit the two men he needed. In his letter he said that if he had not had word to the contrary in ten days, he would assume that it was all right to go ahead and he would expect to be reimbursed for his necessary expenses when he reached Sarawak with them!

When he reached Kuching with his assistants, John braced himself for the inevitable ticking off for putting Government in such a position that it had to approve the employment of the two young men. John realised the necessity of keeping on good terms with Government; he had achieved what he wanted and so he had no difficulty in demurely (he was normally anything but demure) apologising and agreeing that he would not act in so cavalier a way in future. Sir Anthony Abell and Murray Dickson, the Director of Education, greatly admired John Wilson and his work. They realised that he had to be kept on a loose rein and allowed to carry on doing what he was so ably achieving in his own way, even if he trod on a lot of Government officers' toes in the process. There were few British officers in Sarawak who provided such an example of devotion, willingness to live in primitive conditions on low pay and achieve an immense amount of good through his far sightedness, persuasiveness and magnificent example of a righteous life. Despite the fact that he did not suffer fools or the insincere gladly, he was a born leader. If he had occasion to tick someone off, it would be quite clear why. Equally, he would praise a person for the way he had carried out some action. He was most unwilling to compromise if he thought that this would result in something less perfect than he intended. He kept himself physically very fit and always moved around at top speed.

I accompanied Sir Anthony when he decided to spend a night at Budu and then in the Entabai over the watershed into Kanowit District, to where John had extended his activities. It was really heart-warming to see what John had achieved in the realms of education, health, the co-operative movement and general improvement of the life of the people in the areas where he worked.

Most unfortunately, in 1965 John was mortified at being banished from Sarawak by the Sarawak Government – a body of politicians who never before had met such a character as John, and were quite incapable of comprehending the single minded and unbending type that was J.K. Wilson. They felt, quite erroneously, that any British person who was so popular and had so much influence locally, must be a danger to Government. John had achieved a lot due to a Government that realised that not everyone can work by the 'usual channels'. John posed no threat to the new Malaysian Government but his character was such that he was totally incapable of realising that, under a newly formed and touchy Malaysian Government, he ought to take extra care to ingratiate himself and make himself, his work and his methods known in an acceptable manner to those now in control. It never occurred to him that any Government, and especially a new and rather unsure one, might be suspicious of his motives; and

politicians are often unable to realise that a foreigner's popularity locally is no threat at all to the structure of the country or of its present Government. He felt he was still fit and still had much to achieve in his local area for what remained of his working life and was totally astonished that the State Government could not accept his unusual ways in the way the Colonial Government had done.

I liked John a lot and I know that he could be very kind and show sympathy but as he never divulged much about himself, and certainly never talked about his home background or about his time in the R.A.F., there were large gaps in what I knew about him. It was only after I left Sarawak that I learned about his war decorations. Born in 1913, he died in 1991 frail and living with his devoted dog in poverty in a caravan near Edinburgh.

John's achievements can be well illustrated by Bunt's and my contacts with some of his Budu boys.

In 1960, Bunt and I were in Scotland, visited Nairn and took four Budu boys out for lunch. John had selected them, when about eight years old and (like all the other children at Budu) completely illiterate. Not only had he subjected them to concentrated school work and traditional outdoor British games for four years but he had also done his best as far as possible to lessen the cultural shock that would occur when they found themselves in Nairn Academy. The Budu Co-operative Society had set money aside for their education in U.K. and the people and the boys themselves were well aware of the longhouse's financial sacrifice that had been made and the boys accepted that, when they returned to Budu, they must repay this by living there for at least four years.

The boys lived in Mrs MacTaggart's house and she was a good mother, caring for them, disciplining them and ensuring that they did not cast a clout till May was out! The headmaster told us that they fitted in very happily with the Scottish boys and shamed many of them by beating them scholastically and at games. It was certainly strange, when we went for a walk and one of these Iban boys looked over a garden hedge and said in a very well enunciated, clear, and well educated Highland accent "Och! There's a wee po-ond!" We were walking along the sea front and could not help walking in front of a lady seated on a bench and looking through her binoculars at the coast of Cromarty. The Dayak nearest to us took off his cap and said "Excuse us all, please, Madam." What British boy would have done that? In the hotel restaurant they showed far less embarrassment than would most British boys of their age. They studied the menu properly and asked us about dishes which were new to them. We were impressed that instead of all choosing the same dish, they each chose the dish that appealed to him most. In all, they were a great credit to J.K. Wilson, the headmaster and to Mrs MacTaggart.

One of the boys, Jawie Masing, was, later, present at the opening of the St. Lawrence seaway in Canada and was chosen to speak in French to the Queen on behalf of the youth of the Commonwealth! He went to Aberdeen University and returned to Budu as Dr. Jawie Masing. He later set up a G.P.'s. practice at Sarikei.

All these boys had a problem, and it was a problem that occurred with all the native students of Sarawak who were sent abroad to complete their education. They had risen

beyond the then standards of life and education of the people left behind in their villages or longhouses. On returning home, they were told that it was time they got married and very worthy but totally uneducated females were produced for them to choose from. The trouble was that these boys had seen (and approved of) the companionship of husbands and wives in the West, where the wives were of the same level of education as their husbands, and expected to play an equal part in deciding what sort of life they would lead together and how they would bring up their children. Nowhere in Sarawak, at that time, could they find a native local girl who even approached the standard of education that they were looking for. Jawie married a Chinese nurse. A Kayan chief's son married a Belgian. A Malay married a British Secretariat girl and another Malay, who later became State Secretary of Sarawak, found a Malay wife, but one who had been university educated in Malaya.

While I was D.O. Kuching, we heard that the son of Temonggong Oyong Lawai Jau of the Baram was passing through on his way for further education in Britain. We invited him and Jawie Masing for a traditional British meal, with all the cutlery laid out as it would be at a dinner party. All went well till the cheese stage, when the Kayan boy expressed great revulsion at a nice piece of stilton and said "I can't eat 'blachan orang puteh!'". Jawie answered this with "Och mon! You will get a lot of cheese to eat in Britain and you must learn to eat and like whatever food is put before you". He cut himself a large slice and obviously enjoyed it. Incidentally, 'blachan' is a strong smelling paste of sun dried prawns, which both Bunty and I enjoy, though I am ashamed at how many of my compatriots refuse to even try it. 'Orang puteh' means 'white men' or 'white man's'.

### **The Brunei Rebellion**

It was quite clear from the sudden cancellation of the Sarawak Constabulary ball on the 7<sup>th</sup> December 1962, that the Sarawak Government had had no inkling that the Kedayans of Brunei and of Fourth and Fifth Divisions of Sarawak were about to start an armed revolt. For that matter neither did the Brunei Government. It was well known to the Special Branch that the Sarawak Communists (99% of whom were Chinese) were propagating their philosophy, especially amongst the rural agriculturists, and were fomenting anti-Government trouble and just awaiting the right time to rise against the Government. It was also clear that Sukarno would sooner or later, with or without an excuse, try to annexe British Borneo – but that it should be the Kedayans, who were the first to move was startling.

While I was D.O. Kuching, all my information about the rebellion was second hand and I was largely unaffected by it. Immediately news got around of what was happening, Temonggong Jugah in Third Division rushed to the Resident in Sibu and Temonggong Oyong Lawai Jau (quite independently of Jugah) went to see the Resident Fourth Division in Miri offering respectively to raise immediately the Ibans in Third Division and the Kayans and Kenyahs in Fourth Division and attack the rebels. They were thanked but told to do nothing for the present. I was only affected in that I was told that a contingency plan was being worked out and I might have to rush off to organize things in the Baram. Bunty immediately became adamant that no-one would stop her and the children going there too, as she would feel far safer there or indeed with the Ibans than in Kuching! In the event, the contingency plan was not carried out, though Tom Harrisson did move into the Baram area.

If there is one message in my anecdotes that I have tried to convey, it is how Sarawak Government officers (Admin, Agriculture, Police, Lands and Surveys, Forestry, etc and of all races and ranks) regularly travelled over the whole country, especially to those areas where it would have been a great burden for the people to come to a Government H.Q.). They were always made very welcome by the people of all races and I would have considered that plans for an armed uprising could not have been kept secret for long. How then was it that the Kedayans managed successfully to effect such an armed uprising?

I have not mentioned the Kedayans before. They were a poor, Moslem farming community, speaking their own language (not understood by the other people of Sarawak) who had moved many generations ago from what is now Indonesia. They settled on farming land near the coast of Brunei and also spread out, into Sarawak, along the coasts of both the Fourth and Fifth Divisions westwards nearly as far as Bintulu and eastwards to Lawas District, so that the area they covered was shaped like a cigar parallel to the coast. The Kedayans in Sarawak were not numerous; they were a quiet people, not well educated, simple farmers apparently with no demands and lived within easy reach of Government offices. Government officers had plenty to do with acceding to the demands of the other races for improvements in their standards of living and so the self-effacing Kedayans were largely ignored. Government officers certainly never spent nights with them (nor indeed with other peoples who had easy access to District H.Q.), as they did with those who lived further away.

The Government of Sarawak in Kuching was in communication with the Government of Singapore by a secure 24 hour telephone, except that, by mutual agreement, if neither side expected to have to use the line at night, it was closed down at 6 p.m. This was the case on the night of the Constabulary ball!

Much of the information I record hereafter was obtained by talking to John Fisher and to Dick Morris residents in charge, respectively, in Miri in the Fourth Division and in Limbang in the Fifth Division when the rebellion broke out. The information that follows is what I found out while I was still D.O. Kuching. It is far from being a full or balanced record of what happened in Brunei. However, I was posted later to Limbang from where I was able to spend some time travelling the Kedayan areas and discuss the rebellion with the many rebel prisoners in the gaol there. This supplementary information is recorded in the chapter headed Resident Fifth Division.

There had been vague hints that some kind of trouble might be brewing, but these had been ignored. It turned out that over two years before the rebellion broke out, Indonesia had called some young Bruneis from Party Raayat Brunei (which was Sheik Azahari's party there) to Indonesia for them to be trained up and taught how to train other people once they had returned to Brunei. Party Raayat officials and leaders frequently visited the Kedayan and coastal Malay villages in the Fourth and Fifth Divisions of Sarawak. Eventually, certain Moslem Kedayan villages were selected for strong propaganda by Party Raayat leaders while the returned Indonesian men, bombarded them with exaggerated harangues on all the grievances (imaginary or real) that were upsetting them, of how the Brunei and Sarawak Governments were their enemies, of how easy it would be to have a successful rebellion, which would be supported by Indonesia and of how thereafter their lives would be gloriously happy.

Although Dick Morris had been only a month in Limbang, it is to his credit that he became worried enough to order an inspector of police to go to a nearby village and report on what was going on. The inspector called at the house of the village headman and, as it was raining, decided not to go anywhere else! Looking out of the window after lunch, the inspector was very surprised to see various men (and mostly young ones) in dribs and drabs all going in the same direction. He rather wondered what farmers were doing at this time of the day and in that unpleasant weather, but accepted the headman's not very plausible explanation that they were going to their farming lands. In fact the young men were going to a parade ground to practise drill and the use of fire arms. Later on, the inspector saw them all wandering back home again, but still drew no conclusions from this. He reported that there was nothing suspicious going on in the village.

Sometime after 6 p.m. on 7<sup>th</sup> December, 1962, John Fisher was at home and a Malay sidled in and told him that an armed uprising would start at midnight that night in Miri, Bekenu and Niah in Fourth Division. The Malay was very worried that he might be seen at the Residency and inconspicuously departed. John was able to inform all the police stations in his area and so they were ready to defend themselves when the rebellion started. A guard was put on the Residency as the capture of the Resident was one of the main objectives of the rebels. John was able to contact Kuching but too late for the Sarawak Government to contact the Government of Singapore on the official, confidential line about what was expected to happen until the next day. Eventually, it was realised that Civil Aviation had a non-confidential line to its opposite office in Singapore, which was asked to pass on a cautiously worded message to the Singapore authorities to be ready to provide help if necessary. The Brunei uprising began at 2 a.m. on 8<sup>th</sup> December.

It so happened that John Fisher's wife, Ruth, was the sister of Major General Sir Walter Walker, an ex-Gurkha, in Singapore. John managed to send him a telegram in clear, using the Sarawak Oilfields private system on the lines of "prepare your little friends to visit us here at the shortest notice or your sister could be in dire trouble". The General immediately ordered the Gurkhas to return to barracks and be prepared to move immediately.

The rebels moved against the police stations and the oilfields in Miri District but in all cases, except Bekenu, to their great surprise they were repulsed. Some of the outlying police stations were, however, under siege. In Brunei, the rebels captured the police stations and Seria with its oilfields and airfield but the very surprised chief of police, Outram, most expeditiously and effectively organised a resistance and ensured that the Sultan was safely looked after.

In Limbang, the rebels captured most of the Government officers in their beds and, after a fierce fight and several deaths, including four constables, overpowered the undermanned Police Station. Several white people, including a Peace Corps man, were taken hostage. In the middle of the night, a group of rebels woke up a startled Dick and Dorothy Morris and took them off, in their night clothes, into the jungle. Eventually they were taken to the government offices and imprisoned there.

For the next three days the Kedayans and their leaders in Limbang town (who by now had given themselves senior army and administrative titles) swaggered around as they waited for the expected Indonesian help. A group of rebels went to nearby villages and,

by a mixture of promises for favours to come and by threats, managed to collect several shotguns. In fact, however, by now some of the rebels were beginning to be surprised and alarmed at the lack of public sympathy for their cause. Close to Limbang town, the population was frightened and showed their disapproval by staying at home. No joy was expressed at the overthrow of the Government. Further into the ulu, the people were disapproving but not so frightened and the Ibans and Muruts of the ulu Limbang deserve great credit for their actions, especially when one remembers that the news was black from Brunei and they had no Government officer amongst them other than one upriver agent (U.R.A.). When an armed rebel group went upriver, it was disarmed and arrested. Their threats of the dreadful retribution that would befall the Ibans and Muruts (when further rebel forces came upriver) were ignored.

When Singapore and Kuching began to get the first garbled messages of what had happened, the authorities had no indication of exactly where and in what numbers the rebels were. Aerial photos showed that, surprisingly, the naive rebels had not blocked access to the oilfields' airstrip at Kuala Belait. It turned out later that they had purposely not obstructed the airstrip as they expected Indonesian forces to land there at any moment. As General Walker's Gurkhas were available and already on a war footing, they were immediately sent to capture the airstrip. A British battalion was also sent to the troubled area. At this stage it is interesting to note that from when, in 1946 the military administration had handed back Sarawak to the Rajah, this was the first time that any military forces had been stationed in Sarawak!

In Miri District, the rebels ineffectively besieged some of the police stations and eventually returned to their homes. In Brunei, the rebels were more successful and it took a few days for the British forces to regain control. As regards Fifth Division, eventually a Royal Marine unit was sent up the Limbang River to recapture the town. There was very little information as to the numbers of the rebels, who were believed to be occupying the Government offices beside the river. In the room, where they were kept, Dick and Dorothy, who were Australians, could hear the noise of battle and so got under the strongest table they could find and listened to the shooting getting ever closer. Dick reckoned (quite correctly) that the troops would first lob grenades through windows and, not till after the explosion, would they go in. This likely train of events didn't amuse him and so Dorothy and he started singing (and continued to sing) *Waltzing Matilda* as loud as they could. His scheme worked to perfection. A British soldier advancing with his grenade was preparing to lob it through the Morris's window, paused, listened, reckoned that it was unlikely at such a time that rebels would be singing and certainly not that Australian song, and so the Resident Fifth Division and his wife were able to be rescued alive.

It turned out that by no means all the Kedayans were rebels and there were a few Malays amongst the rebels – indeed the leader of the rebel movement, Azahari, was a Malay with Arab blood in him. He was in league with Sukarno and the rebel movement had been organised with Indonesian help in arms and advice. If all had gone well, the rebels would have captured the Sultan, two Sarawak Residents and the British Resident Brunei, and the Government buildings in Brunei, Miri District and Limbang. They would then have appealed to Sukarno for help in ousting the detestable colonial regime, a help Sukarno would have gladly given. The guileless and unsophisticated Kedayans easily succumbed to the blandishments of the plausible Azahari, with his promises of how easily the Governments of Brunei and Sarawak would topple, how all the people of all

races of these countries were waiting to join in with the Kedayans and they were completely taken in by the ridiculous promises of a far happier world for them once Indonesia had taken over.

There is some evidence that the uprising took place earlier than Sukarno intended, which was 2 a.m. on Christmas morning, and so Indonesia was not, in fact, quite ready to carry out an invasion in support of Azahari. It seems too that the Brunei rebels had heard that the Sarawak authorities had picked up some rebels in uniform, which is why the Brunei fracas exploded earlier than it should have done and the Indonesian authorities were just as surprised as the Sarawak ones were, when they heard that the rebellion had started. Those organising the outbreak of the Brunei Rebellion had presumed that they would be immediately supported by Indonesian forces. Whether the date of the uprising was due to a lack of co-ordination with the Indonesians or whether it was that the latter prudently preferred to watch the progress of the Brunei Rebellion before committing their forces or whether the rapid and effective arrival of British forces was the cause, the fact is that the Indonesians did not step in to help the rebels.

Sadly, the result of the ineffective rebellion (in Brunei and Fourth Division it was largely crushed in a week) was the arrest of large numbers of Kedayans and a few Malays. Azahari was not caught as, after setting off the rebellion, he prudently left British territory to await the result. The majority of the rebels soon realised matters had not gone according to plan and surrendered easily and in large numbers, though it must be said that some very brave (or stupid?) men, though militarily thoroughly outclassed, fought well with their inadequate weapons and training and the relieving forces suffered some casualties. A few diehards, very bravely, experienced immense hardship, especially when they retired to the area of the mangrove swamps between Brunei city and the Limbang River. There they held out for several weeks, living in trees at high tide and always the prey of vicious insects with scarcely any food and only brackish water to drink. It was not all that easy either for their relatives to keep them supplied with the minimum necessities to keep them alive.

The whole episode is a very sad one, a waste of human resources and, as it turned out, the beginning of 'Confrontation' supported by the unholy alliance of Chinese Communists in Sarawak with the Indonesian Government. Both the Chinese and the Indonesians, each confidently presumed that when the war in British Borneo was won, they would oust the other! I found it most surprising how the Chinese Communists in Sarawak were able to delude themselves that, if they caused trouble, they would end happily on top!

As always in such conditions, there were great problems in deciding how to deal with those involved in the rebellion. A few had, early on, returned to their villages. Those caught, or still to be caught in the act, had to be interned until it could be sorted out who needed to be tried by the Courts – the ringleaders or those who had killed or wounded Government forces – and those (undoubtedly the great majority) who had foolishly followed the general flow and deserved merely a slap on the wrist before being returned to their homes. As regards Fourth Division, the uprising had gone off at half cock and there were not many prisoners to be sorted out.

## **“Confrontation” and the Clandestine Communist Organization (CCO)**

An interesting book could be written on the development of education and Communism amongst the Chinese in Sarawak while under British rule, and on how the various Chinese races did or did not integrate amongst themselves and with the other Sarawakians, and the extent to which they were influenced in achieving their aims by Sukarno's efforts to incorporate British Borneo (and also Malaya) into his empire.

Most Chinese in Sarawak used to think of China as home and hoped one day to make enough money to return there and lead a pleasant life till their death. Needless to say, for most of them, this remained an unrealisable dream. When I first came to Sarawak, the British Government had rather unwillingly agreed that the Kuomintang (Chiang Kai Shek's failing Government) could have a consul in Kuching. The latter soon started influencing the Chinese to think of themselves as Chinese citizens. Meanwhile, Mao Tze Tung's Communists were steadily vanquishing the Kuomintang's forces and a lot of Sarawak Chinese found this agreeable as it appeared to portend that at last China would no longer be a country that could be pushed around by foreign powers. Chiang Kai Shek fled to Taiwan, the Chinese consul left Kuching and was not replaced, though for a period the British Government continued to recognize the Taiwan Government as the Government of China. Eventually the reality of the situation was faced up to and the British unwillingly recognized Mao's Government as being the legitimate Government of the Chinese mainland. At the same time, it did its best to stop all movement of Chinese between China and the British S.E. Asian colonies. Left to run themselves, many Chinese schools came under control of Communists, which meant that a lot of the younger generation were indoctrinated and showed their pride in being Chinese by supporting the Communist movement. This was encouraged by the propaganda and help from China and by the success, to start with, of the Communist uprising in Malaya.

The Special Branch suspected that some Chinese young men were undergoing military training. In August 1952, without any warning, a force of armed Chinese (including one woman) arrived early in the morning at Batu Kitang Bazaar in Bau District, fired shots, terrified the inhabitants and extorted over \$4,000 in cash from the shopkeepers. The gang, who were dressed in uniform including a five star Chinese Communist style flag, distributed Communist leaflets. As the gang escaped by car up the Serian Road, it was ordered to stop by a police patrol at a road block but opened fire and, in the ensuing melee, shot a policeman. The car itself was so damaged that it had soon to be abandoned – the gang however escaped.

A State of Emergency was immediately declared in First Division and the measures taken by Government were enough to cause the Communists to refrain from any further such raids. Assistance from neighbouring British territories was speedy and generous. The measures taken soon raised the morale of the local people, who did not object in the least to the Emergency Regulations and consequent interference in their daily lives.

This episode helped to decide Government to take ever increasing control of Chinese schools and to undertake the formation of Radio Sarawak in 1954. This had an immediate impact on rural Sarawak (with battery sets where electricity was not available) and Government was able to get over to the Chinese population a more reasoned view of how impractical, in the context of Sarawak, was the Communist propaganda of a revolution in Sarawak led by the Chinese.

It was not until 1956 that the Government began effectively to attempt to control Chinese schools with new Grant Code Regulations offering financial assistance in return for some control over the content of the curriculum. In the early 1950s, there was little integration of the Chinese with the natives and many of the Chinese did not consider themselves as Sarawakians. For the most part, they managed perfectly well without speaking English or any native language. The Land Laws, which, for very good reasons, forbade the Chinese from acquiring native land, meant that the rural Chinese, instead of being mixed up with land owners of other races, were grouped in nearly entirely Chinese areas. Integration between the Chinese (speaking various dialects) and the Natives was not helped by the fact that very few non-Chinese Government servants spoke any of the Chinese dialects. By the 1960s, the end result of their lack of contact with other races was that a substantial part of the Chinese population had a dangerously distorted view of the situation in Sarawak. Their unrealistic thinking was exemplified by those Chinese (and they were in the majority), who had little or no contact with Government or non-Chinese and so considered that what they desired was good for Sarawak and would be acceptable to non-Chinese. Their self-centred delusions were exacerbated by the fact that they considered Chinese leadership was manifestly better than that of anyone else. Hopefully, with help from China, they could impose their Communism on the rest of the population and their ignorance was such that they could see little to stop them achieving their desired control of the country. They could not visualise that Malays and Dayaks might not wish to be ruled by Chinese Communists! Communist cells were formed, which began acquiring arms.

Contrary to the situation in Sarawak, from the start of their independence, the Indonesians had kept a strict control over their Chinese population. Indeed the life of a Chinese in Indonesia was often far from being a happy one, and Communists were as rigorously suppressed as possible. Despite this, many young Sarawak Chinese were encouraged by Sukarno's noises about helping the people of Sarawak to throw off the Colonial yoke and some went over the frontier, where the Indonesians welcomed them. The Indonesians knew that, when they had made full use of these Chinese to help them in their eventual take-over of the British Borneo territories, they had the strength to slap them down. The Chinese presumed that when they returned to Sarawak with the Indonesians and had obtained the control of the country, they would be strong enough to make the Indonesians return home. Despite its name, "The Farmers' Association" was entirely Chinese. It chose its members carefully, limiting its membership to those who were politically correct and its aim was not to improve farming but (adopting Sukarno's words) "to crush first British and then Malaysian Colonialism".

The Indonesians unexpectedly sent a raiding force a short distance across the frontier into the very ulu of Serian District in Sarawak's First Division on 12<sup>th</sup> April, 1963, captured the small ulu Police station at Tebedu and then dashed back to their side of the frontier. This, of course, was before Malaysia Day. They claimed that the force was composed of the so-called TNKU (Tentera Nasional Kalimantan Utara or National Army of North Borneo) volunteer guerrillas, wishing to rid *their* country of the hated British colonialists and to prevent the establishment of Malaysia, with its substitution of one colonial government by another. Incidentally, with the, by now, complete absorption of Dutch New Guinea into Indonesia, the Indonesian "volunteers" used for West Irian, were now available for use against the British/Malaysian territories in Borneo. The Tebedu raid and another on 23<sup>rd</sup> April against Gumbang, and the loss of life amongst the Sarawak police caused great and genuine revulsion throughout most of Sarawak.

These raids were the beginning of "Confrontation" and were followed, for several years, by raids across the frontiers from Indonesia into Sarawak and Sabah. The TNKU raiders were composed of anything from regular units of the Indonesian army, to largely 'Volunteers' under Indonesian army guidance. One of the very sad aspects of these raids was that they were so unnecessary as they were quite ineffective and if the Indonesians had made a realistic appreciation of the situation, they would have known that they could not achieve their objectives. The raiders always assumed that they had only to contact Sarawak longhouses and villages and that they would then be welcomed with open arms by the people, who were, of course, longing to get rid of the loathed colonial regime and who hated the advent of Malaysia and thus their raid would be a joyous push over for them!!

The Indonesians also used the long coast line of Sarawak and Sabah, not to carry out raids, but to bring in supplies up the rivers for the CCO, especially ones like the Rejang delta with its many mouths. Many of the Natives of Sarawak were far from keen on Malaysia but that did not mean that they wanted to be part of Indonesia. It was only the enthusiastic Chinese Communists, who welcomed Indonesian interference in Sarawak's affairs and acted in a subversive way. The other Chinese were neutral or, more likely, genuinely feared becoming Indonesian citizens and many actively supported the Government's efforts to produce a Sarawak in which all races became ever more integrated and the Government was democratically elected.

In contrast to the Americans in Vietnam, the newly arrived British and Gurkha forces were genuinely appreciated, whether stationed in townships or based close to far ulu longhouses, or when they were patrolling the jungles along the Indonesian frontier and occasionally "straying" over it. It was interesting that the Indonesians never publicly mentioned any of our few activities that took place on their side of the frontier.

Many of the British and Gurkha troops had, in the past, met, liked and greatly valued the young Iban volunteer trackers, who had been allocated to them when fighting the Communists in the jungles of Malaya. Equally, the Ibans had brought back to their longhouses stories of the friendships they had made with British soldiers, when fighting side by side. For some reason, the British rank and file have always had a genuine affection and admiration for Gurkhas and it soon became obvious that they had the same relationship with Ibans, Kayans, Kelabits or Kenyahs. One of the happiest groups was the forward naval helicopter base in the Balleh River in Kapit District. The neighbouring locals (Ibans) never felt that they were being treated as inferiors or as untrustworthy, when they wandered around amongst the British advanced posts or when these forces entered their longhouses. The information and help given by ulu longhouses to our forces were invaluable. Guerrillas anywhere, but more especially in large areas of jungle, empty of human habitation, have a great advantage in being able to hide their movements until, at the last moment, they suddenly appear somewhere without warning and then have easy access to return to their side of the frontier. The British and Gurkha forces however, had the great privilege of knowing that the local Sarawakians were on their side and not on that of the enemy. They were also adept at carrying out short and long patrols, during which they might never see the enemy but which worried the Indonesians greatly and, indeed, often resulted in battles with the enemy. The fact that the RAF and Naval air forces had mastery of the air was also an invaluable help to our side. After Malaysia Day, the armed forces of Malaysia played an ever increasing part in defeating the Indonesian forces on Sarawak territory. It must not

be assumed that the Indonesians were a poor fighting force. Their regular troops produced excellent fighting patrols. The TNKU were of mixed standards, partly because their training had not been long or thorough enough and partly because they gradually realised that their activities were pointless as they never got the expected support from the Sarawakians.

It must not be thought that all the Chinese Communists in Sarawak had crossed the frontier to be trained in Indonesia. Many enthusiastic (though, sadly, often blinkered) supporters of Communist China carried on life in their urban or rural areas, often unknown to the authorities. It is clear, as in all guerrilla or subversive situations, CCO personnel often approached anti-communist citizens, who could be useful to their cause, and put them in an impossible situation. A case I know of concerned a leading surgeon who was clandestinely visited by the CCO and asked to keep them supplied with medicines. He refused. The CCO then quietly pointed out that it would not be difficult to burn his house down, kidnap his children or brutally assault him. He knew perfectly well that if the CCO carried out any of these threats, it was highly unlikely that the Police would catch the perpetrators and he also knew that, if he reported his case to the Police and asked for protection, the answer would be "we do not have enough Police properly to look after all those who demand protection". This is the classic Catch-22 problem faced by authorities in such situations: they cannot obtain information from the public about subversive operations, even though that public is on their side, as any witness to the crime would rather keep silent, than risk certain vicious punishment to himself and/or his family if he is foolish enough to give information to the Police or evidence in Court.

The doctor, mentioned above, was eventually caught supplying the CCO with medicines. He pleaded guilty but, in mitigation, asked the Judge what he would have done if he found himself in a similar situation. The Judge did not answer that question, but the Doctor received only a mild punishment.

At Appendix 'A' is one typical example of Communist propaganda that was eagerly and, sadly, unquestioningly accepted by the people to which it was addressed. It should be noted that this 'News' is dated AFTER the formation of Malaysia.

Moving ahead to 1965 (two years after Malaysia Day in 1963 when Sarawak had ceased to be a British colony and become one of the several states that had joined up to make the new country of Malaysia), Bunty and the children went by air to Simanggang and stayed with Ken and Sheila Akam (he was the Education Officer there). While in Simanggang, Bunty was invited to the Residency for dinner. On arrival there she was greeted by Joan Lloyd-Thomas but Graham had been called away suddenly. Eventually he arrived back and joyously related what had happened.

A platoon of Indonesian TNKU had crossed the Malaysian border and then followed the watershed between Second and Third Divisions to the ulu Skrang – a river that flowed into the Batang Lupar a little way upriver of Simanggang. Their unexpected arrival at the most upriver of the Iban longhouses caused consternation. The TNKU spoke no Iban and the Dayaks quickly decided that, to cause themselves the least amount of trouble, they should pretend to welcome their undesired visitors with great joy. This attitude did not surprise the TNKU in the least as they had been told that the Ibans

longed to get rid of the oppressive British colonialists. A member of this longhouse went downriver to the next longhouse and warned them of what was happening.

It turned out that the TNKU wanted help from the Ibans to go downriver and capture Simanggang. The Ibans entertained the Indonesians in the usual manner and it was with full confidence in their new found friends that next morning the TNKU, accompanied by some of the Ibans, went downriver using Iban boats. Each longhouse on the way downriver enlarged the ostensibly happy party. Shortly before reaching the mouth of the Skrang, the Ibans suggested that it might be wise to do a reconnaissance to make sure that the conquest of Simanggang went off flawlessly. The duped TNKU agreed that, so as not to alarm the Simanggang population, they should deposit their arms in a safe place near the bank of the river and then they would go on down the Batang Lupar to be taken to a coffee house for refreshments while they assessed the problem of what to do next. As soon as the party reached Simanggang, a couple of Ibans rushed to the D.O's. house. The D.O, Mohammed Pawzi, greeted them and asked what they wanted. They answered "We don't want to deal with the D.O's. houseboy but with the D.O. himself". It took a little time to convince them that nowadays the D.O. was no longer a white man! Mohd. Pawzi and the Ibans went to the Resident, who collected together all the available police and went to the coffee shop and arrested the startled TNKU and locked them up. The police then went and brought in the TNKU's arms.

With brilliant psychology, it was agreed that no announcement would be made to the Sarawak press of what had happened and it must have caused a great lowering of morale amongst the Indonesians along the Sarawak frontier when they realised that apparently a whole TNKU platoon had disappeared without trace.

### **Women's Institutes**

One of the great pleasures of taking Bunty travelling with me was to watch how delighted the women were to see her and how on each visit Bunty and they were soon chit-chatting together about matters of interest to women. If the uneducated women had views on matters of general interest, it was rare for them to express these in public, almost as though to do such a thing was unladylike! The men 'knew', of course, that their womenfolk had no wish to express views on subjects which men considered were in their domain. I used to cause much hilarity by asking young widows if they ever went out with a shotgun when I knew that they considered that, quite obviously, was a quite impossible thing for women to do. When I asked "Why impossible?" the answer inevitably was "Because women have never done so". I pointed out that all a man needed to go out shooting was a pair of eyes, two hands and be reasonably fit. I noted that the young widow did have two eyes and a pair of hands and if she could carry the weights, which I had seen her carrying, she could carry a shotgun. My logic was not accepted.

In Sibu in the middle of 1958, we were at a drinks party and Bunty was talking to Datu Tuanku Bujang and the subject came up of how the kampong women rarely left their houses and refused to accompany their husbands when invited out. She then talked to him about the W.I. in Britain.

Not long after this conversation, Bunty was having her usual post prandial siesta, when Masseneh, our house amah/cook, came in and told her that some Malay and Melanau

Islam ladies wanted to see her. This was not long after Murdo was born and she wanted some sleep and told Masseneh to tell them to come back at 4 p.m. However, she could not sleep due to the voices outside, so she put on her sarong and met the women sitting there. They said that the Datu had told them about the W.I. and they wanted to start a women's group. Bunty told them about what she remembered when her mother belonged to the W.I. She said that she would do her best to help them start a group but that thereafter they themselves would have to run it.

There followed an inaugural meeting and the women were very practical and said that what interested them would be lectures on first aid, fire fighting, the rules of inheritance and such like. They did not want religious instruction. Bunty organised experts to talk to them on various subjects, including Roy Henry, the Superintendent of Police, who arranged a demonstration of fire fighting in the home. This was a great success as what was meant to be a mock fire developed into a real one and quick and competent action was needed to avert a disaster! Once the women knew how to run a meeting, Bunty left them alone, though periodically they came to her asking for advice.

The following year, the women decided that they wished to walk in the Prophet's Birthday procession, which had hitherto been an all-male affair. The Malay/Melanau men were up in arms at once, claiming that to break tradition in this way was almost indecent, though I believe that the Datu and Datin could see nothing objectionable in women separately and as a group, walking behind the men in the procession. The women, being united in this matter, had decided on a suitable uniform (a white sarong, a green kebaya and a matching head scarf) and no-one could stop them taking part.

While I was D.O. Kuching, Regina, the Eurasian wife of Wan Abdulrahman (one of Datu Tuanku Bujang's sons) called on Bunty and said that the across river Malay women had heard about the Sibul group, which she had started and they wanted her to do the same for them. It turned out that they were much more religion orientated than the Sibul ladies had been. Lady Waddell (the Governor's wife) accepted the invitation to come to their inaugural meeting. Later, they organised a bazaar, which was very successful.



Women's Institute Miri January 1965. Bunty in middle with Elizabeth O'Kelly on her left.

In March 1962, Miss Elizabeth O'Kelly, M.B.E., a very dynamic lady, arrived to take up the new post of Adviser to Women's Rural Institutes and to start up multi-racial Women's Institutes.

When we were transferred to Limbang, the local women, including many Kedayan wives of rebels in prison, led by Katherine Jitam, wife of the Superintendent of Police, told Bunty that they wanted to form a group. Bunty contacted Elisabeth O'Kelly who came to Limbang. A group was formed and Katherine Jitam was appointed the local Women's Institute

adviser. After we left Limbang, the group had a bazaar and sent Bunty, by then in Sibul, a telegram informing her of the large sum they had raised and thanking her for the support she had given in the group's first faltering steps.

The increasing number of Women's Institutes was evidence of a real need that hitherto had not been met – a need that was accomplished without help from the men except for Datu Tuanku Bujang, who was more worldly wise than most of his male contemporaries.

### **Local Government and Political Parties**

Pre-1946, the Rajahs had ruled as benevolent despots, though frequently, before introducing any controversial plans, they did consult some of the senior Malays. In 1867, the Second Rajah established Council Negri (State Council) and appointed people (mostly high ranking Malays) to advise him. In 1888, Sarawak accepted British protection, which meant Britain controlling the state's defence and foreign affairs. In September 1941, the Third Rajah started delegating his powers by instituting the Supreme Council, a body with selected members including certain senior civil servants. He agreed to govern with its consent and Council Negri was given more power. The Japanese invasion ended this first step towards a democratic Government. After the Japanese surrender in 1945, the BBCAU took over the administration of the northern Bornean territories. This in fact was a British Military Administration with quite a large number of Australians in it. In April 1946, the Third Rajah resumed the governing of Sarawak and, in July 1946, placing a certain amount of pressure on several of the Council Negri members, he persuaded them to agree to his wish to hand over Sarawak to the British Crown. Thus Sarawak became a British Crown Colony, which would pursue the goal of eventual self-government.

In 1948, Mr. Creech Jones (Secretary of State for the Colonies) declared "The central purpose of British colonial policy is simple. It is to guide the colonial territories to responsible government within the Commonwealth in conditions that ensure to the people concerned both a fair standard of living and freedom from oppression from any quarter".

From my arrival in Sarawak in January 1947, shortly after the handover of the country by the Rajah to the Crown, until Malaysia Day in November 1963, when Sarawak got its independence, was a ridiculously short time in which to attempt to raise the standard of living of a backward country, in dire distress after the Japanese occupation, while at the same time ensuring that it reached a position where it would hold democratic elections, resulting in Sarawak having one of its own citizens as state Governor and its own Council Negri with its own Chief Minister and own Speaker of the House! This document is not the place to write a long and comprehensive treatise on how the Colonial Government developed Local Government and encouraged Party Politics. However, I will touch on how, in 16 years, the Residents and D.O.s bit by bit steadily gave up their very strong control over the people by gradually handing over the administration of the country to locally recruited civil servants and to local councils and, in the end, leaving themselves with virtually no duties, except magisterial ones.

When I arrived in 1947, there was no Local Government. The Colonial Secretary in London gave the Governor the broad lines that he was to follow. The Governor passed down his instructions on what was to be done for the good of the country, through the Administration (the Chief Secretary, Residents, D.O.s., Native Officers, Headmen) and so to the people, and also through the departmental heads (such as Education, Agriculture, Lands and Surveys, etc). As early as 1948, the Colonial Secretary ordered

that plans for Local Government should start to be implemented in Sarawak. Initially, this was a slow process. In colonial times, control of corruption was facilitated by the fact that most expatriate civil servants did not own property in Sarawak; they were unlikely to retire there and were of a class to whom corruption was abhorrent. Visits by the Government Auditor were feared by any officers who had charge of public funds. His Department not only sought out theft and corruption but his reports on waste and mismanagement were acted on at once by Central Government to the dismay of the unfortunate officer found at fault.

As regards Local Government, Government was continually definitely ahead of public opinion in the steps it took. The first step was to appoint District Councils (one for each administrative district) consisting of selected representatives of the various races (mostly these were Headmen) who met periodically to discuss general matters put to them by the D.O. who was the Chairman. Later Local Government office buildings were built and a clerk to the Council was appointed. Head Tax of \$1 per family head, which had been Central Government revenue, was now handed over to the Council. Next, was the formation of Divisional Advisory Councils. Each District Council elected, according to the size of its population, one or more of its members to represent it at meetings at Divisional H.Q. under the chairmanship of the Resident. A municipal council for Kuching had been formed early on with an expatriate as Chairman and later urban councils were established for Sibu and Miri, initially with the D.O. as Chairman.

The innate good manners of Sarawakians ensured that there was very little acrimony at these meetings between people of different races and differing religions and, as all members were supposed to know Malay, people were able to understand each other. Well educated Malays had to lower their standards to that of "bazaar Malay", a simple language understood by all present. If at times a Chinese or native councillor had not understood what was going on, there was always someone who could clarify the matter in his own language. The fact that Residents and D.O.s (and Departmental Officers) were periodically moved around the country and, in any case, had no personal interest in the outcome of such matters as family feuds or boundary disputes, helped the people to trust the Government officers to be fair.

The next step was a very great one – properly conducted universal suffrage elections to District Councils. Before starting this step, solutions to certain problems had to be solved. Tact was necessary where Headmen had not been elected to the local council. In fact, it was rare for the Headman not to be elected. Most people would usually rather elect a poor candidate of their own race than an excellent one of another. Gradually, the running of Local Government jobs would be removed from the D.O. and handed over to the Council. Certain Councils had a large population in a small area and the reverse was the case in another. A small Chinese bazaar might be surrounded by a large Iban area. As the number of powers delegated to the Councils switched from being advisory to executive, differences in view might result in splits along racial lines. The D.O.s had to be very careful to fix wards to minimise friction and feelings of grievance by one community or another. Universal suffrage when combined with illiteracy posed problems of confidentiality, the production of accurate electoral rolls, the preparation well beforehand of a programme for getting the voting papers to the people. Sarawak's geography and slowness of communications between District H.Qs. and some ulu longhouses required much organization to ensure that all voters knew where and when a Government team would bring the ballot box for them. Long after the urban area votes

were ready for counting, it had to be explained to these people that their results could not be announced until the last of the ulu voters had had a chance to vote. In the event, the District Council elections went off reasonably well.

In the early days of Local Government, the appointed members of Councils listened politely to what the D.O. had to say and then usually agreed with his views. To start with the Councils had no staff of their own and used the District Office staff. People could well remember the days when it was the D.O. who ordered the drains, ditches or footpaths to be cleared, who excused people from paying head tax, who decided where roads were to be built, who supervised the markets or the fire fighting in bazaars, who issued village shop licences and licensed fire arms and regulated the letting off of fire crackers and organised regattas. If a person had a problem that could not be dealt with by a headman, it was to the D.O. that he would take his problem and hope to find that it was dealt with promptly or quickly referred to higher authority. Residents expected D.Os to know when to take decisions and when to refer to higher authority and they disliked D.Os. who failed to use their initiative, even more than they disliked those who occasionally made a decision which should have been referred up to them. I have been amazed at the length of time it often takes authorities in the U.K. to come to a decision, when in Sarawak I would have been able to decide one way or the other swiftly. Sarawak nationals, who had never taken public decisions in their life and now found themselves local authority clerks with powers to decide a matter or refer it to a council, would usually rather put the problem on one side for a long time and then eventually refer the matter to someone else and so avoid the possibility of making the wrong decision.

After the elections, however, the message that the D.O. was no longer the person to approach to solve problems took a long time to be accepted, though for a time he continued to be the Chairman of and then the Adviser to the Council. He also helped the local authority clerk to run his office efficiently. Personally, I felt sorry for individuals who had gone to a lot of expense to come from the ulu to see me, only to be told that it was now their district councillor that they should have approached. If the individual was an Iban and had no idea who was his councillor and was then told that it was Wee Tin Poh, a verbal explosion would ensue as he said he could not expect a proper decision from a Chinese and he insisted that I should deal with his problem. Equally, a Chinese in a small ulu bazaar would be astonished to be told that it was his councillor, Anggau anak Grinang, to whom he should address his problem.

In due course, a Divisional Advisory Council became the Divisional Council, with, for a time, the Resident as its Chairman. On the whole, the devolution of power from Headmen, D.O.s and Residents to elected representatives and their councils went fairly smoothly and, I think, this was because there was but little demand from over 90% of the public for local government. Thus the Colonial Government was not in the difficult position of so many colonies, where vocal members of the population and the media were demanding Government to go faster than it thought wise. By 1956 there was a majority of non-officials in Council Negri and in 1959 there were state wide secret ballot elections for all district and urban district councils with all men and women over 21 eligible to vote.



The District Advisory Council, the Malay Advisory Board and the Chinese Headmen's meeting and Local Authority lunch at my Simangang house, Autumn 1951.

With the development of elections to local government and, in due course, to Council Negri, it was clear that party politics should be introduced, led, it was hoped, by mature and worldly wise people, with each party being multi-racial, though, in fact, it was highly likely that racial parties would be formed, with, as a result, increased tension between the races. As there had been little or no pressure for party politics in Sarawak, it was also likely that, to start with, most of the public would show little interest in such matters. Judging by what happened in other colonies, certain extrovert and ambitious individuals would

come to the surface and clamour for power in the Party and it would be inevitable that, with gathering momentum, the general public would take ever increasing interest in what was going on around them and affecting them. It was also likely too that individual politicians would make popular but ill thought out promises and the general populace would not have the knowledge or education to know how impractical the carrying out of these promises would be. The Ibans and Malays had various associations that could be the nucleus of a party, but hitherto, as with cession and anti-cession, there was often little long term loyalty and there would be wheeling and dealing resulting in parties frequently and suddenly breaking up and re-coalescing.

The bazaar Chinese, in places like Kuching and Sibu, especially those that dealt regularly with Singapore, were the ones who would have the experience to start up a political party, but it would take time for the Native leaders to feel that they could bring in their people to join a party started by Chinese and make it into a multi-racial one.

It was not Government's job to form parties, but in 1959 Government did murmur in the ear of one or two well balanced and competent people that "Had not the time now come for them to form a multi-racial party?" Ong Kee Hui, an ex-Government servant, an agriculture expert with a good knowledge of the languages, customs and way of life of the ulu people and who owned a bank, started the Sarawak United Peoples Party (SUPP). Although by its constitution it was open to all races, it appeared to many to be a Chinese and to a lesser extent a Malay party. At first, this party was not viewed with any great enthusiasm by the ulu Natives of Sarawak. The one group that saw its chance here to speed up the achievement of its objective of "the peoples' struggle for independence" was the CCO, which supported (one might almost say "infiltrated") SUPP. SUPP began to veer to the left and got a name for opposing some of the Government's development plans. A multitude of parties, many of them racial, then started up and several of them associated themselves with SUPP.

PANAS (Party Negara Sarawak [The Party of the Country of Sarawak]) was started by the Datu Bandar, a well known, well educated and aristocratic Malay, who was an ex-Government servant. Theoretically, this was a multi-racial right wing party, but in fact was much more a Native Party than a Chinese one. The membership of SNAP (Sarawak National Party), despite its name, was a largely Iban party and unique in being formed not by ex-Government servants, but by educated Ibans, who had worked overseas or for such bodies as Shell Oilfields. The leaders of SNAP included Stephen Kalong Ningkan, who was destined to be Sarawak's first Chief Minister. Pre-war he had been a Rubber Fund clerk, a policeman, a local authority teacher and a Sarawak Oilfields hospital assistant.

As had been expected, lots of parties started up, theoretically multi-racial but most of them single race, often headed by people who disliked the Datu Bandar or the SUPP leadership. Personal ambition played its part in the subsequent wheeling and dealing between parties. For several years these smaller parties tried to go it alone, decided to amalgamate with others and then break away again. There were several cases of heads of smaller parties, treacherously suddenly turning against their ally, the head of the bigger party so, though the two party heads had appeared to be the best of friends, they now reviled each other in a most unpleasant manner. It became extremely difficult to know who was on speaking terms with whom. It was difficult for the uncommitted would-be politician to look into the future. Many were they who later became well known politicians because they had had the good fortune to choose a successful party and stay with it and many were those who were banished to the political wilderness forever, because they had wrongly estimated the future success of a party or switched to another at the wrong time. There was much to-ing and fro-ing and discussions between Sarawak parties and those in Singapore and Malaya and, as time went on, some of the Malayan parties had quite an influence on certain Sarawak parties. Incidentally, when the Indonesians carried out their raids on Tebedu and Gumbang, the Natives of Sarawak were appalled at what had happened and SUPP suffered a considerable loss of Native membership at that time.

When I first arrived in Sarawak, Residents and D.Os. and heads of departments in the Secretariat carried out Government policies. When I left, they had far fewer executive powers and their posts were increasingly manned by Sarawak born officers. No expatriate Administration Officers had been recruited after 1956.

As District Officer Baram, I had to write a quarterly report on developments in my District and a copy went to the Secretariat. Extracts from the various district reports were selected for publication in the Sarawak Gazette. I was startled on receiving my copy of the Straits Times dated 29<sup>th</sup> January, 1960, to read in it an article quoting from my report, headed SIBU SHOCKS SARAWAK which is produced below.

Elections at Sibu have given Sarawak cause for thought. When the District Council assembled last week for its first meeting four of the wards were unrepresented, two because inquiries were necessary and the successful candidates could not be declared elected in the normal way, the other two because the results were not known by the time the Council met. A day or two after the meeting one of the candidates was sentenced to a total of three months imprisonment on six charges of bribery, and it is possible there will be other prosecutions. There was a whole cloud of suspicion during the election

campaign, for reports of bribery and corruption were rife long before election day. But no-one came forward with substantial evidence, said the District Officer sadly at the inaugural meeting of the new Council, until after the elections were held. And no-one drew attention to the fact that one of the candidates had a criminal record and should have been disqualified from standing.

Even if this had been all, Mr. Urquhart's trenchant homily would have been fully justified. Sibu, he reminded the Council, must have confidence in its elected representatives. They must be above suspicion. If they are not above suspicion, yet are elected, then the public is to blame. Mr. Urquhart duly proceeded to blame the electorate for not disclosing what was going on and, in one ward, for permitting a small but excessively rowdy element to throw events out of gear. But unfortunately this was not all. The voting seems to have been largely communal and worse still, most of the Chinese, Iban, Malay and Melanau headmen are outside the Council with the result that Councillors may be tempted to impose upon their communities an authority which Councillors do not possess.

The voting was not only racial but intensely local. Candidates of the same race collected mainly only the votes of immediate neighbours of the same race, quite regardless of reputation and fitness for office. There were one or two happy exceptions, for instance a ward in which a Chinese candidate had a good poll although there were no Chinese voters. More characteristic, however, was the extreme example of another ward in which there was no Chinese candidate, and so no Chinese bothered to vote. Mr. Urquhart's lecture on the responsibilities and duties of elected Councillors and the public's part in local government was not out of place, but it is depressing that it was necessary. For Sibu is not a backwater, at least it has not been considered one until now.

Small wonder that Sibu's District Officer has already had visitors, many of them illiterate, who have expressed their suspicions and fears of this relatively modest political development of Malaya and of Sarawak's other neighbours. The doubts cast by this experience in Sibu are all the more regrettable in the light of the successful Constitutional changes of 1957, which produced a partly elected and well-balanced Council Negri, and a reasonably satisfactory system of local government in the First Division, including Kuching Municipality. In another direction, too, particularly the fields of education and health, there has been an immense popular response to the Government's efforts. The willingness of local communities to tax themselves to pay for their schools has suggested a more practical sense of public responsibility than is the case in most parts of the Federation of Malaya. Perhaps Sibu is an isolated failure. It would be pleasant to think so; whatever the explanation, however, this is a setback for Sarawak's optimists.

Finally, to add to the above mentioned Straits Times article I include a personal anecdote of the sort that, unfortunately, does not appear in and lighten the dullness of official reports on elections on Sarawak. For the first secret ballot of all the people ever held in Sarawak, there was no difficulty in the towns or nearby areas, but it was a great organisational problem to get voting papers and voting boxes to each village or its equivalent – a longhouse. As the great majority of voters were illiterate, it was decided that areas of ulu districts would be allocated to an administrative officer from another

district. A programme was worked out for each officer and it was hoped that the Good Lord would not cause weather conditions that would interfere with the programme.

From Sibu, I was sent to Kapit and collected my several sealed ballot boxes and the voting papers for a large stretch of the Balleh River and set off in the Government longboat powered by an outboard engine. I visited three or four longhouses a day, spending a night in one of them and my trip lasted about three days. My programme worked out well and I managed to return all the boxes to Kapit without losing any or dropping any in the river.

My intention was to be firm and practical and not allow myself to be deviated by imbibing vast quantities of tuak in each longhouse. However, I was soon put in my place by finding the usual group of damsels outside each longhouse, each with a bottle and a glass. Having got into the longhouse, I was told that on such an auspicious occasion there must be an offering to the spirits (perhaps this is why no adverse hindrances to my programme took place, except that I had to spend longer in each longhouse than I had anticipated).

On arrival in a longhouse, I started by giving a talk on how to vote, on how confidentiality would be kept and on the names of the candidates. After each grown-up had been given a voting paper, I settled down in an isolated corner of the longhouse and people queued up to vote. As each one came up and voted, I would tick off his/her name on my voting register. Most of the men were matter of fact about voting. For the illiterate, I myself would quietly read out the names of the candidates to him and then put an 'X' against the name of his desired candidate. I did not hear of any case throughout Sarawak where the voter did not fail to trust the administrative officer to put the tick in the correct place and keep confidentiality! Being Ibans and so extroverts, it was inevitable that some bumptious young men felt that they had to show off in front of the ladies and announce in a loud voice for whom they were voting, though I tried to stop such demonstrations. Other young men advanced slowly towards me as they showed off their muscular control by doing a traditional war dance as they advanced to the voting box. Some of the women became all coy (although, on the whole, Iban women are far from coy) and the following conversations would take place:

"I am just an ignorant little woman. What do I do?" I explained what to do.

"Whom do you think I should vote for?"

"I am not allowed to recommend anyone. Choose the person that you think would make the best councillor."

"The Penghulu thinks that so-and-so would make the best councillor."

"This is a secret vote and no-one will know how you voted. Choose the person you want."

"But I am only an insignificant woman. How can I do this?"

It can be imagined what a slow process this voting was.

My most interesting event on the trip happened during the evening in a Penghulu's longhouse. The Penghulu, as a popular area headman, was the first to vote. He had been drinking for some time before I arrived. I couldn't escape drinking with him before the voting took place. When the queue was formed to start voting, he was in front and made a slurred speech on how this was the first time that he had voted like this and on how important it was to do as I had told them. He then sang a further incantation to the

spirits to ensure that the election went off well and this necessitated a further drink, and then he weaved his way erratically to my secluded corner. His candidate had the 'X' put where he wanted it, he stood up and, facing the waiting queue, repeated what a great day this was and, with a flourish, bent down and put the voting paper in the box. However, he was so overcome that he (as unexpectedly by him as by me) couldn't prevent himself from vomiting accurately down and around the entrance slit of the ballot box. After the outside of the box had been cleaned, to his voting paper were added the remaining papers of all the other voters in subsequent longhouses. The box was then sealed. It would be a few more days before the box would be opened by those appointed to count the votes. I felt sorry for them as they emptied the contents of the box on the table and was I was thankful that I did not have to be present when the counting took place! This box had to be used in several more longhouses.

And thus Sarawak advanced one further step along the path of becoming a self-governing democracy!

### **From Colonialism to Malaysia**

What follows is not meant to be an authoritative history of the formation of Malaysia but merely a commentary from one who experienced it. My own opinion is that, whilst the majority of Sarawak people accepted what the Government was doing to improve their standard of living and gradually to introduce them to local government, they were also happy to leave decisions on the long term future of their country to the Government. Unlike some other colonies, there was little pressure on Government to hand over the running of Sarawak to its inhabitants. Though there were a few who occasionally talked about the desirability of an eventual union of the three British Borneo territories, those who visualised a union of these three territories with Malaya and Singapore (and they included me) were few indeed. So there was great surprise when the possibility of the formation of Malaysia was first mooted, and though a large part of the Moslem population soon began to feel at home with this plan, the rest of the Native population of Sarawak was, at any rate to begin with, very suspicious of it and many of their leaders were downright against it. That said, the members of those tribes that had contact with Indonesia knew enough about that country to be certain that they did not want to be part of it. Many of the Chinese traders in British Borneo had contacts with the Singapore Chinese and would not have been unhappy to have closer connections with them, but there were only negligible contacts of any kind between Malaya and British Borneo.

The Federation of Malaya had been granted its independence in August 1957. In parallel, the governments of Sarawak, Brunei and North Borneo (Sabah) had saved money by establishing joint departments such as the Judiciary and Geological Survey. They had, at times, vaguely discussed the desirability of establishing closer ties, but the matter was not felt to be urgent and I certainly never heard of any public pressure for plans for such a union to be worked out. It seemed sensible for Malaya and Singapore to unite, except that by so doing, the Chinese, to the dismay of the Malays, would become the majority race. The Prime Minister of Malaya, Tuanku Abdul Rahman, therefore started tentative approaches to the British Government and the three British Bornean territories about the feasibility of federating with Malaya and Singapore and thus producing a majority of non-Chinese in a new country and, at the same time, giving the British Bornean territories their independence within such a union. He accelerated the process of consultations as he was getting ever more worried about the increasing number of signs that Indonesia, under President Sukarno, was wishing to expand its

empire by taking over the British part of Borneo and, probably later, the Malayan peninsula. (An interesting pamphlet "Indonesian Intentions towards Malaysia", published in 1964 in Kuala Lumpur, points out that as far back as the Japanese occupation, Indonesia attempted to annex Malaya to the 'Greater Indonesia').

Brunei, since handing over the Sarawak River area to the First Rajah in 1841, had been getting ever smaller and poorer as Sarawak and North Borneo got steadily bigger. The discovery of oil on its territory had changed that. It had no wish to join the Federation and help to fund a new Malaysia. Most of the ordinary people of British Borneo had not yet realised the threat posed by Indonesian imperialism.

Looking back to July 1946 when Sarawak changed from being a British protected state to become a British colony, it was still an undeveloped country with over 90% illiteracy and no common language, even amongst the literate. There were virtually no Sarawakians with a university degree; few local people were qualified to take on the most junior posts in the running of the Government; and, by international standards, the number of government departments was ridiculously few. The main justification for the change of status had been to help Sarawak recover from the devastation of war and, at the same time, to modernise it so that it could become a viable state within the Commonwealth and the United Nations.

The problem facing the new Colonial Government was how to establish a national infrastructure with little income and a population that was too poor to be taxed to any great extent. In 1946, few people working out the future for Sarawak would have had the temerity to suggest that in less than twenty years it would be ready for independence within the new state of Malaysia.

I wish now to blow my own trumpet, and those of all the expatriate officers who served Sarawak during those 17 colonial years, so happily and devotedly in the worthwhile job of raising the country's standard of living and who achieved this, not by dictatorial methods, but by obtaining and keeping the trust of the people and by treating them as equals and friends. Government officers, especially pre-war, became well integrated with the local people. The fact that, when travelling, they kept in close contact with the people by spending nights in their houses also meant that they were able gently to put to them suggested ways of improving their standards of living. Such suggestions were often not acceptable at first to the people in some parts of the country and, where this was the case, they were dropped – at least temporarily. Where the suggestions were acceptable, they were carried out and, in the end, those people who had refused the suggestions would realise how they were being left behind and would clamour for help in adopting them. For instance, if money was offered for a school and the local people could not be persuaded of the desirability of this, the money could always be used elsewhere. At first, many ulu people were against taking part in Local Government and it was a slow process cajoling and persuading them until they agreed to District and Divisional Councils. By the time of Federation, Sarawak had established a more advanced system of local government than Malaya. Here I wish to mention and stress that the British could not have achieved what they did in Sarawak without the most valuable help of countries such as Australia, New Zealand and Canada who were members of the Colombo Plan.

One of the kernel reasons why I have written 'Anecdotes' is to question the intrinsic and instinctive international view that there can be no good colonialism. I have loved my time in Sarawak and one of my greatest reasons for this has been the great friendship I have had throughout with people of all races, old and young, well educated and those without formal education, but who even so can cope well in this world because they had learnt how to deal with the problems of this life. And, after my marriage, Bunty added a further great circle of local common friends. They were the salt of the earth.

When Sarawak became a Colony, a promise had been made that the Crown would not hand over the country to anyone else without the consent of the people. When I was D.O. Baram, I was startled when representatives of the Orang Ulu presented me with a letter, which they asked me to pass on to Her Majesty the Queen. This letter, reminding the Queen of her promise, said that they had heard that discussions were taking place about Sarawak's future and demanded that no action should be taken towards changing the present way of governing them without their consent. I forwarded this letter to the Resident at Miri and, by the time I left Baram, no answer to it had arrived.

In Sarawak I saw no signs of pressure from below for immediate independence. On the contrary, it was the Government that took the first action towards implementing this. In the years leading to the formation of Malaysia, Government's policy, which Residents and D.Os. were told to promulgate as strongly and as frequently as possible, was the great advantage to Sarawak of achieving its independence within a new state to be known as 'Malaysia'. Personally, in my Districts I did not find initially any great enthusiasm for Malaysia. So far as I can tell, the main reason that Britain supported the transfer of its Bornean Colonies to become states in a future Malaysia was that this action represented the least bad alternative of all the possible alternatives for the future of Sarawak, North Borneo and, hopefully, Brunei. Undoubtedly, the best solution for the inhabitants of the British Bornean states would have been for the Colonial Governments to have continued carrying on quietly for a few more years with their job of preparing the people gradually to take ever more control of their country's future into their own hands until they could have chosen what kind of independent state they wished to have or be part of. However, with international public opinion as it then was, such a course was fraught with difficulties and could not be considered.

Be that as it may, Sarawak was given its independence by Britain in 1963, only 17 years after becoming a Colony. Although Sarawak then got its first Sarawakian Governor and elected its own Chief Minister, to the astonishment of many in Malaya, Britain was asked by the indigenous people to negotiate with Malaya to allow its colonial civil servants to stay on there after Malaysia Day. For Administrative Officers, by agreement with Malaya, this period was limited to three years. Perhaps I may be biased, but I do not recall in the press, which was free, nor in the policies of the Sarawak political parties nor in their deliberations in Council Negri (the State Parliament), nor in the activities of pressure groups, any demand for a quick independence.

Once President Sukarno had announced that he was prepared to help the people of Sarawak to throw off their hated tyrants, it became almost impossible for Britain to remain as a colonial power in Borneo. Anyone, who goes to the trouble of reading the minutes of the United Nations Security Council before, during and after the Brunei Rebellion, will note the anti-colonialist views of member states (and especially such

members of the Security Council as Communist Poland and the ex-Spanish colony of Costa Rica).

The British Government, presumably, had the choice of rejecting Tuanku Abdul Rahman's offer of independence for Sarawak within Malaysia on the grounds that the job of preparing the backward inhabitants to cope with more advanced peoples had not yet been achieved. However, a combination of international opinion and British Government policy of disposing of its colonies meant that this was not to happen. Sukarno wished to increase his empire and so was against the formation of Malaysia, with its granting of independence to the British Borneo states, as this would negate the attractiveness of his statements about liberating them. He regularly re-iterated his wish to "crush" Malaysia and made his first raid into Sarawak *before* Malaysia had been established.

Remembering the lack of support the Netherlands had received in the United Nations in its attempt to exclude Dutch New Guinea (later to be known as West Irian) from the newly independent Indonesia, the British could not have expected their views on Sarawak to elicit much sympathy. Thanks to the Tuanku and the formation of Malaysia, the wind was taken out of the Indonesian sails when the peoples of British Borneo said they would join Malaysia. Sukarno still claimed he was liberating Sarawak, but he no longer had the support in the United Nations that he had expected. The Tuanku was a wise politician and understood far better than did most of his colleagues in Malaya the differences between the natives of Sarawak and those in Malaya. He also appreciated the fears of the Sarawakians at being strung together with and dominated by Malaya, a more developed country, one that was strongly Moslem and one whose people would have difficulty in treating the Sarawakians as equals. It was the Tuanku who, at the time of choosing the first independent Governor and Chief Minister of Sarawak, insisted that the two new posts should not both be held by Moslems at the same time.

When I met Malays or Chinese in Malaya and asked them about the Sakais (a nomadic people in the central jungles of Malaya of a completely different racial background from the Malays and speaking a completely different language), I was interested to hear that, though usually they had never met a Sakai, they could confidentially assure me that they were filthy, primitive people who belonged to an inferior race. When I spoke to people in Malaya about Sarawak and its people, I found an almost complete ignorance of how Sarawak's people differed from those of Malaya, but this did not stop them averring their certain knowledge that Sarawak would be an unpleasant place to be sent to work and that the native peoples of the interior were just like Sakais or even worse as they were wild head hunters!

Ignorance of what other races are like could also be found in Sarawak. Though the Chinese of Kuching or Sibu would see Ibans wandering about the streets, the ordinary Chinese had never spoken to an Iban and they feared them greatly as head hunters! The Astana in Kuching recruited its servants from the neighbouring Malay kampong. I found it interesting, when I was Private Secretary and the Governor went travelling to the ulu, how alarmed were the recently recruited servants at being required to spend nights in longhouses. When I was recruiting some young Chinese from Sibu to join Government service, I was appalled to find that many of them, though they had had an excellent education, had rarely bicycled to the contiguous Malanau kampong and had never visited one of the nearby Iban longhouses, much less slept in one. Under such

circumstances, of course, the views of the Astana servants and of the Sibuan Chinese on Ibans were not only distorted but racist. I was not surprised therefore, when even educated people from Malaya who came to Sarawak behaved in a condescending or even disapproving manner and in fact were close to being racist.

Nobody could call Tun Abdul Razak (Deputy Prime Minister of Malaya) a racist, though he had a lot of pre-conceived views that needed changing. On a visit to Kuching before Malaysia came into being, he was greeted at the airport, a few miles out of town, by Graham Lloyd-Thomas, Resident First Division. As their car neared Kuching, the Tun said "I would not have been surprised at seeing Malays waiting at the side of the road to wave at me, but I am astonished and pleased that the Dayaks are doing so." Graham looked at those lining the road and said "Dayaks? I don't see any Dayaks. Oh! Those are not Dayaks but Malays. Sarawak Malays."

While I was D.O. Kuching, Temongong Jugah and his wife from Third Division and Penghulu Montegrai from Second Division came to dinner with us and over the coffee the two men were discussing Malaysia while Mrs Jugah sat silently chewing her betel nut. The conversation became animated. Neither chief was at all keen on Malaysia. Suddenly, Jugah's wife removed the betel nut from her mouth and both chiefs listened to her in respectful silence as she said "It is pointless you two getting het up over this matter. If Government thinks it is good for us, it will happen. Before it happens, make sure that you do all you can for our people." They did not argue with her.

In 1961, the British and Malayan Governments decided that a commission should be set up to ascertain whether the people of British Borneo wanted Malaysia. The Commission under the Chairmanship of Lord Cobbold reached Kuching in February 1962. Its members were, on behalf of the British Government, Sir Anthony Abell (a former Governor of Sarawak) and Sir David Watherston (a former Chief Secretary of the Federation of Malaya). The Malayan representatives were Dato Wong Pow Nee (a Chinese) and Enche Mohammed Ghazali bin Shafie (a Malay).

As D.O. Kuching, I was on duty outside the Supreme Court to issue passes to those who were to be admitted to give their views to the Commission. One of these was Tra Zehnder, a Dayak and the wife of a Eurasian Forest Officer. She emerged from the Supreme Court room in a flood of tears. I asked her what the matter was and she said "I became very emotional in there, I lost my temper and I told them that I was dead against Malaysia and, if the scheme went ahead and was not a success, I would curse the British who allowed it to happen".

John Seal, Civil Aviation Operations Officer, married to an Iban, a great traveller to the ulu and a much loved friend of the people of the different races there, told me of what happened when the Commissioners, with their attendant lackeys, arrived at Long Akah airstrip to hear the views of the Baram Orang Ulu in the fort there. To the complete amazement of the visitors, when the plane landed, Temongong Oyong Lawai Jau, with a broad smile on his face advanced with arms outstretched towards Sir Anthony and hugged him, and Sir Anthony reciprocated: they showed every sign of genuine pleasure at seeing one another. Clearly the people from Malaya were thinking "Fancy a minor headman of a primitive tribe doing that to an ex-Governor! It wouldn't have happened in the Federation of Malaya between a State Sultan or the Governor and a local headman". The Temongong then did the same to John Seal, after which he was

introduced to the other members of the party. In landing, the plane had got bogged down and damaged and the plan to fly on to a more civilised place for the night had to be abandoned. The Temonggong, who was the paramount chief of the Baram, and his wife, both of them aristocrats and people of great dignity and authority, invited the Commission to stay at their longhouse across river.

The first problem arose when the Temonggong announced that Sir Anthony and John would stay in his room and the others would be accommodated elsewhere. Both objected and said that Lord Cobbold should stay in the Temonggong's room. He answered in Malay "I know who my good friends are. This is my house and I alone will decide who stays with me". John solved the problem by saying that he ought to sleep where the plane was, so Lord Cobbold was able to share the Temonggong's room in his place. The Malaysians were astonished that a former Governor should apparently be delighted to stay in a longhouse. They themselves were aghast at the prospect of spending a night with primitive head hunting tribesmen, with dogs roaming about the house and wandering pigs under and around it.

When it came to dinner, seated on mats on the longhouse floor, the Temonggong produced chicken, rice and fern tops. The Sarawak party clearly enjoyed this food. The visiting Moslems were horrified at the thought of eating chicken that had not been ritually slaughtered by a Moslem and food prepared by infidels. When the Temonggong noticed that some of them were not eating he said "I thought Malays in Malaya, like Malays here, were used to eating rice." The visitors agreed that this was the case. The atmosphere was not improved when the embarrassed visitors heard him bluntly and clearly say, "Oh! So it is MY rice that is not good enough for you. Is that it?"

After the meal, the girls sang songs to the visitors and then offered glasses of borak. Strict Sarawak Moslems, used to ulu habits, would accept the glass, tilt it up but not so far as to allow the liquid to touch their lips and then hand the glass back to the girls with a smile. As good hostesses, the girls differentiated Moslems from non-Moslems. With the Moslems, the girls accepted this ruse, though if a non-Moslem had tried this method of evading drinking the offering, they would, of course, have forced the guest to drink deeply from the glass. Unfortunately, the visitors were revolted by the alcoholic drink and refused to accept the glasses at all. The girls were disconcerted at this and assumed that the visitors disdained their songs and drinks. Then the dances started, including an Orang Ulu type of conga, in which Sir Anthony and John Seal quite obviously happily joined in, but not the visitors.

The trouble with the visitors was that they appeared to have made no attempt to find out in what way life was different in Sarawak when compared with Malaya. Many of them looked down most condescendingly on such towns as Kuching and Sibu and, without this plane accident, would never have seen how people lived away from the towns. Ignorance often breeds contempt. The visitors were quite unable to adapt themselves to conditions that were so different from what they themselves were used to. Does that make them racists? Whether the visitors were or were not intentionally rude to the Orang Ulu, it seems unlikely that the Cobbold Commission's visit to Long Akah increased the Orang Ulu people's desire to experience Malaysia.

With the advent of local government, in Baram District I used to take downriver Malay and Iban headmen travelling with me to upriver Orang Ulu areas and both sides behaved impeccably to each other and used to thank me for what I had done. Since the

formation of Malaysia, I wonder how many rigid fundamentalist Malays, such as a Haji Tuan Imam from Trengganu have been encouraged to spend a night in an Iban longhouse upriver of Lubok Antu – or for that matter an Iban Penghulu to be a guest of a Trengganu village headman?

My own opinion about Sarawak's future was that it was unrealistic to think that an ignorant and biased U.N.O. would have allowed the British (probably not even supported by the United States) to continue with a Colony type of Government undisturbed for a few more years. It must also be admitted that as Government had by now encouraged the formation of political parties and the first one had been registered in 1959, some of these parties were bound to be on racial lines and there would soon emerge an ever increasing pressure by some of the parties for independence. When it comes to it, therefore, the only feasible choice for Sarawakians was to select control by Indonesia or a partnership with Malaya. I am glad to say that so far as Sarawak is concerned, while there have been tensions, Malaysia has resulted in a continuation of the steady increase in prosperity and standard of living in Sarawak that had been started by the British. It is also fair to remind readers that, when Sarawak became Malaysia, it was a quiet, law-abiding state, which was developing satisfactorily in various fields and, due to Government's careful husbandry, Malaysia inherited a state in a financially very sound situation and one in which the people could, if they wished to do so, easily and, without recourse to violence, change their Government and its leadership when a general election took place.

In the run up to Federation, the British Government had not had time to develop the ulu natives, forming the great majority of the population, enough in the realms of local government, education, party politics, etc. Most of the indigenous population had little idea of how local, state or central governments worked in a multi-racial society. If the Ibans had then been asked which they would prefer to have of an Iban Governor or Prime Minister of Sarawak, the ridiculous answer would overwhelmingly have been 'a Governor'! Sadly, by Malaysia Day, many of the desirable attributes that facilitate the proper growth and functioning of a true democracy did not exist in Sarawak. I am thinking of such conditions as one single race, one religion, a standard of living that does not vary unreasonably throughout the state, and, above all, the existence in the towns and countryside of a large, stable, well educated, and tolerant middle class determined to hunt out corruption. In fact, it is interesting that, for well over 90% of the time that Malaysia has existed and despite several state elections, both the Governor and the Chief Minister of Sarawak have been Moslems (and that in a country where only about 25% of the population are Moslems), which must be very pleasing to the Malaysian Government in Kuala Lumpur.

In September 1963 Malaysia was formed with its own State Flag and its own State Anthem. It had its first local Governor (a Malay) and its first Chief Minister (an Iban).

On the occasion of the first visit (in August 1964) by the new Chief Minister (Stephen Kalong Ningkan) to the Ulu Baram, the Kayan Paramount Chief (Temonggong Oyong Lawai Jau) read out a speech. It must be remembered that the Kayans and other Orang Ulu in the past had hated and feared the Ibans. The Temonggong gave me a copy of his speech to the Chief Minister.

“Your Honour,

We the people of the Baram, extend a hearty welcome to your Honour on the occasion of your visit to Long San. Likewise we bid the Resident and the District Officer welcome. We, Kayans and Kenyahs of the Baram are glad indeed to receive you in our midst. We should like to offer you our apologies for not many of us here to-day to receive you. Your Honour has come just at the time when our people are planting their new crop. We were glad to receive the news that you had decided to come and visit us as this the very first time you are pleased to be with us. We sincerely hope both you, Your Honour, and the Resident and the District Officer, will accept our apologies for not having gathered together in great numbers to welcome you. This is our planting season and the work cannot be left undone. Those who have come to welcome you are from many villages. There are those from Long Na-a, Long Liam, Long Tap, Long Tebangan, Long Suniei in the Akah River are present here to-day. Then there are present among us the leaders of each and every village in the Baram as far as Lio Mato. We, all of us Tua Kampongs and Penghulus have come to welcome you. One or two representatives of each village are here to-day to extend their welcome to Your Honour. We are ever so pleased to come and listen to what your Honour has to say us. Even more so as you, Your Honour, is a true Sarawakian yourself. For indeed we Kayans and Kenyahs during the times when we lived our lives under the Rajahs' leadership have always been too pleased to meet the Governor or other leaders of our country, keen as we are to express our gratitude.

Today when we Kayans and Kenyahs are gathered together, we feel perhaps a little less exhilarated. In olden days, when the Rajahs governed our country, life took its course. We had not yet, as we have to-day, experienced the thrust of life of modern times. Then, after the Rajahs, we found ourselves in the King's and Queen's care, the British Government was entrusted with the care of our country Sarawak. There was an increase in prosperity. We, the people of Sarawak, felt at ease. Why? The British Government has done all in its power to stimulate education. As far as the Kelabit, country dressers went to supply the people with the necessary medicines. We have known British rule to be one of extreme helpfulness and consideration.

Now again, we have changed our Government. British rule has taught us the fundamentals of the art of living. But now we have to go our own way. Now we use our own minds. Peace and prosperity in our own country are the subjects of our concern. We think of how to achieve this. We have not acquired sufficient agility of mind. We, the people of Sarawak, are lacking in education. We have entered upon the Federation of Malaysia. We express our sincere wish this step will force us to go ahead steadfastly. And you, Your Honour, are our country's leader together with the Governor. We should have our own way until ever after. This is our wish. We trust in you since we ourselves lack the necessary education. We promise you our full cooperation in carrying out your plans of cultivating wet padi. We sincerely trust that that you will continue to assist those who have already planted rubber. Let people carefully consider the advantages of moving closer together.

The greatest obstacle we upriver people have is our river. We would benefit a great deal by easier travelling. We should not have to brave too hazardous rapids in our rivers. The health of our people leaves much to be desired. We should like

to be within closer reach of a doctor. We are of opinion our governing body should be even more prosperous through the birth of Malaysia. Let us not ignore people's customs which are good and right. We are not many of us but we are many different tribes with many different customs. We would advise our Government to carefully weigh people's customs at their true value. We hope our neighbouring countries will bear us greater love in future. Meanwhile we Kayans and Kenyahs as much as the other tribes in Sarawak, Ibans, Chinese, Malays, Melanaus do not want to submit to difficulties. We, Sarawakians, rejoice at our independence."

## 18 – RESIDENT FIFTH DIVISION 1963 – 1964

In September 1963, on my return from leave I reported to Kuching and was posted to Limbang. We loaded our luggage and ourselves at Kuching on to the 'Kenyalang', a large old wooden hulk of the Buoys & Lights Department, which had a strong roof over part of its deck, and set off down the Sarawak River and out to sea, where we travelled parallel to nearly the whole length of the Sarawak coastline. As we passed Kedurong lighthouse, several miles away from the coast, the coastguard reported the strange phenomenon of an island with trees on it floating from west to east. With the curvature of the earth we were too far away for him to see our boat, but not so far away that he couldn't see our pot plants put on the top deck roof to give them maximum protection in rough weather!

Fifth Division was in the north easternmost area of Sarawak, wedged in between Brunei in the west, Baram District in the south, and North Borneo (later known as Sabah) in the east. Brunei had an enclave (the area of the Temburong River and its tributaries) wedged into Fifth Division. This untidy situation was caused by the surprising action of the British Government, which by 1906, had allowed the Rajah, over half a century, bit by bit to accept cession by the Sultan of 9/10ths of Brunei territory, and then suddenly, put its foot down and refused to agree to the Sultan's request to the Rajah to take over the two remaining remnants of Brunei, surrounded by Sarawak on all sides except for the sea, in exchange for a pension for himself and his family. The two Brunei enclaves in Sarawak territory were not viable units, as both river systems were small and Brunei town had traditionally relied on the Limbang area to keep it going, and so the State of Brunei was a drain on the British treasury until just before the Second World War, when oil was found there. A jeep track ran from the west bank of the Limbang River to the east bank of the Brunei River and another jeep track ran from the east bank of the Limbang River to Bangar, the biggest village in Temburong. Rather than use the jeep track, with the need of arranging a boat on reaching the Brunei River, to get from Limbang to Brunei town (in due course to be known as Bandar Sri Begawan), it was often more convenient to use a launch or speedboat, go down the Limbang River, across Brunei Bay and up the Brunei River. If using a speedboat, it was wise to complete the journey before 10 a.m. as, after that, the water surface in the bay often became very choppy.

Fifth Division consisted of two districts, firstly Limbang District, which covered the area of the Limbang River and its tributaries, wedged in between the main part of Brunei to its west and, in the east, the Brunei enclave of Temburong (covering the Temburong River area), which itself was surrounded by Sarawak on all sides. The Limbang River's source was at Bukit Batu Lawi, a dramatic limestone peak sticking out of the jungle like a thumb 6650 feet (2027m). The other district was Lawas, bounded on the west by Brunei's Temburong and Limbang District, on the south by Baram District and on the east by North Borneo. Its longest river was the Trusan, which rose in the area of Gunong Murud, 7950ft (2423m). Downriver in Limbang were Moslem Kedayans and Malays, while Ibans had moved from elsewhere into the ulu Limbang River. In Lawas Districts were Muruts and Tagals. The Borneo Evangelicals had their H.Q. at Lawas with a small single engined plane and had organised small air strips in the ulu of Lawas and Baram Districts, so that they could keep in contact with their ulu missionaries. The R.Cs. had a mission and a school at Limbang to which our small children went.

Five-year-old Murdo came home one day to show us his first lesson in Chinese characters. He claimed it was the Chinese word for "Spaniel". I queried this and was surprised when it turned out to be true. We were not very long in Limbang and the children did not learn very much, except that Alexa came home one day singing a rather rude song in a mixture of Malay and Chinese. I always found the R.C. priests in Sarawak cheery and very good company provided one did not discuss religion. The ones at Limbang were the exception to the rule being misogynists and would not come to our house.

Though a Divisional H.Q., Limbang town merely consisted of a small and simple bazaar and a Malay kampong. The Residency was a comfortable modern bungalow at the upriver end of the township and built on the top of a small hill, with a lovely view looking westwards over the swamp and the plain towards Brunei town and surrounded by jungle to the east. The Divisional prison was at the foot of this hill. For senior service company we had a periodically inebriated bachelor doctor, whose main pleasure, apart from drinking, was to play loudly a gramophone record of Australian aborigine didgeridoo music – interesting when heard for the first time, but thereafter monotonous. Then there was an unsocial P.W.D. engineer, who soon after our arrival waved farewell for ever to his wife, accompanied as he did so by the local lady who had supplanted her. There were a young Columbo Plan couple from Canada, who belonged to some obscure so-called Christian religion and with whom we had nothing in common. So far as we were concerned, we were very lucky to have an excellent police superintendent, Ramsay Jitam, with a charming wife, Kathleen, and well brought up children of the same age as ours. He was part Sea-Dayak and part Chinese and she was Chinese. Soon after our arrival, the doctor went off on leave to Hong Kong and came back with a wife, Dolly, who was tall for a Chinese. Bunty took her on a tour of Limbang and mentioned that the bazaar was really rather primitive and she would not find any of the delicacies enjoyed by the Hong Kong Chinese. She looked furious, drew herself up to her full height and announced "I would have you know that I am not a Chinese. I come from Macao and my grandfather was the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Manilla!" Kathleen Jitam said to Bunty "What race does that Dolly belong to? She speaks Chinese, she looks Chinese, she acts like a Chinese but says that she is not one." When it came to Christmas, instead of inviting all the other Europeans in Limbang, with whom we had nothing in common, we limited our guests to the Jitams and had one of the nicest Christmases ever. In due course, Ramsay rose high in the Sarawak Constabulary and then in politics. After Christmas, the disagreeable Divisional Engineer was replaced by Chai Boon Poh, a nicer man and a better engineer.

My arrival in Limbang coincided with the celebration of the transfer of Sarawak and North Borneo (to be known as Sabah) from the Crown to join with Malaya and Singapore to form Malaysia. Malcolm McSporran was in charge of the ceremony of hauling down the Union Jack and hauling up the new Malaysian flag and also the new state flag of Sarawak, which was close to the distinctive flag that the Rajahs had used since 1848. The national anthem of Malaysia was played followed by that of Sarawak "Fair land Sarawak we shall always love and honour thee" to a tune and words composed by the wife of the Second Rajah. After this, I took over from Malcolm as Resident. No-one seemed to have thought about replacing the colonial Sarawak flag (a Union Jack with, in a circle in the centre, a version of the Rajah's coat of arms) with the Sarawak state flag on the residency flag pole, and so it carried on flying there (the error unnoticed by anyone) until I could obtain the proper replacement. Being British, I

approved of continuity of the Rajahs' national flag with only gentle changes to show gentle changes in Government.

While on the subject of continuity, when Malaya got its independence, it took over the heraldic coat of arms of the former colony, with its supporters being a Malayan tiger on each side of the shield, with slight suitable variations on the shield due to the change of Government. When a further change of Government took place, the only change in the heraldic shield was the addition of the shields of Sarawak and Sabah to the shields already there of the Malay states. On one occasion I pointed out to Tun Abang Haji Openg that there were no tigers in East Malaysia and no orang utans in west Malaysia (Malaya). It wud, I said, be a very positive symbolical sign to all in Malaysia that all states in Malaysia and both parts of Malaysia were considered equal if the Kuala Lumpur Government removed one of the two tigers and replaced it with an orang utan. The Tun enthusiastically agreed with me and said that he would raise the subject when next in K.L. Nothing however developed from my suggestion and so I presume that the Malaysian Government was unable to appreciate the great value of a small symbolic change, which would greatly please East Malaysia, without, I presume, offending West Malaysia, and that would cost the state little or nothing in cash to implement.

In January 1964, the Chief Minister of Sarawak, Mr. Stephen Kalong Ningkan came to Limbang and he and I went travelling upriver in the Iban area. He told me that he had had a tie designed: dark blue with the new state flag in a shield in the centre. He expected all civil servants to show their loyalty to the new state within Malaysia by buying one. The sentiments were laudable and I still treasure my tie, as it showed the affection Sarawak had for continuing with the flag that had been used, in one form or another for over a century. It was only some time later that I found out that the profit from selling these ties went into the purse of the Chief Minister! I was glad that on gaining independence, Sarawak was able to carry on with a form of the traditional, very distinctive and popular flag, that had been granted to Sarawak by the First Rajah in 1848 and was based on the armorial shield of the Brooke family. Once seen, it would stay in one's memory. On a yellow background the flag had a partly red and partly black cross on it. I was proud to see it flying together with the Malaysian flag in my Residency garden after the formation of Malaysia.

Having arrived in Limbang, I decided that one of my first objects should be to get fully acquainted with the Kedayan villages, which were all downriver and also with the prisoners. After the Rebellion was over, Government had, in the Limbang area, a large number of Kedayans under remand and a very few hard core rebels, who had fled in very small paddle dugouts into the swamps between the Limbang and the Brunei Rivers, which were under water at high tide and certainly could not be called 'dry' at low tide. These people had little to live on in the swamp jungles. They had contacted relatives, who had little enough to live on themselves, and though they gave what they could to those in the jungle, the latter were living at near starvation point and in extreme discomfort due to mosquitos, sandflies and other pernicious wee beasts. The swamp jungles were hot and usually no breeze penetrated them by day and life must have been even more unpleasant in rainy weather. Yet it was several months before the last of these men gave himself up.

The first step for Government was to bring to Court those who could be proved to have carried arms and used them against the authorities and security forces. Even those who

had been proved to have killed Government officers and others were not executed though several, who had been positively active, received long sentences. The small Limbang gaol could not cope with such a large number of prisoners and several convicted men were sent to Sibuan and elsewhere. Limbang had a large godown, rather like an aircraft hangar and a lot of rebels were held there. It was a far from ideal existence for these men. A high barbed wire fence had been put round it and the most that can be said for this 'prison' is that, because the rebels were really nothing other than simple farmers and family men, they were in no way aggressive or difficult to manage. They were not locked up in cells but could roam around, chitchatting to each other. They had little exercise and were well fed and so began putting on weight.

When I had spare time, I used to go along to the godown, with a note pad, and record my conversations with them, finding out when they had taken their first steps to becoming a rebel and why they did so and what had happened to them afterwards.

The picture that emerged of a Kedayan village was of Malay like small wooden houses on stilts, which provided adequate shelter. They were padi planters and most of them had small rubber plantations. They tapped the rubber trees, outside the padi planting cycle, to obtain cash, which was not very much as the rubber was of poor quality. They were good Moslems and some had managed to raise enough money to go on the Hajj to Mecca. They rarely mixed with other races. Prior to coming under the jurisdiction of the Rajah of Sarawak they had been oppressed by the Brunei Sultans.

It soon became clear to me that the Kedayans had not thought about rebellion until the recruitment of the Kedayans to the Indonesian cause had started. Over several years before the Rebellion broke out, the Indonesians had called some members of Partai Rakyat Brunei (Azahari's party) to Indonesia, where they had been well trained and indoctrinated. These Brunei agitators returned to Brunei and, with the help of some individuals sent from Indonesia, had trained other Bruneis. They then began the infiltration and recruitment of Kedayan villages in Brunei and later in Sarawak by individual Bruneis, often accompanied by an Indonesian. In Limbang District, for some reason, probably due to lack of staff, these Bruneis concentrated on most Kedayan villages but left out some. I have not heard that any of the agitators were Sarawakians. The recruiting team members were clearly extroverts, who strutted around and gave themselves titles such as Brigade Commander, Captain, District Officer, etc., and, as evidence of their desire to encourage the Kedayans, made the leading villagers corporals and sergeants. Once they had got one or two in a village to become active rebels, no-one liked to be left out of the 'gang' and so joined it. Some, certainly, joined the 'gang' with dedication and enthusiasm, while others had little interest in becoming rebels or even had misgivings, but above all didn't wish to be left out of the movement that was sweeping through the village. Thus, when the Rebellion broke out, certain villages became active rebel units, while other Kedayan villages, a minority, had taken no part in the Rebellion.

The people I interviewed in the godown could be divided into two types: those who had taken no interest in the indoctrination lectures and who were quite unable to tell me what were the reasons for and the objectives of the movement; and those who had unquestioningly accepted the words of the Brunei and Indonesian instructors and who could rattle off to me parrot fashion the list of their grievances and how the success of the Rebellion would result in an immediate rise in their standard of living. When I asked

these types whether it had not occurred to them to ask their instructors some awkward questions (examples of which I put to them in the godown) they looked mightily surprised at me and said that, being ignorant people, they had implicitly believed all they were told and did not know how to think for themselves.

The agitators had told these simple villagers:-

a) The present Government was oppressive and did not have the good of the people at heart. If it had been a good Government, would the Kedayans not now be rich? Furthermore, all the other races of Sarawak were also longing to overthrow the Government.

b) The whole of Sarawak and Sabah were longing to join with Brunei to form the state of Kalimantan Utara (Northern Borneo). This state would be a democracy with the Sultan of Brunei as its head and Azahari as its prime minister and Indonesia would be its friend and come to its aid as soon as the Rebellion started.

c) The new state would have the Moslem religion as a state religion and Moslems would get preference over others for all the good posts.

d) Those villagers that helped the Rebellion would be suitably rewarded with good jobs in the new state.

e) Brunei's riches would be divided amongst everyone and so all would be rich.

Bunty, the children and I took our Landrover and went along the dirt track from Limbang to the frontier with the Brunei enclave of Temburong. Most of the villages were a pitiable sight. There was not a male to be seen between the ages of 16 and 70, as all the men were dead or in prison. The women had their usual jobs to do and could not carry out all the jobs that their menfolk would have done. It was bad enough coping with the rice crop. They certainly had no time to tap rubber and obtain cash. As a result, the boat hawkers and village shop owners were also suffering hardship. The villages looked unkempt as there was no-one with the time to slash the lalang grass. There were no new babies in the villages and the boys were being brought up fatherless. No pleasure or dislike or interest was shown by the grownups at our presence amongst them – only apathy. I deduced that they did not dislike us, as the children were interested in seeing us (especially as our children were with us) and were not in the least frightened of us. While grownups can hide their true feelings about a visitor, their children cannot disguise theirs, and so will reveal what are the true feelings of their parents. It was clear that their men folk must be sent home as quickly as possible. Meanwhile Government had to provide such items as roofing materials and in some cases rice.

I went over to Lawas to meet a British Army brigadier (who, I seem to remember, was Harry Tuzo, later to become a senior British Army general) and some of his officers to discuss Indonesian confrontation problems in that area. I stood on the edge of a field near Lawas Bazaar until the helicopter had landed. As the British officers emerged, the D.O. Lawas (Abdul Rahman Hamzah) and I advanced across the field when suddenly a mangy bazaar dog streaked across the field yelping loudly. It was followed by another, until there were about ten bazaar dogs who, with tails wagging and showing every sign of doggy pleasure, leaped up at the startled visitors and tried to lick their faces.

I will mention here that a dog's life in a Chinese bazaar is not always one of the happiest. Most of them seem to have mange and I have never seen a fat one. For the dogs, however, one of the side effects of Indonesian confrontation had been that a

British battalion had been posted to Lawas District. The soldiers showered affection on the bazaar dogs, who for once were cosseted and well fed on Her Majesty's rations and were having the time of their lives. Great was the concern of the dogs when the British were replaced by a Gurkha battalion. Gurkhas dislike dogs and so the latter had to return to their old uncongenial way of life. One of these dogs had been snoozing on the outskirts of the bazaar when the helicopter landed and, to its pleasure, it saw that apparently the British troops were back! It gave a happy yelp of surprise which alerted the other dogs, hence, as I approached the Brigadier, I witnessed the joyful canine assault on this senior officer and his party, who, I may say, showed no signs of reciprocating the pleasure that the dogs showered on them.

In Lawas District are a few longhouses occupied by the Tagal tribe. They have two peculiarities – one being that the central part of the longhouse verandah floor is sprung, which enable dancers to bounce up and down on it. Less desirable is a torture that these kind people inflict on their guests. They produce on the communal verandah large jars of borak with a cork in the neck with a hole through it through which the guest can suck up the potion. The cork is also pierced with another hole through which is a cane, smaller than the hole so that the cane can move easily up and down through it. A short distance below the cork a float is fastened tightly to it. This float rests on the surface of the liquid in the jar. That part of the cane that is above the cork is marked with bands at intervals, the space between each mark being far more than the volume of one very large tumbler. With much laughter and happiness on the faces of the Tagals, the unfortunate guest has to bend over the jar and suck up borak as quickly as possible and preferably without stopping until the descending float shows that he had consumed the volume of liquid between two marks. The provider of the borak becomes upset if you fail to consume the full amount between two marks! On arrival for my first visit ever to these people, I was consoled that, now that these people had been converted by the B.E.M., they would be teetotal and an alcoholic drinking session was a thing of the past. What was my disappointment to find that whether they were teetotal or not, for my visit they had reverted to their old ways. If I had to undergo this torture, I preferred to be the first to suck through the cane. The question of hygiene didn't seem to worry the Tagals as they took turns in lowering the float. I was revolted by the brew offered me and I failed dismally to drink up the required amount. I must admit that when, after the drinking session, dancing began and more and more of us were hopping up and down on the sprung staging; there was uninhibited merriment and a good time was had by all.

Courtesy of the Royal Malaysian Airforce, the D.O. Lawas and I were flown by helicopter to the airstrip at Bah Kelalan, which is near one of the sources of the Trusan River, close to Mount Murud (7950 feet and Sarawak's highest mountain) and only a few kilometres from the Indonesian frontier. The scenery was magnificent as we followed up the valley of the winding river along jungle covered mountain sides and in some areas flew over dramatic sheer sided high limestone peaks.

Close to the airstrip was the camp of a company of, I think, the Royal Leicestershire Regiment and about a mile away there was a large longhouse of Kelabits. My party was entertained by the British soldiers and we discussed confrontation problems. I was interested at the friendliness shown between the British troops and the Kelabits, who, during daylight hours, were able to wander round the camp and exchange cigarettes with the soldiers. Equally, during daylight hours, the soldiers could, if they so wished, wander around the Kelabit longhouse. I was hot and went for a cooling swim in the cold

river straight from the mountain. The soldiers watched me in amazement as they were forbidden to bathe in the stream in case of bilharzia! I later met Gurkha troops, who also were forbidden to swim in Sarawak Rivers. The Sarawakians never worried about bilharzia and swam and cooled off happily in streams large and small, provided there were no crocodiles nearby. I, of course, had always enjoyed my dips in the rivers when travelling. I never heard of a single case of bilharzia in Sarawak. How sad for these troops in the Sarawak climate never to be able to enjoy a bathe in a mountain river.

About 4 p.m. I announced that I would go over to the longhouse for the night. In no uncertain terms I was told that this was impossible as the Army could not carry out its responsibility for looking after my party in the event of an Indonesian attack unless we stayed within their perimeter. I pointed out that I would have been greatly distressed if I, as Resident of the Division, felt I would not be safe spending the night with any of the people in my Division and they would have been insulted if I had shown that I did not trust them to show their usual hospitality to guests, including looking after my safety and that of my party. Furthermore, it was tradition that, when they had all returned home from their farming areas at the end of the day, that was the time for entertainment, hearing Court cases, listening to complaints, exchanging information and generally keeping up to date about what was going on. I wanted to find out what they knew about what was happening on the other side of the frontier and to find out if the relationship with the military was the best possible. The soldiers were aghast at my decision and I had to assure them that I would not hold them responsible if anything should happen to me. Needless to say, nothing untoward happened during the night but I did have a twinge of anxiety when I thought how easily an Indonesian force could have captured me.

It was Hari Raya and Bunty, Murdo, Alexa and I were visiting Malay dignitaries on a pre-arranged programme. At one point, a distinguished looking man, dressed in a silk shirt and a beautiful gold and silver embroidered sarong and with a new songkok on his head, appeared and asked me to come to his house. I did not recognise him and so politely said that I would do so only if there was time when I had completed my fixed programme. However Murdo said "Daddy, it's Abang Mat, I would like to call in on him. We are his friend". I was startled and then realised that he was our garbage remover man and was usually dressed in a pair of skimpy pants, with uncombed hair and looked as if he came from a very poor background, which he probably did. However the title 'Abang' signified that his ancestors were upper class and even if he had next to no property, he had carefully kept and looked after the fine clothes that had been handed down generation by generation. Our garbage man was the last person I wished to offend, so we went down the side lane and we were well entertained in his home.

Sambas had been a hard core rebel and was the father of the Limbang River's rebel leader, still holding out in the swampy jungle. Sambas was imprisoned in the small gaol that was at the foot of the steep hill on top of which had been built the Residency. He became the Residency gardener and, of course, the children spent a lot of time with him. He was a big strong man for a Kedayan and it soon became clear that he had made a great faux pas in not only becoming a rebel but a very effective one. Doubtless, before rebelling, he had been a capable farmer. The head of the prison agreed that there was no point in Sambas being accompanied by a warder during his gardening hours and so Sambas was let out of prison to come to us and be re-admitted when he went down the hill again in the evening.

Bunty and I put on a little party for the Gurkha officers camped near Limbang. Sambas watched how busy Bunty and others were with the preparations for the party and asked if he could help. Bunty sent him down to the gaol to get permission to help with the preparations and then, that evening, serve drinks and food. He returned, not in his prison shorts, but in a respectable shirt and a sarong over his trousers. He was a Moslem and so Bunty pointed out what ingredients were and what dishes contained pork and was amused that he nevertheless helped serving those dishes just as he did with others. As the party was coming to its close and Bunty was talking to an officer who was a Gurkha, Sambas arrived and asked if he might go now, as otherwise he might miss his meal. Bunty thanked him profusely and off he went. The officer enquired where he lived and Bunty said "At the bottom of the hill." The officer looked puzzled and said "I didn't know there is a Malay kampong there." Bunty said, "There isn't. He is a prisoner." The officer enquired what was the crime that he had committed and when told that he was a rebel, he said "But what is the object of our being here? We are here to protect you from the rebels and here is a hardened rebel flitting around your house and playing with your children."

## 19 – RESIDENT THIRD DIVISION 1964

As I had only recently been made a Resident 2<sup>nd</sup> Class, I was the dogsbody who would continually be changing jobs as, in turn, I replaced the proper incumbent while he went on leave. So, in March 1964 I took over as Resident Third Division. The Residency in Sibu had a downstairs reception area and another one upstairs with a large balcony facing north and giving a magnificent view of the Rejang at its widest point (about a mile wide). At spring tides, especially if there was flood water coming down the river, the garden flooded. From the balcony, one could see far down river the Norwegian or Dutch 4,000 ton cargo boats (with a tiny passenger capacity) coming majestically round the bend on the powerful incoming tide – a very fine sight. Between the house and the river bank was a grassy area big enough for a helicopter to land on.

The Third Division was the largest Sarawak Division with an area of nearly 25,000 square miles (64,750 Sq. km) with a population of over 260,000, consisting of Ibans (Sea-Dayaks), Chinese, Malays, Melanaus, and Orang Ulu. At the time I first went to Sibu in 1947 it could still be called an island, as at low water there was a large ditch that flooded at high tide. By 1964 this ditch had filled up and was a muddy ditch with ginger plants growing wild in the mud. These ginger plants had fine bunches of white flowers, which emitted a powerful but attractive tropical style perfume. Sibu bazaar, with modern shophouses built on filled in land so that they were above normal high water, was on the mainland, as were the offices of Sibu Urban and Sibu Rural District Councils. The Government offices, Island Club, Hospital and Resthouse were on what used to be the island. Many of the Chinese private houses were built on stilts on the river banks with rickety raised plank walks joining them to each other and to floating wharves on the river bank and to a raised motorable though narrow road. The Government wharf was on the island and made of Belian or Iron wood, which did not rot in fresh or salt water and which was so heavy that it did not float. The wharves for the cargo boats were on the mainland and made of concrete and nearby were many floating rafts tied to each other, which acted as wharves for the Chinese launches, which served the various bazaars up and down the various rivers and which also sailed out to sea to places like Kuching and Mukah.

By the River Igan was Kampong Nangka, which had been a Melanau longhouse, vestiges of which remained, but was now mostly separate houses on stilts. Some of these people were Roman Catholics, a few were still pagans but the majority were Moslems. Though there were the usual Chinese Cantonese, Hokkiens, Heng Huas and Teo Chews in Sibu, the predominant Chinese group consisted of Foochows and a lot of these were Methodists. The Second Rajah had encouraged the Foochows to come to Sibu and the Lower Rejang area in the early 1900s as rice farmers, but these industrious people soon gave up rice planting and grew prosperous on rubber instead. Later, many of them planted pepper and more recently a few families grew rich by large scale participation in the timber industry, including sawmills. The Hokkiens had been the dominant economic race but, in Sibu, had now been overtaken by the Foochows, whom they looked down upon as being brash and uncouth, hence there was a certain amount of strain between the two groups. The Foochows were originally rough peasants and normally did not talk to each other so much as shout at each other. It was said that if a group of Foochows were talking and could not be heard by observers several yards away, then they must be discussing some nefarious or illegal business.

In such a low lying area, Sibu had a negligible road system, though, when I was there, a 30 mile road was being built, among small hills with swamps between them, to the Oya River to open up new agricultural land. Communications were therefore mostly by boat, from perahus and speed boats (propelled by outboard engines) to Chinese launches. The nearest Iban longhouse was on the other side of the Rejang from the town. A small airport had been built on the outskirts of Sibu, from which planes went west to Kuching, east to Bintulu, Miri and Brunei and north to Mukah. Sibu was the second most important town in Sarawak. The total population of Sibu's urban and rural areas totalled 77,282 in 1960. Incidentally, road building in large parts of northern Sarawak – and certainly near Sibu - was a menace to the unwary contractor who tendered to build a stretch of road. At first sight the area looked like small hills with flat land around them. When the first traffic crossed the flat land between two hills, the new road soon sank down into the swamp. The unfortunate contractor had to build another road above his original one and that too would sink down. By the time he had made a road that did not sink, he would have lost a lot of money.



Left to Right: Author, Peter Tinggom (D.O. Kapit), Dato Temonggong Jugah and Alfred Mason at Jugah's house at Ng. Gaat Balleh, April 1964

The Orang Ulu Kenyah longhouses at Long Jawi were the most isolated villages in Sarawak, situated in a largely unmapped area between the Hose Mountains and the Indonesian frontier. Because of confrontation, Gurkha troops had been helicoptered in together with a Field Force (armed police) detachment and some Iban Border Scouts, and a camp was set up next to the village. The troops had a strong transmitter/ receiver with them and, in the event of an Indonesian attack, the Gurkhas could call up standby forces to come to their immediate aid by helicopter. It was here in September 1963 that one of the few reverses suffered by our troops occurred. A well organised Indonesian raid took place at dawn and the first the Gurkhas knew of it was when mortar bombs

landed amongst them, one of which destroyed the transmitter and so the Gurkhas could not call for help. The party suffered some casualties and some Border Scouts were captured. Morale amongst the villagers had slumped. In April 1964, with the Sarawak Information Officer, Alastair Morrison and his wife Hedda, I was flown to Long Jawi by Royal Navy helicopter to await the arrival of Datu Temonggong Jugah (Federal Minister for Sarawak Affairs), and Alfred Mason (his Political Secretary, who a few years earlier had been one of my Sarawak Administrative Officers in Lubok Antu), the DO Kapit (Peter Tinggom) and Penghulu Hang Nyipa. They were welcomed by a Guard of Honour of the 6th Gurkha Rifles and the Border Scouts. That evening we were all given the traditional Kenyah welcome going on well into the early hours of the morning and it was clear that, helped by a stronger force of Gurkhas than had been there before, village morale was once again high.



Views of Royal Navy helicopter at Long Jawi and the village with the helicopter in the centre, 1964

In a clearing amongst the rubber trees on the outskirts of the Sibu suburb of Sungei Merah, a Foochow had built his wooden house on stilts. His prosperity was increasing and as evidence of this he bought himself a safe and had had a party to show it off. It is interesting that he had never opened a bank account. Some months later, when he had gone shopping in Sungei Merah, he heard that his house had caught fire. He rushed home to find that his house had been burnt to the ground. His weeping wife told him that the fire spread so quickly that little could be rescued but she had organized neighbours to save the safe. He said "You silly woman. You don't think, do you, that, after that party I would keep my money in the safe? I kept it under the mattress." He then opened the safe which was quite empty! I find it interesting that he didn't trust his wife enough to tell her where he kept his money.

Though the British troops were liked by the Sarawakians, the Gurkhas were even more popular. I hadn't been long in Sibu, when the Gurkhas were replaced by the Royal Ulster Rifles. Not long after the change over the Irish celebrated St. Patrick's Day with their usual gusto and more than a small amount of drinking and singing. I asked a Chinese headman how he found the Irish as compared with the Gurkhas. He very diplomatically said that the Irish were very nice but he found them "slightly more boisterous" than the Gurkhas – an understatement if ever there was one about the behaviour of the Irish on St. Patrick's Day.

Abang Haji Openg had been appointed in 1924 as a Native Officer. During the Japanese occupation he had carried on his job, but had not acted in what could have been called an illegal manner under international law. He had been promoted to the Senior Service in 1951 and when I was Private Secretary, he was D.O. Kuching. He

was created a Datu and in 1963 he was President of the Majlis Islam (Moslem Council). On being chosen as the first State Governor of Sarawak, he was given the title of Tun.

Soon after my arrival in Sibuan, he decided he would like to visit the coastal Melanau Islam fishing village of Matu in the Rejang delta. Bunty, the children and I went downriver in my launch and transferred in the delta to his yacht, the 'Zahora', which had come from Kuching. We were well entertained by the local people and the Tun solemnly went round blessing the crops in a ceremony much closer to the Melanau pagan past than fundamentalist Moslems would have approved of!

After the visit, I said farewell to His Excellency, transferred back to my launch and we sailed to a B.C.L. logging camp on the banks of one of the tributaries of the Rejang delta, tying up at its floating wharf. The wharf was connected by a walkway on stilts to terra firma. Bunty and I were sitting with the Manager on his verandah about 150 metres from the wharf, when we saw Murdo running towards us and eventually gathered that he had shoved Alexa into the river, which was tidal and, I had noticed, was flowing very fast indeed. With fear clutching at our hearts, we galloped towards the wharf, where we found a dripping Alexa and equally wet sailor. He had seen her fall in and rescued her just before she was swept under the floating raft! Three year old Alexa was very beligerent with me. Her words were "You told me, Daddy, always to keep my eyes open under water. Well, I did so but in this brown water I couldn't see anything". It turned out that Murdo hadn't 'shoved' her in. They had been playing boomp-a-daisy and after one 'boomp', Alexa had lost her balance and fallen in.

I wrote a letter of thanks to H.E. for his hospitality and told him about the above episode. I got a letter by return of post from him, castigating me for not looking after my children properly. He considered we had delightful children and his wife and he were quite upset at the thought of what might have happened!

In North Borneo there lived a planter who periodically came home on leave and stayed with his two maiden sisters in Cheltenham. To their regret, all their efforts to get their brother Robin married off while on leave came to naught as he refused to fall for the enticements displayed by the eligible and attractive ladies invited to meet him. In 1954, one of Robin's nephews was newly appointed as a police officer to Sarawak. On his way there, he arrived in Singapore and saw on the front page of the Straits Times a long article with pictures on the marriage of an up and coming Eurasian newspaper publisher, called Donald Stevens to a Miss Lutter, who turned out to be the daughter of the policeman's Uncle Robin. The policeman did not enlighten either the aunts (or indeed his father) that the reason their brother failed to respond to the female wiles of the Cheltenham beauties was because he was happily married with a large family in North Borneo.

After independence within Malaysia, Donald Stevens became the first Chief Minister of North Borneo, now renamed Sabah. One day, the two sisters in Cheltenham received a message from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London that the Chief Minister of Sabah would be calling on them. They presumed that this must be because he was a friend of dear Robin. In due course a huge chauffeur driven car with a flag on it stopped outside their front door (to the interest of all their neighbours) and they were greatly surprised when the Chief Minister bounded up the front steps and greeted each of them with a hug and a kiss and that he called them "Auntie". Later on, when he said "I expect

that you would like to see the latest photos of your nephews and nieces" and produced a photograph album. With a shock the penny began to drop as to why Robin had not surrendered to the blandishments of the females paraded before him in Cheltenham.

A fortnight before Neil was born, Bunty and I received the message that the Chief Ministers of Sarawak (Ningkan) and Sabah (Donald Stevens), accompanied by their wives and Ningkan's young son, had decided to spend two nights with us. The official programme recorded that during the day, the two Chief Ministers and I would visit a few longhouses on the banks of the Rejang, return to the Residency by 4 p.m. and that night there would be a large drinks party at the Residency for local notabilities to meet them.

All concerned were told that the trip upriver was on a tight schedule and it was most important that we kept rigidly to the programme. I particularly pointed out to Ningkan the necessity of refusing the pressing invitations of each of our hosts to have 'just one more for the road'. The Ibans in each longhouse were delighted to have an Iban Chief Minister visiting them. They were not willing to let him leave at the time stated on the programme and pressed him to stay longer with them – an attitude that the C.M., having forgotten or decided to ignore my instructions to him, fell in with only too eagerly. It was not long before Ningkan was happily tipsy and increasingly unwilling to offend his hosts. At the first longhouse I twice got the C.M. to go down the tangga and twice he succumbed to local pressure and returned to the longhouse for further entertainment. We left the first longhouse about an hour late. As we journeyed to the next house, the C.M. agreed to my entreaties to be firm in resisting appeals to have one more for the road. I reminded him that we were due back at the Residency for tea and then had to get ready for the reception that evening. I may say that when I struggled at each longhouse to get the party to leave, I got no support from Donald Stevens, the Sabah C.M. Indeed by now all of them were definitely drunk. Ningkan had the bit between his teeth. As a minor member of the party, I had been able to avoid drinking the quantities that the main guests had happily absorbed, nevertheless, I found it increasingly difficult to keep my objectives in view. Ningkan was revelling in the adulation of the Ibans at having the Iban Chief Minister of Sarawak in their longhouse and doubtless was certainly not averse that Donald Stevens was a witness to Ningkan's popularity. At about 5.30 p.m. we arrived at our last longhouse near the mouth of the Kanowit River and now for the first time I was able to send an urgent note by boat to the nearby D.O. Kanowit to contact Bunty about our disgraceful lateness.

Meanwhile, quite naturally, heavily pregnant Bunty was getting extremely worried. She interrupted her preparations for the party (preparations, in which she had expected me to play a considerable part) by 'phoning Roger Edwards, the Superintendent of Police, who knew nothing about where we were. They kept on 'phoning each other. Then the D.O. Kanowit's message arrived. Bunty, I am proud to say, played the part of Mrs Resident magnificently. She took charge and told the Superintendent to get on to the Royal Navy and organise a helicopter and got sympathy by saying that she was 8 months pregnant. Kanowit got a message to me that a helicopter would land across river at the Rural Improvement School at 6.45p.m. and that it would not turn its engine off and that it was on a tight schedule, and would we please be punctual. Armed with this message, I got Donald Stevens and the two ladies to leave the house immediately and on to the boat. Even then Ningkan was reluctant to leave and in the friendliest manner possible I took hold of his arm and we staggered to the boat. We were nearly

half an hour late for our helicopter appointment; the pilot looked at our drunken party in amazement and did not mince his words about our unpunctuality.

At 7 p.m., Bunty (and our future son, Neil) were calmly welcoming the guests on the doorsteps of the Residency. Standing for a long period shaking the hands of over 100 guests (in her condition) would, I am sure, have been disapproved of in the best manuals on how to behave during pregnancy. The guests went in to find no host and no V.I.Ps., whom they'd come to meet. About 7.30pm, there was the deafening roar of the helicopter landing in the garden and shortly afterwards a filthy, drunkenly happy group, stinking soaked with the tuak which the girls had poured over them, when their victims had resisted drinking any more out of a proffered glassful, erupted into the reception room amongst a dead silence. Bunty and I got our guests to go immediately to their rooms. Ling Beng Siew helped Bunty greatly by going up to her and advising her to have black coffee sent to the bedrooms of the guests as soon as possible.

Next morning preparations were going on for despatching our guests to the airport. The arrangement for the school run was that certain children were delivered to the Residency and the parents took it in turn to take them from there to the school. On this occasion, it was Lillian Mook Foo's turn. So as not to disturb our guests, Bunty had arranged that, on arrival, Philip Shaeffer and Elisabeth Gibbs should go quietly up the back stairs. Shortly before departure Lilian's daughter, Kit Sun, had become sick and so Lillian could not leave her house. So it was Bunty who had suddenly and unexpectedly to amend her programme so as to get these two children and our two unseen down the stairs and as they crept out of the Residency, they were seen by Mrs Ningkan and her small boy and then by Mrs Stevens, who announced that they plus the Ningkan boy would come too. We had a Mini. Mrs Stevens, with two children on her lap, sat in front and Mrs Ningkan with three children was in the back. By now Bunty was close to being late for delivering them to school. The police on the gate had a written schedule of who was coming and going and when. They were nonplussed and thrown into a tizz when an unscheduled Bunty with children and the Chief Ministers' wives shot out of the gate at great speed. She had no time to explain the situation to the police. After delivering the children, she passed close to the shopping area and the two ladies insisted that they get out to see the shops, ignoring Bunty's words about missing the departure time for leaving the Residency to go to the airport. They shot into different shops. Bunty would collect one, put her in the car and tell her to stay there while she went for the other. When she returned to the car, the other wife had disappeared. Eventually Bunty managed to get both ladies to stay in the car at the same time. She hurtled back to the Residency to find two angry chief ministers and me standing on the doorstep, where we had been for some time, not knowing why our wives had disappeared so suddenly.

The day before Neil was born, the Governor and his wife arrived by boat in Sibu and called on us at tea time. They hadn't realised how far advanced Bunty was in her pregnancy and showed great concern at having caused her to have an official appointment at such a time. They then left Sibu by air for Kuching.

In the middle of that night Bunty woke me up and said quite calmly "Ian. Take your pillow and sheet, I think I am going into the first stages of labour". Sleepily, I set off but hadn't got to the bedroom door when she said, in what was undoubtedly a crisis sort of a voice "Ian. Come back. I think the baby is on the way and may arrive before the midwife can get here. I will give you a quick course on midwifery". To my undoubted

relief, the midwife (who had her own baby a fortnight later) did arrive in time. It took only 55 minutes from when Bunty woke up for Neil to arrive. I rushed downstairs to get Bunty a brandy soda, but having reached the bedroom, felt my need was greater than hers and quaffed the lot!

Next morning Murdo and Alexa were brought in to see their baby – the real baby that they had asked for and whom (according to our agreement with them) they would now have to look after. It was a few months later, as they were cleaning him up and changing his nappy, that I heard Alexa say, "Murdo. We were very silly to ask Mummy and Daddy for a baby. Neil has been a great nuisance to us, hasn't he?" In fact they were both devoted to their baby brother.

I had to take a visitor to a nearby Iban longhouse. I had warned him that he might not enjoy his drink and not to under estimate its potency. When we accepted our first glassfuls, I was startled to find that it was quite different from the usual and then I suddenly realised that I was an accomplice in breaking the law as my drink had been made out of pepper corns. These Ibans, who lived near the Chinese were obviously beginning to alter some of their traditional ways of life. I didn't feel it incumbent on me to point out to them that, while they could brew 'traditional' drinks without having to pay excise duty, they were quite clearly breaking the law by making a non-traditional wine without paying a tax to Government! In my opinion, this pepper wine was much more acceptable than the usual tuak.

Periodically, Tibetans or Nepalese Tibetans would appear on the streets, with the goods they wished to sell tied up in large cloths. A lot of the popular goods that they sold to the Chinese were supposed to be aphrodisiacs and included various unmentionable parts of a deer such as dried penises. They also sold jewels. These men wore the clothes that would have been suitable in their mountain refuges and they looked and smelt as though they had never removed these clothes or had a wash since leaving the Himalayas. Various experts told us that the stones they sold were often, but not always, the genuine article and could be obtained at a very much lower price than in a shop. Bunty asked one of them what jewels he had and he showed her items that even to her untutored eye looked like glass and so she scornfully moved away. He then told her to wait. He undid his belt and nearly undressed himself as he felt deep inside his clothes and extracted from somewhere near his skin a dirty handkerchief in which were glittering stones of various sizes, which he claimed were white sapphires. I guess that it was the first time that Sibuites had seen any Mr. and Mrs. Resident squatting down on the pavement with a Tibetan, as Bunty selected and graded in size enough stones to make a necklace and matching earrings. There was then much haggling and we got them for a ridiculously cheap price, provided they were the genuine article. We then took the sapphires to a Cantonese goldsmith, who thought they were genuine gems and who made them into a very nice necklace and earrings. This cost more than did the stones. Later we asked a Government geologist if the gems were sapphires and he said that he was 90% sure that they were, but couldn't be 100% sure without submitting the stones to a process that might damage them.

In our back garden, near the raised passageway from the house to the kitchen and kitchen quarters (where the children often played), was a Kayu Ara, that is a Banyan tree with aerial roots hanging down and which would eventually reach the ground. All the natives in Sarawak, including devout Moslems, believe that spirits dwell in Kayu Ara

and branches of such trees must never be cut or damaged, and certainly the trees should never be felled or dreadful events will affect those concerned. A swarm of aggressive bees settled in our Kayu Ara and, in conversation with Datu Tuanku Bujang, the senior Malay in Third Division, Bunty puttered to him about the bees. The Datu came next day and told us not to watch him but go back into the house. We peeped out and saw him shake a powder on to the tree and, as he did so, he incanted. By next day the bees had left.

We have had some peculiar Christmas cards from both Christians and non-Christians in Sarawak. Most British Christians visualise a white Christmas with a heavily garbed Father Christmas. In the tropics it is inappropriate to try to imitate the Victorian idea of what a Christmas should be and certainly Father Christmas doesn't need warm clothes. The main shopping area of Sibu consisted of rows of shophouses painted white. On the sunny side of the street one is dazzled by the bright reflections of a strong sun on the white walls. One Chinese shopkeeper sent us a Christmas card with a photograph on its cover of his own shophouse and part of its street with a mixture of glare and strong shadows and inside was a poem that began "Christmastide is here again, cold the wintry winds are blowing; see the holly and the ivy." A Christian Iban did not consider it inappropriate to send us his Christmas wishes on a postcard showing smoked human skulls hanging on the wall of a traditional Iban longhouse!

In my capacity as Resident, I was Chairman of the Divisional Executive Committee to co-ordinate the activities of the military, the police and the civil administration in connection with 'Confrontation' and the C.C.O.

So far as the C.C.O. was concerned, the extensive system of waterways that made up the Rejang River delta was an ideal area in which a clandestine organisation could function safely. The Chinese in this area were largely rubber garden owners, market gardeners, fishermen and a few who worked in logging establishments. They were self-sufficient and scarcely mixed with the natives, who therefore had little idea about who did or did not belong to the C.C.O. The majority of the Chinese merely wished to be left alone to get on with their livelihoods. The hard core of dedicated C.C.O. were often idealist and immature late teenagers and those who had, over the past few years, left the Chinese schools. They could easily bring pressure on to the farming population to give them cash, food or other help by threatening to burn down their property or harm their children and there was little the police or military could do to protect the anti-C.C.O. inhabitants against the carrying out of such threats.

The military and police had fast boats to patrol the delta waterways, but these boats were noisy and could be recognized from a distance for what they were. The fishermen all had the same type of traditionally built Chinese sea-going boats with large human eyes painted on either side of the bow. These boats could use sails but mostly relied on chugging diesel engines.

The Divisional Executive Committee agreed that a few of these boats should be purchased for use by the military. However, the results of using local boats to catch the C.C.O. unawares didn't have the hoped for effective success rate. Perhaps this was because, unlike the Chinese, the British soldiers strung their recently washed underpants (British pattern) on a line between the two masts to dry, and these could be

recognized from far away. In any case the Chinese never hung out their clothes on their boats to dry!

Bunty and I, having returned to Sibu only four years after the end of our previous posting there, were delighted to meet again lots of personal friends of all races, several of whom had children of the same age group as ours. Bunty happily accepted Joan Gibbs' invitation to an informal party to meet a lot of these old friends. We felt very relaxed and were greatly enjoying ourselves, when one of the party went up to Bunty and said "You do realise, don't you, that none of us can leave till you do?" It had never occurred to us that even in a friendly gathering like this, the official protocol held sway.

May Day was a public holiday. The left wing Chinese of Sibu had organised a big public meeting. To the astonishment and embarrassment of the organisers, I turned up, congratulated them on their organisation and said how nice it was that we workers – for I too was a worker and probably worked longer hours than many of them did – could all celebrate peacefully together on this auspicious occasion. None of them knew how to cope with my unwelcome presence and none tried to deny that I was a worker. To their undoubted relief, having shown my solidarity with them as one of 'we workers', I soon left the meeting.

Some of the really hardcore Limbang rebel prisoners had been sent to Sibu gaol and I went and called on them there. As a result I engaged two charming rebels, who had been ruthless murderers, to come daily to look after the Residency garden. They were missing their families and so spent much of the time, when they should have been gardening, playing with our children, who grew to be very fond of them. We have some nice photos of Mahat bin Ajap holding the newly born Neil and Mahat bin Ajap with Haji Daud bin Osman, Murdo and Alexa.



When the time came to leave Sibu, they asked if they could come to the airport to see us off. The prison authorities agreed and a warder accompanied them there, having first ensured that their prison uniform had been replaced by ordinary clothes. One of Bunty's friends enquired who were this group of people whom she had never seen before and was mightily astonished to be told that they were Brunei Rebellion murderers!

While heavily pregnant with Neil, Bunty went shopping in our local butcher, groceries, cold storage shop called Kim Guan Siang. Old grandma Kim looked sympathetically at her and said "What you want is turtle meat soup" and she pointed to a river turtle, which they had for sale. Bunty declined. She had hardly got home when the shop's messenger arrived on his bicycle and delivered the chopped up turtle and full instructions on how to cook it. We all enjoyed the soup and much appreciated the friendliness shown.

Buntty had once bought some rusa (a local variety of sambhur deer) from a market stall holder – a rare luxury in Sibul. Thereafter, whenever this stall holder had venison, he sent her a message giving her first refusal for a piece of fillet of steak.

We took local leave and went for a week to Mukah on the coast but I was called back to Sibul urgently and a helicopter was sent to pick us up. We assembled on the airstrip with our light luggage – our houseboy would take our heavy luggage by the usual long roundabout route to Sibul. The helicopter was on a tight schedule so we pushed Murdo and Alexa in and then Neil, in his carrycot, and belted ourselves in. Neil's carrycot was under where I was sitting, which was opposite the door. In that climate, the crew did not trouble to close the helicopter's door and, indeed, a member of the crew sat in the doorway, cooling his legs in the breeze by letting them dangle down outside. Shortly after take-off, the helicopter did a steep turn so as to face the direction of Sibul, which meant that the floor tilted steeply and I could see through the door the dense jungle below. Thank God for the seatbelts, as with gravity, Buntty and I would have been unable to stay seated on our seats and would have slid across the floor and out of that door. As I braced myself against the gravitational pull, I suddenly felt Neil's carrycot pressing against the calves of my leg as it too wished to glide on the floor and out of that door. The belts being what they were, I was unable to bend down and get hold of the carry cot. I had to use every ounce of strength that I had to keep my feet in contact with the floor and thus keep the carry cot where it was under my seat. Mercifully, the helicopter soon came out of its steep turn and I could then take steps to avoid our recently born Neil hurtling down into the jungle should our transport do another such manoeuvre.

Ningkang wished to make a quick visit to the Belaga area and he and I flew to the Belaga airstrip, where we were met by a speedboat driven by Abang Suhaili. At its stern was the usual recess, in which the powerful outboard was attached and from which control cables went to the bow, where the driver sat. Either side of the engine recess was room for one person to sit, thus Ningkan and I were right at the back of the boat, with the engine between us.

At one stage, we were going downriver and reached an area of rapids. Obviously I didn't have as good a view ahead as did Suhaili, nevertheless as he approached at speed a big waterfall I was startled and surprised that he had not pulled into the bank before reaching it and was obviously intending to jump it. When we were some 30 feet from it, he suddenly changed his mind and swung the wheel so that the boat faced upriver. The trouble with this was that the different pressure felt by the propeller, as the boat was first sideways on to the current and then facing upstream, meant that the propeller started to race and was not gripping the water. Ningkan and I were dismayed as we looked over our shoulders and realised that the boat was drifting swiftly backwards to the edge of the waterfall, which we could now see was about a five foot drop – if one was going to jump a waterfall at speed, this way to do it struck us as by far the worst. I felt a tinge of panic at the fact that there was nothing I could do to remedy the situation and I remember thinking how unpleasant it would be if I survived, while the Chief Minister was under my care, and he didn't. It seemed inevitable that the boat could not avoid jumping the rapids, when, astonishingly, the propeller began to sound more normal and was gradually starting to grip. The water was going so fast that the boat went on, ever slower, going backwards. The speed of the water was such, that very little dribbled down the vertical wall of the waterfall while quite a lot continued

flowing straight forwards before going downwards. Ningkan, the back of the boat and I were thus on the very edge of the waterfall and we could look straight down it, while the propeller was still in the water that jutted forwards before gravity forced it to turn downwards and, to our undoubted and astonished relief, it was at this point (beyond the edge of the waterfall!) that the propeller really began to grip properly. It held us where we were, in this extremely dangerous position, and then, at first imperceptibly, started to push the speedboat upstream and our morale began to improve. When we were well clear of the waterfall, we smiled at one another but not a word was said by any of the three of us during the whole episode – words were superfluous.

It was on the same trip, in a narrow river, that I saw a sight that I had periodically seen before and always enjoyed as one of the pleasures of travelling in the ulu. We were going upstream and saw a beautiful kingfisher on a branch stretching out over the river. As we approached it, it showed every sign of worry and flew to another branch in front of us and continued to do so until, apparently, we had reached its boundary and then, with much screeching, it decided to risk flying past us as it flew downstream and so stayed in its own stretch of river. This had given us a really good chance to look at this lovely bird.

Griffin returned from leave and took over Third Division and I moved to Miri to take over Fourth Division.

## 20 – RESIDENT FOURTH DIVISION 1964 – 1965

Fourth Division comprised Miri, Baram and Bintulu Districts with the Divisional H.Q. at Miri.

The river at Miri is insignificant and, as it has a bar at its mouth, it is only at high tide that boats drawing less than five feet can sail into the river. The country there is a mixture of swamps or steep sided, flat topped low hills. In 1910, oil was found on one of these hills and it is a tribute to British engineering that that Heath Robinson-like machine, Oil Rig No. 1, went on functioning until long after Malaysia Day when the last drop of that oil had been extracted and no spare parts had been needed! More oil was found in the swamps and so the oil refinery was erected at Lutong next door to Miri. The water table of the original jungle swamps around Lutong was near the surface of the soil, which was covered in oil but this did not inhibit plant growth including beautiful clusters of Sealing Wax Palms (*Cyrtostachys*). At night, Lutong was lit up by flares of surplus burning gas, which the Oil Company at that time was unable to use for other purposes. The bazaar, hotels and Government buildings were one side of the river and the hospital and Malay/Melanau village the other.

Not far from the bazaar, one of the flat topped hills was next to the sea with sheer cliffs rising out of the water. On this cliff was the Residency with a wide view overlooking the sea and the bazaar. Unfortunately, the soil up there was unfertile and a painful effort was needed to make flower beds or for tropical shrubs to grow. However, with the help of some mulching, tall Vanda Joachim ground orchids flourished happily. Downstairs, the house had a bedroom, a dining room, a kitchen and a reception room with two covered verandahs facing respectively North and South. As we were so close to the equator, at the equinoxes the sun was overhead and shone down on to half of each verandah. As it moved into the northern hemisphere, it shone with equatorial force on to the whole of the northern verandah, which was therefore kept empty, and the south facing verandah was a blaze of colour with pot plants. All these plants had to be moved across the dining room to the north verandah when the sun moved southwards. Upstairs we had an air-conditioned bedroom, 20 x 40 foot, a large bedroom for the children and a large drawing room, made larger by a bay 15 x 15 foot on stilts which



Neil's Christening party at the Residency, Miri,  
October 1964

jutted out making a porch over the front door. The outside wall of this drawing room was about four foot high. Between this wall and the ceiling there was nothing to keep the weather out, though there were pillars at intervals, which helped to hold up the roof and between these pillars were slatted blinds, which we could let down, if required, to keep out the sun or rain. As a result, there was a permanent breeze across the drawing room. During the torrential rains of the monsoon season, the drawing room was less agreeable as it was difficult to keep the blinds taught and in

any case the wind blew rain in through the slats. The humidity in that room could be close to 100%. On one occasion Bunty hung up our bath towels, that had come out of the washing machine after its final spin, and it wasn't long before they were

considerably wetter than when they had been hung up! We kept our cameras, shoes and other goods, that could easily develop mould, in our air-conditioned room. From the kitchen, there was a covered way (where the washing up etc was carried out), which led to the servants' quarters. On and below this hill were various Government quarters and latterly a fine secondary school had been built there. Sarawak Oil Fields (SOL) was delighted to get rid of some of its surplus gas by providing Government quarters with free gas for cooking and any burnable unwanted materials were disposed of in one's gas incinerator!

When I was in Miri, there was only one motorable road leading from it, which led to Lutong and then on to Kuala Baram; from there a ferry could take vehicles to the other side, where was the start of the road leading to Seria and on to Brunei town (Bandar Seri Begawan). Seria was a rapidly growing town with the headquarters of SOL, since the biggest oilfields in the region (that provided Brunei with its riches) were nearby, having been largely discovered there post war.

The local manager of the Borneo Company was one of those who had his house on the residential hill above Miri. He was woken up at 1 a.m. by his telephone ringing and the agitated voice of a Chinese friend of his, a shophouse owner, enquiring if he was the agent for the New Zealand Insurance Company. The Chinese trader said that he wished to insure his shophouse with immediate effect and would pay the premium, whatever it might be, first thing in the morning. The B.C.L. manager said he would be glad to see him at 9 a.m. and discuss the matter with him. The Chinese said that this would be all right provided the insurance cover would take effect immediately. The B.C.L. manager looked out of his window and could see flames leaping into the sky from that part of the bazaar where his friend's shophouse was.

Stephen Kalong Ningkan, the Chief Minister, visited Miri and stayed with us. We held a reception for local dignitaries and, as usual, after a few drinks, Ningkan, who was proud of his voice announced that he would like to sing. No-one demurred, silence reigned and Ningkan sang. I admit that his singing voice was better than mine, but that doesn't mean very much. Anyway, we all respectfully clapped him. After dinner, we were discussing the effects of signs of the Zodiac on our lives. In 1957, Whitbread had produced a very large calendar of colour prints of the signs of the Zodiac based on oil paintings by Anna Zinkeisen. I had enjoyed these prints and so hoped that they would amuse the Chief Minister. Ningkan turned up the sign of the Zodiac that covered him, looked serious, put the prints on one side and changed the subject of conversation. When I later looked at the description that accompanied his picture, I realised how tactless I had been in producing these pictures. The wording for his sign happened to be only too apt as it warned him that he was likely to have a tendency to think too much about himself, pointed out that he should be careful to resist alcohol taking control of him and not to allow his admiration of women to lead him too far. Ningkan was, in fact, a kind man and easy to get on with, but he was out of his depth as State Chief Minister.

A small regatta had been organised at the isolated bazaar and village of Tatau at the mouth of the Tatau River in Bintulu District. The Governor (Tun Abang Openg) and Tun Temonggong Jugah had announced that they would attend. I set off in the divisional launch (Lorna Doone) in fine weather from Miri so as to cross the bar at the entrance to the Tatau River at high tide, which would be in the dark and arrive the day before the Governor's yacht arrived. The weather became increasingly rough and the launch's 'Juragan' (captain) had the unpleasant task of deciding which was the lesser evil:

tossing about in the open sea for several hours and who knew how much worse the storm might become; or the very dangerous task of crossing the bar in the dark but, if successful, we would have reached calm water. He asked me for my advice, which was worthless, and I told him that he himself must decide. The launch was by now being tossed about in a most unpleasant manner and, being dark, the helmsman could not see the size of individual waves that were about to reach us. At least we knew where we were as we could see the lights of Tatau. These Marine Department Juragans were expert at knowing the differences between one bar and another at each of the mouths of the Sarawak Rivers, though crossing them at night was an extra hazard and in rough weather not only were the waves at the bar higher than usual but their troughs were that much lower. In all the time I was in Sarawak I only remember hearing of one launch that capsized when crossing a bar. Be that as it may, as we approached the Tatau River bar our small ship was dancing all over the place and often appeared likely to capsize as waves broke right over her or as she seemed to be standing on her head as she slid down a wave and dived into the waters below. I thought of the stories I had read in the Bible and elsewhere of crews deciding that perhaps prayer to God/Allah would be more effective than a man's effort. The Juragan himself was at the wheel and not unreasonably looked very tense but mercifully showed no outward signs of alarm. As we began to cross the bar, the launch twice partly slewed sideways and went very close to rolling on its side. It seemed to be out of control, which was probably, at least temporarily, the case and twice there was a bang as we hit the hard sand of the bar and then suddenly all was peace and quiet as we gently moved on to tie up at the wharf. When daylight came, I was astonished to see that the strength of the waves had been such that a metal bar about three inches wide and nearly half an inch thick that was fastened to the side of the ship from bow to stern with strong bolts at regular intervals had been wrenched from the bow on the starboard side for about 12 feet and bent right back through nearly 180°!

By next morning the storm had abated and the Governor's launch had no trouble crossing the bar. I rather think that the last head of state to visit Tatau was the Rajah, so the locals were delighted to have Abang Openg and Jugah amongst them and the Regatta and land sports went off with a swing.

That night the yacht was anchored in mid-stream and I had been invited on board. After the evening meal we were sitting comfortably on the deck with our drinks, which, for Jugah and me, were alcoholic, and the conversation turned to ghosts and spirits. Abang Openg recounted the story of his encounter with a ghost. Jugah then told us that not only did people occasionally see ghosts in the ulu but white people's residences also had ghosts. He knew, he said, because now that he was so senior his wife and he occupied a villa built in the Rajah's time in Kuching and which had been occupied by senior Sarawak civil servants. They had not long gone to bed and there was no-one else in the house when they were disturbed by knocking noises outside their door. Jugah went out and all was silent and he could find no reason for the noises. He went back to his room and the noises started up again. Jugah's wife told her husband that evidently there was a spirit there that needed to be placated and that as soon as possible they should carry out an Iban 'pirieng' ceremony. Jugah pointed out that they were not now in an Iban house but in a white man's house. He got up and fetched a tumbler and a bottle of whisky, poured out a good strong drink and placed it beside their door in the corridor. They were no longer disturbed by noises and next day Jugah found that the glass was still there but the whisky had all gone!

The Chief Scout, Sir Charles Maclean (Chief of his clan and later to be Lord Maclean and Lord Chamberlain to the Queen) came to spend a night with us while visiting the Scout troop in Miri. I met him at the SOL airstrip at nearby Lutong and drove him to the Residency. I ushered him to the upstairs drawing room and he was startled, before he reached the top step, to be greeted by Bunty with the unusual words "Ah, Sir Charles, please do be careful not to stand on the orchids!" She had collected a lot of our garden's Vanda Joachim ground orchids and had laid them out on the floor at the top of the stairs to grade them for height. That night we threw a party for local dignitaries to meet him. Next morning we went to the compound of the Miri troop and Sir Charles was impressed to see a working oil drill in the compound – he knew of no other scout troop in the world that had its own oil well. That afternoon I took him to Lutong to catch his plane and to welcome Wardzala, the retiring Director of Public Works on his farewell visit. However, the weather was such that the plane was unable to land; the DPW disappeared into the clouds and the Chief Scout returned to the Residency. That evening he had the pleasure of dining with all the Public Works Department staff that had been invited to say farewell to Wardzala!

Another Chinese New Year had arrived and Bunty and I set out on yet another round of calling on our Chinese friends. We entered one house gaily calling out the usual Chinese New Year greeting "Kong hee fat choi" and found our host (a leading shophouse owner) miserable – indeed his wife was crying. They had come downstairs extra early that morning to complete the arrangements to welcome the many expected guests, only to find a note on the dining room table from their teenage daughter informing them that they were capitalist pigs, running dogs and imperial lackeys and she had run away to join the CCO in the jungle.

On one trip the whole family set out from Miri in the Lorna Doone and sailed along the coast and into the Niah River, and tied up at a wharf where the Sarawak Museum had a small house on stilts partly over the water. We were greeted by Barbara Harrison, the Curator's wife. She was on the verandah of the house on the river bank with a whole lot of antique Chinese jars that were greatly prized by the locals. The ones she was examining had been used to hold the bones of long deceased upper class local natives. To our alarm she asked Murdo and Alexa, aged six and five, to spill out the bones, put them on one side to be examined later and to wash the jars clean. She had no children of her own and we felt that she did not realise how likely it was that our little ones might break a priceless jar. They didn't. They enjoyed helping Barbara and were in no way dismayed at handling human bones.

From the other side of the Niah River there was a plank walk over a mile long across a swamp and then a walk on terra firma that led to the famous Niah Caves, where Tom Harrison had discovered the remains of pre-historic man dating from 40,000 years ago. The caves, which were big enough to contain St. Paul's Cathedral twice over, housed a major colony of swiftlets, whose nests provided one of the most expensive Chinese delicacies (Birds Nest soup). Another commercial item from the caves was the smelly guano on the ground from the birds and from the huge colony of bats which was harvested. This was put into very large sacks and the local men took this very valuable fertilizer to Niah. Each plank of the walk rested on a trestle rising up some four feet above the swamp. The trestle was just wide enough to take two planks side by side. This meant that as one advanced along the plank walk one had to concentrate on coping not only with keeping one foot on each plank, each of which sagged and

bounced up and down in the middle affected by its own unique tension with the weight of a human being, but of breaking one's rhythm as one came to a trestle to have to step sideways on to the next couple of planks that overlapped with the ones on which one had been walking. When one met a train of about ten hot, sweaty, smelly, powerful coolies with a wide bulky weight on the back advancing towards one at a trot, there was no question as to who would give way. The trick was to balance oneself precariously on the edge of a trestle and hope that the sack did not knock one off it as the cooly switched from one pair of planks to another. The locals seemed to have no problem retaining their balance as they walked fast on these planks.

Next day we got ready to set off, Neil being carried in a sling on the back of our houseboy, Bujang. The first problem was that the locals were aghast at seeing us taking our children with us and did we not know that there was a dreadful spirit in the cave that devoured children and it was more than criminal of us to think of taking a baby. None of their children had ever been to the caves. There was a lot of shaking of heads as we departed.

Our children started off just as alarmed as Bunty and I were at the possibility of slipping off a plank into the swamp. Why, after a bit, Murdo decided to play bumps with Alexa seemed strange to me and it was not surprising that Alexa lost her balance and fell into the mud below. One of the men accompanying us fished out a wailing filthy little girl.

The entrance to the cave was huge. A little way in, there was a hut and we settled in there with bedding rolls and had our meals on the dry stone floor. We went to look at the pre-historic excavations and then at the bird nest area. The swiftlets built their nests out of their saliva, which also served to stick the nest very high up on the vertical side of a wall far in the interior of the dark cave. Certain natives had long established very valuable rights to a certain area of the cave and only harvested enough of the nests in their area to ensure the continued survival of the swiftlets. Personally, on one of the very rare occasions that I was offered birds nest, I found it tasteless. I did not notice that its aphrodisiacal properties had any effect on me. Sir Anthony Abell took four nests home with him to U.K. on leave and offered them to the owner of a Chinese restaurant, where he often went for good food. The man was so delighted that he said that each time Sir Anthony came home on leave, he and the friends with him could have a free meal.

To reach the nests was perilous and deaths were not uncommon. The owner of the rights attached bamboo scaffolding to the wall, but often the scaffolding consisted of little more than one very long bamboo above another, up which he had to climb with a basket slung over his shoulder and carrying a torch. On the floor at the foot of the nest area were lots of creepy-crawlies that were unique to this cave and were mostly blind. They fed on the guano and any baby birds that fell out of the nest.

A little before sunset and for sometime thereafter, as we sat near our hut with a tumbler of whisky and water, we watched the amazing sight of a large continual stream of fruit bats (flying foxes) and other species leaving the cave to go to their feeding grounds.

There was a small side entrance to the back of the cave and, with a guide, I took Bunty by a narrow jungle path to go and see some paintings made by unknown people around 800 A.D. The path ended at a swamp and from then on it was a question of treading on

branches, visible below the clear water surface by the leading walker who pressed them down, but hidden by the muddy brown churned up water to those following him. In this swamp jungle there was virtually no soil and so the trees were short and therefore gave only moderate shade from the sun, while since there was no wind the heat was intolerable. After about 200 yards of miserable progress and on being informed that there was still half a mile of swamp to be negotiated, Bunty's enthusiasm to see the painted cave waned and she returned to dry land to await my return. The painted cave was not so much a cave as a long recess in a cliff wall. I clambered up to it and was delighted with the clarity of these paintings of so long ago depicting a ship cult, with coffins shaped like dug-out canoes, paintings of canoes, turtles and other animals.

The safe return of the children caused great astonishment (and relief) to the Melanaus and, since our pioneering journey, children frequently go to the caves.

Murdo and Alexa were in neighbouring beds in Miri hospital with some infection. During my lunch hour, I went to see them and as I was walking down the middle of a long ward and about to go through the door leading to the next long ward (where they were), I heard Alexa's voice saying "That's very naughty Murdo. I'll tell Daddy when he comes in". I stopped and peered round the corner into their ward and there was Murdo jumping from bed to bed with great agility but not necessarily to the enjoyment of the sick and maimed in those beds. I suggested to the hospital authorities that perhaps Murdo was now well enough to come home.

Sarawak markets have their fish classified as Number One Fish, Number Two, Number Three and Number Four Fish (in descending order of delicacy) and amongst the latter are skate, which when very fresh we find delightful and we considered should be amongst the Number One Fish. We invited our three DOs, by now all Sarawakians, to lunch and Bunty offered them skate. Our guests, who in their lives had never eaten skate, thought it was very rude of us to save money by giving them Number Four fish but had to admit to their great surprise that, cooked in butter with capers, it was delicious.

We had often been disgusted at witnessing the way some British children ordered the servants around and so insisted periodically that our children helped to clear the table after meals and helped with the washing up and other chores, probably to the annoyance of our domestics in the kitchen. Many years later Murdo asked Bunty why we had done this. Apparently it had rather rankled with him when his pals in Miri never had to carry out such jobs. When we explained that we didn't like seeing children ordering grown-ups to do things and in any case, later when we were in U.K. there would be no servants and it was just as well that they got used to helping out before we returned there, he agreed how sensible we had been.

Our time in Miri was coming to an end and we took the Lorna Doone up the Baram, its tributary the Tinjar and another tributary the Tutoh to say farewell to some of our friends. We tied up at Penghulu Gau's wharf and found that he had laid on a party for us. Baby Neil was left on board and Murdo and Alexa were happily moving around amongst the locals, though we insisted that they should not be given borak. As we were getting ready to leave, from somewhere out of sight we heard a wail from Alexa and found that she was not appreciating having her face blackened. Murdo's face and clothes were covered with black streaks but he was made of sterner stuff and was not crying. We

dashed off to our launch with the children but we too were unable to escape being blackened.

I had visited the Berawan longhouse at Long Teru in the Tinjar several times as Private Secretary and as D.O. Baram. Kasih was a wonderful hostess and a dominant personality. When I had first known her she was the wife of a Penghulu but was now Balu (Widow) Kasih. One of her assets was an ability to mix her drinks and remain unaffected. I have never met anyone who could outdrink her. On this occasion, to avoid the usual Balu Kasih party, I arranged for the boat to tie up at 9 a.m. Leaving Bunty and the children on board, I adventured into the longhouse and told Kasih that it was unthinkable that I should leave Miri without saying good-bye to her. She took me into her room while barking out orders in Berawan. I was alarmed (but not surprised) when she produced the usual bottle of borak and some very large tumblers. I protested that I did not drink alcohol at this hour – a remark which she ignored. I stood up and said that I must go now but was dismayed when I saw that a large bevy of determined looking damsels were in the doorway blocking my exit. As Kasih started to fill the tumbler I said "No" and looked wildly round for salvation and I saw a small, but dirty glass – indeed it was mostly nearly opaque. As there was no better alternative, filthy though it was, I couldn't afford to be too pernickety and picked it up and said that this would do me. She protested that it was too small but eventually gave way and I accepted it full to the brim, wished her well and took a long swill. It was only then that I noticed that the container was not a glass but a jar and that it had once contained and indeed still contained smears of hair brilliantine! Kasih, with a bottle of borak in one hand and a glass in the other, then accompanied me back to the boat. On it fun and games were going on. A batch of girls were chasing the Malay crew round and round the deck of the Lorna Doone until they disappeared into the interior of the ship and locked themselves into the inside somewhere. Kasih then sang to Bunty and offered her a drink. The Berawans then went ashore. Meanwhile the maidens had noticed Senior Native Officer Wasli – a Malay, dressed neatly in a white shirt and black trousers – who was re-joining the ship. They started to blacken his face and clothes and the children looked on in horror as, when he tried to escape them by rushing into the river, they followed and pushed him under the water. The children shrieked out to me to save Wasli from drowning. I told the crew to start up the launch and be ready to leave at a moment's notice. Wasli had escaped and ran along the river bank, did a circuit and then rushed up the gang plank. The order to "Go" was given and as the distance between us and the shore grew ever wider we waived to Kasih and her maidens, who, yet again, had made our visit to her house a memorable one.

John Fisher, for many years Resident Fourth Division, had a magnificent collection of Sarawak stamps. When he returned to Sarawak after the war, in whichever station he happened to be, he hunted around amongst all the old files and collected any pre-war stamps and Japanese occupation stamps, including pre-war stamps over printed by the Japanese authorities that he could find. These Occupation stamps were considered worthless by Stanley Gibbons and so, presumably, very few people kept them. It took John a long time but eventually Stanley Gibbons had to admit that John's Japanese stamps did have a value. He also had Sarawak stamps post marked by the Drake-Brockman postmark. Julian Drake-Brockman was my predecessor and successor at Miri. He had been interned by the Japanese and after a necessary period of recuperation, had been appointed District Officer Bintulu in April 1946. He then found that the Bintulu official postmaster chop used for cancelling stamps had disappeared

and he had to cancel with ink what few letters were being posted. Meanwhile he hurriedly had a copy made of the lost postmarker and congratulated himself on a job well done. In due course he was surprised and distressed to receive an almighty blast from the Postmaster General in Kuching because in international postal regulations, only he could issue an official stamp-cancelling postmarker in Sarawak and all the letters cancelled by Julian's ingenuity were illegal. A new postmarker was sent to Bintulu. Needless to say, any "Drake-Brockman postmarked stamped" letters that have survived are few and so those that did are of considerable interest and value.

The time had come to pack up and go on leave. Bunty and the children went by air to Simanggang and stayed with Ken and Sheila Akam (he was the Education Officer there) and then went on to the Resthouse in Kuching until I joined them there having accompanied the luggage travelling slowly by sea.

## 21 – ON LEAVE PRIOR TO RETIREMENT

Bunty and I had a few days in Kuching before setting off on leave. I found out that on my return, I was to become Resident Fifth Division. This filled us with dismay as the schools there were not suitable for our children. When we got married, we presumed that, like others in such bodies as the Colonial Service, the Indian Civil Service and the expatriate staff of leading merchant houses, when the time came we would send our children to boarding school so that they could be brought up as British citizens. Now that the time had come to do this, we suddenly realised that we hated the idea of being separated from our children. The head of the Cooperative Department and his wife had agreed to spend three years in Sarawak without home leave. They had arranged for their son to be a boarder at Ardingly School and for the holidays he would stay with a close relation. When they turned up at the school during term time, they were told that their son was in a certain room with his friends. They opened the door and looked in. Buster found that he couldn't be sure which was Christopher but surely his mother would recognise him, but Joan also couldn't. So they said that perhaps it would be better for him to meet his parents without others being present. We were both appalled at this story.

Amongst the terms of the Malaysia Agreement was a clause allowing for expatriates like me to stay on for three years. Thus I could have stayed on for a further couple of years, with the advantage by so doing of increasing my length of qualifying time towards a pension and with the faint chance that there might be a vacancy to enable me to rise from being Resident Second Class to First Class, with a consequent jump in my pension. We were both extremely happy in Sarawak. On the other hand I was now 44 years old and, with each added year, the chance of getting a new job would become ever more difficult. On balance it seemed sensible to make a clean break now and start working towards a new career. This is what we decided to do and I put in my resignation in March 1965 in a letter written from the Rest House in Kuching.

While I felt that independence had come too soon, my career had covered nearly the whole time that Sarawak had been a Colony, during which time the best aspects of the Rajahs' rule had been maintained and the standard of living of the people was rising steadily. We had handed the Colony over to Malaysia in a healthy financial state and in the friendliest possible way so that the successor Government could carry on the good work. When I left Sarawak, I had lived in that country longer than I had in any other!

Before leaving Kuching, I had to have a medical. The doctor who knew me well, pressed my liver and I said "Ouch". He said "Well knowing your consumption of alcohol (whether willingly or unwillingly) and all you say is a mild "ouch", your liver must be in good condition!"

We took the Messageries Maritimes liner "Laos" from Singapore to Saigon. It was the time when Buddhist monks sometimes set fire to themselves in public. Though I had my camera at the ready, I regret to say that none obliged. To please the children we went to Saigon's zoo and were pleasantly surprised at how clean it was and how sleek were the animals. The political situation being what it was, there were very few white women or children in Saigon and in the zoo Murdo and Alexa (with the extra striking platinum blond hair that fair children develop in the tropics) were surrounded by fascinated

members of the public and, Alexa especially, found it tiresome when strangers wished to caress her hair.

The ship had been chosen because it had a deck for children. Once we were aboard, we found that except for an Indian diplomatic family and a French one going to Japan, there were no children on board and except for the Ramseys (P.W.D in Sarawak) and ourselves, all the rest of the passengers were Americans on a cruise. Most of these were widows, whose husbands had worked very hard to become rich and had then died with the effort. These ladies all looked alike with their blue rinsed hair and huge black spectacles and loved showing off their mink coats and diamonds, even to the extent of wearing their coats when going ashore in Hong Kong, which was having a hot spell.

When Bunty took our six month old Neil to the children's deck, she found that babies were not allowed there or on any public deck and she was expected to keep Neil in his cabin for the whole trip! This she did not do but to lessen any trouble, after breakfast we took his carrycot to an inconspicuous part of the deck near a lifeboat where they could enjoy fresh air. She was alarmed when an elderly American lady approached her and she expected this lady to protest at Neil's presence on deck. However the lady sat down beside her and said, "Say! You're British". Bunty agreed. It turned out that this lady had been a Miss Herring in Southwold (which Bunty knew well having spent many seaside holidays there) and, aged 16 this lady had got married and emigrated to America. Her husband was one of those who had killed himself by overwork making himself prosperous. The lady spoke in a rich mid-west accent. Bunty mentioned the names of various Southwold families that she had known and then suddenly noticed that this elderly lady had lost her American accent and was quite unconscious of the fact that she was speaking in broad Suffolk! She frequently came to sit with Bunty and each time started the session speaking American and ended it reverting to her childhood Suffolk accent.

Before reaching Kobe, a notice had been put up on the public notice board of the Laos to the effect that if anyone wished to meet a Japanese family and experience a tea ceremony, this could be arranged. Out of the whole ship, we were the only ones to take up the invitation! Bunty, Alexa and Neil went to the house of Dr. Nose (pronounced "Noseh") in the car of the lady from Kobe town hall and Murdo and I sat in his son's car. Young Mr. Nose was a medical student, spoke excellent English and must have heard the following conversation, started by Murdo aged six. "Daddy. Why are there so many Chinese here but no Malays?" "They are not Chinese but Japanese. We are now in Japan". "Daddy, how many Japanese did you kill during the war?" "Keep quiet." "Daddy, do you remember the sunken Japanese ship in the sea off Miri? Its funnel used to show up at low tide".

After the above excruciating conversation, we were made very welcome by the lady of the house. We sat on the floor in a circle while she prepared the tea ceremony and we then began formally to drink tea, hoping we were not behaving in too gauche a manner. Bunty had handed Neil over to the daughter of the house, who was next to her, so that she could concentrate on the tea ceremony. Suddenly there was an agonised scream from Neil. Next to the daughter was a brazier with sand on top of it and Neil had put his hand flat on it. The skin of his hand was hanging down in shreds. The tea ceremony came to an abrupt halt and the lady picked Neil up and rushed into the surgery next door. In due course Dr. Nose came back with Neil, whose hand was well bandaged up.

The doctor said "I have put an ointment on his hand. Do not undo the bandage for ten days. His hand will be all right". When we took the bandage off, his hand had no scars on it! We never found out what the ointment was.

We left the Laos at Yokohama and had a short holiday in Japan, where people were astonished to see us carrying Neil in a carry cot between us as we went up and down flights of stairs in temples on the underground; Japanese men left the carrying of children to their spouses. We then flew to Anchorage, where we had lunch and then told the children to settle down for the night as we were to fly over the North Pole. Murdo and Alexa resisted as they thought that they were being asked to have an afternoon rest, but eventually they got to sleep. We woke them up as we were flying over the sea with the coast of Norway on our left. I give Murdo full credit when, on waking, he said "What has happened, the sun is the other side of the plane?" He was dismayed when I told him to get ready for breakfast. Murdo, who enjoyed his meals, enquired angrily why we had let him sleep through tea and supper. I explained that as we had flown over the North Pole we had gone straight from lunch to breakfast. Murdo was shocked and said "That is not a nice thing to happen to anybody",

We reached Bexhill-on-Sea and arranged for Alexa and Murdo to go to a local school. One day, Buntty got a telephone call from a puzzled geography teacher, who told her that he had been telling the class about the North Pole when Murdo interrupted him to say loudly and firmly and in an aggrieved voice, "They don't have tea and supper at the North Pole!" The teacher said "Nonsense". Murdo asked whether the teacher had been to the North Pole and getting the obvious answer "No", got the support of the whole class, who were delighted to find that the teacher had been caught out when Murdo said "Well, I have and I know!"

Our heavy luggage came by sea taking several months and some of the airtight trunks were not opened for some time after that. When we eventually did so, we were assailed by the hot damp smell of Sarawak coming off the articles of clothing! It made us feel quite nostalgic.

My last anecdote is to mention that when I reached U.K., a letter from the Overseas Civil Service arrived asking me if I would like a further spell overseas on contract. I answered in the affirmative provided the pay was not less than I had been getting, that there was a suitable school for my two children aged 6 and 5 and the place had reasonable medical facilities for bringing up a six months old baby.

In due course I was offered a job as a District Officer in that part of the Aden Protectorate that was close to Oman. The people there were traditional desert Arabs, were very strict Moslems, thus the life there was the complete antithesis of life in Sarawak. My family would be the only white people there. A virulent rebellion was in full swing. As regards the conditions that I had laid down, the pay was 3/4 of my present pay. There were no schools but "PENU is an excellent teaching method". There were no cows or shops with powdered milk, but "your wife could keep her own goat". They knew that I did not speak Arabic and my knowledge of the Moslem religion was modest and limited to dealing with the Malays and the Melanau Islam to the extent that such people lived in the district in which I was working. The carrying out of the practices of the Moslem religion by these people in Sarawak would often not have been approved of in a strict Arab state.

I felt it was madness, if not criminal, to send anyone to that post who was not an expert in Arabic and on the Arab way of life, the Moslem religion and the background to the rebellion. Bunty did not speak Arabic and milking her goat and supervising the lessons of her children seemed likely to be her only pastime. It was clear that the post was a very dangerous one for my family and me to take up.

The Overseas Service authorities may have been unpleasantly surprised when I turned down their kind offer and I heard nothing further from them.

## POSTSCRIPT A

On return to the UK, Bunty and I moved to South Croydon, which was very convenient for our friends from Sarawak to visit us when in London and, I am glad to say, we have managed to keep in touch to a greater or lesser extent with many of our Sarawak Chinese, Iban, Malay and Orang Ulu friends. Right from the start of my new life in Britain, I made no effort to try and keep up to date with what was happening in Sarawak and certainly not with what was happening in the fluid world of changing politics there. I soon learnt that when I asked after "So-and-so", there could be two main types of answer. One was to tell me how "So-and-so" was getting on and the other was an embarrassed silence followed by "I have no idea" or perhaps "he backed the wrong horse in politics and so, of course, is no longer popular with the Government and I no longer speak to him."

In 1984, twenty years after our departure, Bunty and I paid a private visit to Sarawak, helped by our old friends Dr. Wong Soon Kai and his wife Dr. Jane Wong, who, with the passage of time had accumulated influence and decorations. On getting out of the plane at Kuching, we were surprised but delighted to be greeted by my old friend Ong Kee Hui, now with the title Tan Sri Datuk, for, when he had left the Agriculture Department to enter politics, he had eventually spent some time as a Federal cabinet minister in Kuala Lumpur. He led us to the V.I.P. lounge and from then on we were looked after as honoured guests of the state. We were asked where we wished to go and what we wished to see and do and then transport was provided for us to carry out our wishes – either an air-conditioned Japanese 4 wheel drive or a speedboat as appropriate.

We had a lovely time meeting lots of old friends, though sometimes it was at first difficult to cope with the physical changes of 20 years of ageing, especially as, of course, I still visualised my friends as they were when I had last seen them. It was often embarrassing when I had no idea who it was who greeted me so effusively! What was sad was that so many of the people, whom we had been so looking forward to meeting had died. I think especially of people like Abang Haji Adenan, Tun (in my time he was 'Temonggong') Jugah and Temonggong Oyong Lawai Jau. Datu (now Tun Datu) Tuanku Haji Bujang was now Governor of Sarawak. He had recently had a stroke and was partly paralysed, had difficulty in speaking and did not recognise us – we too, of course, had also changed in 20 years. However I went on talking and reminded him of various things we had done together and of how he was the first person to see our new born son in the hospital and of how he had then rushed off to fetch the Datin. Suddenly, instead of ignoring me, tears came to his eyes and, though he could say nothing, his hand moved enough to clutch mine and he pressed it repeatedly.

We went to Matang Mountain, as being the nearest place where I could see virgin jungle, to Serian, Simanggang, Sibul, Sarikei, Kanowit, Song, Kapit, Marudi and upriver thereof and to Miri – everywhere we went government officers went out of their way to be helpful to us and we met old friends in the bazaars, Malay kampongs and in longhouses. One of the most startling happenings was when we were leaving Kapit and an old Iban rushed from his table at a coffee shop to greet me saying that there was only one person with a voice like mine and it must be Tuan Akat, even if he did now have a white beard. It was interesting to find how a Malay Sarawak Administrative Cadet of mine was now State Secretary and in charge of the civil service and to find that

the Resident Third Division used to be one of my S.A.Os (Sarawak had decided to keep its system of Divisional Residents after incorporation into Malaysia).

After Indian independence, I remember an Indian saying to an ex-member of the Indian Civil Service "Yes, you gave us law and order and controlled corruption, you gave us schools, hospitals, roads, etc. but how often did you give us your hearts?" Well, I know that Bunty and I had given our hearts to Sarawak and now on our return to that lovely country, we felt that, by the obviously genuine friendship shown to us, that this fact had also been realised by those many people we had last seen 20 years before.

Everybody wished to know how we found Sarawak after 20 years. This question was asked by all races, usually with the confident tone of one expecting a favourable answer but occasionally the question had a little tone of hesitation, using words such as "Do you see any improvement since Colonial days?" No-one asked me if I thought that the state of things had deteriorated in the last 20 years.

One thing that surprised (and pleased) me was that in longhouses, where expatriates were now rarely seen, the children might be shy at first but were soon crowding round Bunty and me, even to the extent of allowing me to teasingly play with them. Clearly, their parents had not had reason to instil in them a hatred or fear of white people.

I would have felt very sad if I had not found many signs of how Sarawak had improved since Colonial times, as, after all, the whole *raison d'être* of colonialism was to teach people how to rule themselves successfully when left to do so on their own. We thoroughly approved of the way clean water was now available in most longhouses and how electricity supplies had spread so that people in a longhouse could now telephone to anywhere in the world. In all sorts of ways the standard of living had improved and was continuing to do so. People were rightly proud of the developments in education and one Chinese lady told me pointedly how many more schools there were now than before Malaysia. There was little point in reminding her that Malaysia had by then existed for over 20 years while the Colonial regime had only lasted a total of 15 years and had started from a base where the population was 98% illiterate, there were only a tiny number of schools and, were a new school to be opened, there was no-one qualified to be a teacher. As and when qualified people became available, the Education Department had to compete for their services with other Government departments and with the world of commerce and industry.

In Colonial times it was necessary to have a policy of helping properly qualified Natives of Sarawak, by giving them priority for vacancies in higher education over the Chinese (who, as a whole, were far better educated than the rest) but this was meant to be a temporary measure until the Natives had caught up with the Chinese. I was shocked therefore to find that, after 20 years of Malaysia, this policy still existed and there was no mention of it being phased out. I couldn't blame those Chinese, who were educationally especially well qualified but also very poor, at resenting the fact that they were unable to get state aid towards the costs of higher education if there was a native (not necessarily as well qualified) available to take up the vacancy.

Everywhere I went, the development of towns and bazaars, often with new very fine buildings, meant that I had the greatest difficulty in finding my way round places like Sibu and Kuching, both of which were much enlarged and flourishing.

One development, which greatly saddened me, was the short sighted large scale timber extraction, which was being carried on and which resulted now in great financial reward to various individuals – but at what cost to future generations? As we flew across Sarawak we could see large areas where felling had taken place (and it was impossible to believe that all these felled trees were of great commercial value) and we stared at great gashes in the hillsides where wide timber extraction roads had been cut and had become excellent conduits for soil erosion. By questioning people in such places as Kapit and Marudi, it was clear that the bazaars there suffered from high water levels and floods far more frequently than ever used to be the case.

During my visit I had no time and no wish to delve into the murky workings of Sarawak politics. I couldn't help noticing however how, once a party got into power, it managed to stay there (with only a rare change of personnel) for a very long time. I also couldn't avoid seeing how many of the senior officers in that ruling party or in the civil service seemed well able by one means or another to enrich themselves. I did not come across any case, while I was on my visit, of the local press doing anything other than reporting in full and with editorial approval the contents of each public speech made by every state government party official, however minor and unimportant. I never read in the local English press any kind of criticism of Government. Equally, it was difficult to find anything like an equal amount of space in a paper allocated to the reporting of the views of opposition parties.

After my 20 years' absence, I saw no reason not to congratulate the Government on its achievement in raising the standard of living of the people; but equally, I saw no reason not to mention my 1964 opinion, that when the Colonial Government had left Sarawak, it had handed over a tree that had been well planted and was taking root.

In Malaysia, where over half the population is Muslim, I can understand the importance given to that religion but in a state like Sarawak (whose surface area makes it the biggest in Malaysia), the Muslim religion is followed by only about a quarter of the population. Why is it then that after Ningkan's short time as the first Chief Minister until now (in the year 2000), when I am writing this book, both the Governor and Chief Minister have always been Moslems? Theoretically, the elections to the central Government of Malaysia and to the Governments of its states are conducted democratically. I do wonder how it is that, in a multi-racial and multi-religious country like Sarawak, when the non-Moslems are in such a large majority, the people never seem to wish to elect as Governor and Chief Minister anyone who is not a Malay or a Melanau Moslem.

In this connection, I was saddened to hear that a few years after my visit in 1984, the state flag of Sarawak, (a most distinguished and easily recognizable one, with its strange mixture of a yellow background on which was half a red cross and half a black one and in the middle of which there was an eastern or antique crown) had been abandoned. The Kuala Lumpur Government and a weak Sarawak Government had succumbed to the pleas of some narrow minded Malays of West Malaysia that it was intolerable that, on the Federal coat of arms (which included the emblems of each state) there should be such a detestable emblem as a cross amongst such Muslim emblems as the star and crescent. From 1848 when the Brookes had used their own coat of arms as a basis for the Sarawak flag, through the war on the few ships of the Sarawak Steamship Company that survived, on during Colonial times and on again for many

years in Malaysia, with slight modifications to show when a change of regime had taken place, it had been a continuing symbol of Sarawak's statehood and a much beloved one at that for nearly 200 years. Personally, I feel that in the long history of a country, continuing symbols have a large and emotional part to play and should not be changed every time a new Government emerges. The Sarawak Muslims mixed much more freely with people of other creeds than did the fundamentalist Muslims of states like Trengganu or Kelantan and I had never heard from Sarawak Muslims, who after all, had played a very large part, since the start of the Brooke period, in running the country that they hated their flag. Indeed, I well remember when in 1964 (i.e. after Malaysia day) I went to the Melanau Islam village of Matu with the Governor, Tun Abang Haji Openg, how Sarawak flags were being flown all over the place. These Moslems had been happy with their flag for well over a century. I brought back with me the Sarawak flag that had been flying proudly at the top of the mast in my Residency garden. The present Sarawak flag is a tricolour, which makes no impact at all amongst the vast number of tricolour state flags in the world.

There were signs in Sarawak that the State Government wished to denigrate the achievements of the previous regimes and was prepared to twist historical facts to do so. One cannot get round the fact that the inhabitants of Sarawak were ruled for better or worse in turn by Brunei, the Brookes, the Japanese, the British Military Administration, the Brookes, and the Colonial Government and not until the very end of that Government was it that the people of Sarawak got self-rule. Modern history books should try to be as impartial and unbiased as possible in what they say about the past and the author of any history book should be able to refer any critics of views expressed in his book to public and other records in confirmation of what he has written. By tampering with facts in school history books, it does not take long for the public to get a distorted view of the past. I was saddened therefore to realise that there was now an attitude that no good had resulted from Colonial rule and this re-writing of history was exemplified to me by seeing stretched across the main road near the Sarawak Museum a banner extolling the murderers of the Governor of Sarawak as heroes of the Sarawak independence movement. It seems very sad to me that the present Government feels that it regrets Sarawak's peaceful, frictionless transition to independence and so now wishes to propagate the fiction that there had been a noble and terrific struggle to the death of the Sarawak people to wrest independence from an evil Government and, in support of such a myth, it needs to find heroes that the Sarawak people can look up to.

My own feeling is that it was because the Governments of Britain and Malaya pushed the people of Sarawak hard, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, that they accepted independence in 1963 by joining the newly formed state of Malaysia. Whatever one may think of this, it is at any rate a pleasant fact of history to be able to record here that Sarawak got its independence without a struggle.

It is sad therefore that in March 1996 (33 years after the formation of Malaysia and 47 years after the Governor's murder) the Malaysian Government and that of the State of Sarawak felt that, on the anniversary of the hanging of Awang Rambli and two of his three accomplices, their bodies should be disinterred from Kuching prison and reburied with full state honours in Sibü. Those misguided murderers have now been reclassified as patriots and freedom fighters and, at the burial ceremony, Sarawak's Social Development Minister said that the four had sacrificed their lives "to fight for our independence". He said that a mausoleum would be constructed at the grave and a

book would be written about their struggle. These 'martyrs' were anti-cessionist, had no support outside the Malays and Melanau Moslems and, even amongst them, had only a limited support – not for independence but for a return to Brooke rule under Anthony Brooke. Be that as it may, the present Government is creating myths about how independence was achieved and it won't be long before these myths have become established facts.

During our visit to Sarawak in 1984, Bunty and I were astonished, especially as we had carefully avoided referring to the advent of Malaysia, when out of the blue we were told in more or less the same words on several occasions by Ibans and Orang Ulu "You British you let us down. You should not have left Sarawak when you did. We upriver people were not advanced enough to be able to stand up for ourselves against the people of Peninsular Malaya and of the better educated people in the towns."

## POSTSCRIPT B

My son, Murdo, was old enough when he left Sarawak to remember aspects of his life there. At home with us, he often met Sarawakians and he frequently expressed a wish to see again the land of his birth.

In 1989 he had the cash and the time and visited Brunei, Limbang, the Baram, including climbing Mulu Mountain, Niah National Park with its huge cave, prehistoric remains and birds' nests, Sibu, Kapit and the Gaat (a tributary of the Balleh, which itself is a tributary of the Rejang) and Kuching and parts of First Division. He was accompanied by a photograph of himself, soon after his birth, being held by a delighted Temonggong Jugah. Wherever he went, whether or not he mentioned that he was my son, he was made most welcome and given every possible help by people of all races and by none more than by Datu Amar Linggi Jugah. The photo gave him extra kudos in the Iban areas. He thoroughly enjoyed himself everywhere.

Murdo had been so happy in the land of his birth, that in 1990 he cancelled his planned trip to India and had another successful trip to Borneo, visiting Sabah (including climbing Kinabalu), Brunei, the Kelabit area (including climbing Murud Mountain) and returned to Rumah Mamat in the Gaat, which was his favourite area, and the local Ibans were delighted to see him back.

You can imagine how happy I was that my son obviously enjoyed his time in Sarawak as much as I had done.

## APPENDIX A – FARMERS ASSOCIATION NEWS

Copy of Issue No 8 of 10 March 1964  
(Note – this date is after the formation of Malaysia)

### Only by Armed Revolt can we achieve Victory

Ever since the past our intention has been to overthrow the colonial society, the neo-colonialists and their “dogs”, and to obtain independence. There are two ways to achieve freedom for our country; one is to achieve victory by peaceful means and the other is to do so by armed revolt. Which method are we following? The best course to follow is by peaceful means because we are peace loving people. But can we go on by peaceful means? Unless we start an armed revolt in Sarawak we cannot obtain victory. In order to answer this question we must study very carefully the work of the neo-colonialists in Sarawak at the moment.

Firstly, we must understand why the neo-colonialists want to dominate this country. Do not pay heed to the self-praises made by the neo-colonialists; do not care how good these praises may sound. They have two real motives: (1) To buy our raw materials such as rubber, pepper, timber etc. cheaply and then export them at high prices to other countries such as England. From our raw materials the neo-colonialists get a lot of profit. (2) After the neo-colonialists have sent our raw materials to their own country and after the materials have been manufactured and become utilized goods, they are re-exported to our country at high prices. Here again the neo-colonialists make another profit. Hence, we know that we are cheated twice by them. In addition the neo-colonialists do not pay for anything when they drain off our natural wealth; they impose all sorts of taxes and so make profits in various ways. All the profits are taken to their own country. This is the main reason why the neo-colonialists want to rule us. We wish to achieve independence and freedom from neo-colonialism for Sarawak. We wish to rule our own country and get the benefits for our own people and our own country. From this we know that our fighters for freedom are struggling to liberate the country from colonial domination. Therefore, the freedom fighters for Sarawak are working against the neo-colonialists. When neo-colonialism has been eradicated, we will survive and be progressive. When we achieve independence – the real freedom – then neo-colonialism will be completely destroyed. Because of their profits the neo-colonialists would not give us true independence. Therefore, when the freedom fighters gained independence through their activities the neo-colonialists suppressed them and condemned their activities. We must take up arms in our struggle for independence and freedom. This is the right action to be taken. So all members of the public have to think about this issue over and over again.

Secondly, the neo-colonialists have been too early to suppress the freedom fighters in their activities of struggling for independence. (1) The latest to struggle for independence and freedom for Sarawak, and who strongly oppose neo-colonialism, are the more than 200 detained by the colonialists. These detainees have been tortured severely while they are in the detention camp. The neo-colonialists have introduced various constitutions in order to upset our movement; they block our way, close newspapers, annul the licences of various organizations, etc. (2) The Election Constitution of Sarawak is inappropriate to the local conditions and it is used by the Government to cheat the public; if the colonialists stand for election they will be

defeated. We know this from the last election. If the Election Ordinance is imposed in accordance with local conditions, the neo-colonialists will find themselves in difficulty because the fairness of the Ordinance will make them suffer. (3) We have been suppressed by the neo-colonialists for a long time. They send soldiers to our country from England and Malaya and these soldiers can do what they like in this country. The neo-colonialists too call for the local people to be their soldiers and proclaim that these soldiers are the new national soldiers. They call some of them "Home Guards". They establish all sorts of service in the army. Not very long ago they ordered some aeroplanes, artillery and other weapons from foreign countries. These weapons will subsequently be used by the neo-colonialists against us.

The last two paragraphs have shown that we cannot achieve independence by constitutional means. It is not only Sarawak which cannot achieve independence by constitutional means but the whole world because throughout the world all countries which have been ruled by colonial governments cannot gain independence by peaceful negotiations. Malaya or Malaysia as it is called is not really independent. It is independent in name only. There is the colonial government inside and the neo-colonialists will eventually bar the nation's movement. As a result the people want to take up arms in their struggle for independence, e.g. Cuba, Albania and all socialist countries.

Members of the public! You have been oppressed by the neo-colonialists and their dogs. So we have no other means to liberate ourselves from the suppression but armed struggle in order to achieve our final victory.

All members! The getting rid of all things that upset and confuse us depends on armed struggle.

ALL MEMBERS!

BE READY FOR ARMED STRUGGLE

LET US OVERTHROW THE NEO-COLONIALISTS WITH OUR ARMED STRENGTH.

Many of our society's members have expressed their determination to take up arms, so we have to consider the matter seriously. However, some of our members have enquired thus: "Will we win our armed struggle?" It is right to ask that question. We must consider the whole of this affair, which I will now explain, and I hope you will propagate our decision to all members whom you happen to meet after reading this letter.

First you have to understand that our struggle must be carried out because it is the way by which we can defend ourselves and advance towards the goal that the people of our country want; we must follow the footsteps of the newly emerging nations of the world. All nations of the world, especially in Asia, Africa and Latin America are now struggling for their liberation from colonialism and in the case of our own nation, for independence from imperialism. We know that the more we fight for freedom, the better the nation will be. We must use our maximum effort to overthrow colonialism. Our fighters are ready to deserve the commendation conferred on them by the result of their struggle against colonialism and their opposition to imperialism in the whole world. Our

fighters will not be unlike other fighters in the other countries, i.e. we will have victory. In our struggle the Colonial Government will resist us more than before.

### Our Fighters equipped with Arms are Sure to Win

Colonialism is now opposed by almost every nation in the world, so colonialism is now nearly annihilated. Colonialism represents the weak, lazy and the obsolete; those who represent colonialism will soon be eradicated. We now represent the new strength of modern nations. However, the nations we are for at present are still under suppression; our forces will become stronger and our members will become more in number. So at the end we can defeat domination by the weak, the lazy and the obsolete. We can defeat the neo-colonialists by our continuous struggle. We will be similar to Cuba although it is a small island. The Cubans have defeated the descendants of those who hampered their national development, won their fight for freedom from American Imperialism and are now free from the yoke of colonialism.

Our present struggle is, of course, for the liberation of Sarawakians from British domination, suppression and agitation by the British dogs. We fight for the freedom of Sarawakians and for their true independence. We are fighting for the good of the people. So the people support us in our movement in Sarawak. We have, at present, as members of our society, all races; so we are ready to go ahead with our armed revolt. By launching our proposed action we will incite the people to rise against the colonialists and their dogs in Sarawak. The forces of the people could not be resisted for the development projects could not be carried out without the support of the people. Without labour the Government projects could not be carried out at all. We know that the active force of the public is very important for all sorts of requirements. Therefore, if we are united for an armed revolt, the result is unquestionably "victory".

Nations of all countries throughout the world have undoubtedly spotted us in our strife. Thirteen counties with a population of 100,000 [*sic – this should probably have been written as 1,000,000*] are confirmed to be on our side and from them we can get all sorts of assistance. The people of Asia, Africa and Latin America also support us. Some countries which are still under the rule of capitalism, colonialism, imperialism and British colonialism are on our side. Recently, representatives of 48 countries held a meeting in Indonesia. They passed a resolution supporting us in our campaign to abolish colonialism. Indonesia, our neighbour, will give us military aid and will train our soldiers in Indonesia; the Indonesians also support us in our civil war. Indonesia will give us guns, ammunition and food. In addition Indonesia will provide volunteers and jungle guerrillas to start incursions everywhere along Kalimantan and Borneo Utara border. So we have the support of the new emerging forces throughout the world. How about our enemies? They received assistance from American and Australian Imperialism. Our enemies should not get any support from other countries besides Britain, U.S.A., Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Therefore, it is evident that we can convince more countries to come to our side. Who will be the winner. The answer is clear.

Finally, this is our own country. We are used to going into the jungle and to the small towns along the rivers and streams, up and down hills, and to all places in Sarawak for this is our native land – the land in which we now live. We can claim that we know all the mountains, rivers and streams because we used to go through them.

The neo-colonialists, who have to be led by the local guides, certainly cannot walk as fast as we can in the jungle

Hence, you can see our freedom fighters will achieve their objectives and the neo-colonialists and their dogs will be defeated.

All members! Let us whole heartedly and bravely enrol ourselves into the fighting movement! The final victory will be ours!

### Wrong Thinking

The Farmers' Association has decided that there is no other way to liberate Sarawak than to resort to armed struggle with the full support of the people. We know that this is a good decision for the moderates and the masses of all classes in the country. Therefore, we must come forward to join them in their movement in order to destroy our enemies with our arms. Meanwhile some of our members do not know what we are fighting for. Therefore, they have "wrong thinking" on this decision. This "wrong thinking" comes from the influence of our enemies so that the comrades will misunderstand what we are fighting for. Therefore, we cannot achieve our goal because of the weaknesses among our own members. In order to clarify everything for the benefit of our members we will give full details of this affair. We hope that all members will be prepared.

Many people have asked about the Farmers' Association as follows: "You have talked a lot, but where are the weapons? No matter how often we accuse our enemies with our lips, these accusations will not affect them and so they are not necessary. You will not necessarily be assisting us but just send us weapons and let us start an armed revolt. That will be enough!" The people who ask such questions do not understand verbal propaganda because they only believe in guns and ammunition for taking action against the unwanted authority. Are they right? We know they are wrong because they are ignorant of armed revolt and depend too much on guns and ammunition. But some of you may ask why they are wrong. We will explain below.

If we are doubtful as to whether we will win in our fight, the socialists will win instead, so there is no need for us to launch any struggle. In an armed rebellion our position is difficult. We have to fight between life and death; we will be wounded or killed. In an armed revolt we have to consider everything carefully. We must be cheerful, happy and gay; we must forget what will happen to us, or we will be cowards. If we fear that we will be killed and fear too much for our property and our family our struggle will be in vain. We must fight with confidence; we must not be afraid; we must not think about life and death so that our guns will be fired for the price of life, then we will not succeed in our struggle. In addition, if all races are united the Ibans will trust the Chinese and the Chinese too will have confidence in the Ibans or other races. Their struggle will be fruitful. If Ibans or Chinese or other races are not united they will perish. If we are not careful the various races in the country will fight against one another. The British and their dogs are inciting all races to do this. If we are divided and fight separately or individually, we cannot win.

With the Farmers' Association to fight against the neo-colonialists, we cannot start jungle warfare against our enemies. We must train how to use weapons and how to

fight against our enemies. Without being trained we will be no match for our enemies. We must unite in order to win victory against our enemies.

Guns and cartridges are made by men; if men do not make them there will be no guns and cartridges. But no matter how many guns and cartridges we have, they will be useless without men to use them.

From the contents of this letter we know that we must be prepared and ready for armed rebellion; without armed rebellion we cannot survive. If we fight whole heartedly with guns, knives and any other weapons that we may have, we can also defeat the neo-colonialists. We must obey all laws and rules of our organization in order to achieve what we want. Comrades, you must believe what we say, and think over and over again.

### Some Vitally Important Matters in the By-Laws of Our Organization

This time we tell you why we elect office bearers among our members. Why don't we elect chairmen and committee members among the initial members? It is because we have to go through democratic process. Why do we not get everyone as members of our organization? The reasons are:

(1) Our organization aims to overthrow the wickedness of bad systems of government and replace the wicked systems with better ones. We show our strength to liberate Sarawak. We must behave nicely and be of good character before all the people. We must be simple, accessible to everybody and we must show a good example to the people. The majority of farmers in Sarawak are honest and good citizens, but some members have gone to extremes because they have been influenced by bad elements in our society. So we must be careful in accepting members for our society. If we campaign for our association we should allow everybody to become members. We should choose them from their behaviour, character, occupation or conduct.

(2) The Farmers' Association's aim is to overthrow the wicked neo-colonialists and set up a socialist society. For this reason the neo-colonialists always endeavour to stop our movement and so be able to rule us forever. So everyone of us must be firm and strong in our activities in order to replace neo-colonialism. We must not accept dishonest people to be our members for these dishonest people may become traitors who will split out organization. We must be vigilant for the spies and detectives sent out by our enemies to study our activities. Certainly, if spies sent out by our enemies can study our secrets, the neo-colonialists can easily destroy our organization. Through the information obtained by the detectives of our enemies some of our members were arrested. But the more our members are arrested, the more people will join us and the more secretive our activities will be.

Our organization has been strengthened and our members can be found everywhere in the country. So our movement confuses the unwanted authority. The unwanted authority is very clever because it sends some of its spies to join our organization and to study our activities. So be watchful and be on the lookout for traitors and get rid of them.

Now we will tell you why we elect a chairman and committee members.

Our organization is a clandestine one. We have to be cautious in electing our chairman and committee members so that our enemies do not realize our supreme strength. Once our activities are discovered our members will be arrested. The arrest of our members will be a great loss to us.

Where is our democracy? What is the power of members?

(1) Everyone of us has the power to execute our influence in the party whether it is in a sub-committee or general meeting. In the meeting we can listen to all the views expressed by members of our association on all matters whether related to the work of our organization or not, or whether they are related to other matters. In the meeting too we can ask what we do not know and say what we like in order that all views will be thrashed out in the meeting.

(2) We can express our opinion to the association and and [sic] criticise our activities. We are free to praise and criticise our work in the light of past experience.

(3) We can bring our personal affairs or case [sic] before the organization so that the case will be seen through. This organization pledges to help its members with any difficulties. Assuming that in our houses we want to open an adult literacy class and we have no blackboard, chalk, books, etc., we can take all these matters to our organization so that it will give us help.

So much for that. Now we turn to the affairs of the members.

#### Stir up trouble between our Chinese Brethren and the Neo-Colonialists

The neo-colonialists have from time to time fought our Chinese brethren. But our Chinese brethren are not disheartened by the action taken against them. The action taken by the neo-colonialists encourage our brothers to fight more strongly. How do our brothers fight against the neo-colonialists? Here is the answer.

In March last year the neo-colonialists and their dogs collected shotguns and ammunition from our Chinese brethren in the First, Second and Third Divisions of Sarawak. All the shotguns owned by the Chinese in Sibul, Sarikei and Bintang were ordered to be surrendered to the authorities. The reasons are: (1) our understanding brothers, the Chinese, know that they must start an armed revolt. So a great majority of them were ready to overthrow the neo-colonialist government by armed rebellion, and the neo-colonialists and their dogs were afraid of armed revolt. Therefore, in order to stop our brothers from starting the armed revolt, the Government collected more than 8,000 shot guns owned by the Chinese. (2) The government make use of the Ibans to threaten the Chinese but only a few Ibans obey the order given by the neo-colonialists. Those who obey them do so for the sake of rewards given by the neo-colonialists. Some Ibans pretend to rob Chinese shops, loot Chinese goods and threaten to kill Chinese. They call the Chinese "communists". Ibans are being used as weapons by the neo-colonialists to fight against the Chinese and most Chinese are afraid of the Ibans and dare not start the armed rebellion. But still a majority of our Chinese brethren will continue in their movement towards a rebellion. Our Chinese brethren are still working underground in order to launch a sudden attack, though the attack may be contrary to the opinion of some Chinese opportunists. Some Ibans support the Chinese

in their opinion regarding the starting of a rebellion, though some, in certain places, oppose it. We hope that the Ibans will not be mistaken and think that the Chinese will fight against the Ibans. The Chinese are fighting for the country and for the freedom of the Ibans. The neo-colonialists know that they cannot stop the Chinese from taking up arms so they detain a number of them. Curfew is imposed from 7 p.m. to 6 a.m. The curfew greatly affects the Chinese community. It stops the Chinese from visiting one another by night. The neo-colonialists think that by imposing a curfew the underground movement will be stopped suddenly and those who violate it will be arrested. Our brave Chinese brethren are not afraid of the curfew because they know that the neo-colonialists cannot control them in all places at all times. The Chinese call for meetings at night; they move up and down rivers by night as usual. The wanted Chinese can escape from being arrested because they are well trained in underground activities. The curfew cannot stop our Chinese brethren in their struggle to overthrow the Government.

The neo-colonialists have another way of fighting against the Chinese i.e. they pay certain amount of money to the Chinese who agree to be their spies. These spies have to talk in support of the neo-colonialists and accuse members of our organization. The spies also interrupt meetings and study the characters of our members. They investigate all social gatherings organized by our society. The neo-colonialists issue all sorts of statements in their campaign against the Chinese so that the other races in the country hate that community. But the public are not afraid of the spies. Instead the spies are afraid of them. Many of the spies have given up after they have received a warning from the public. The public rebuke them thus: "If you remain as spies, your life will be in danger and you will not be respected by the people." Some of the spies who tried to fight against the public have been arrested by the people and prosecuted in a "people's court". So the spies are no longer strong or active. One cruel spy, for example, was brought into a "people's court" warned not to continue as an agent and was sentenced to have his ear cut off. Another was beaten and tortured by the people until he vomited blood. Yet another had his floating jetty cut down; it floated in the river. And yet another had between 400 and 500 of his pepper vines destroyed by the people in the night. We trouble the spies but what will the neo-colonialists do to us?

The worst that befall us is that only one or two us [sic] have been arrested. This is a great victory for our Chinese brethren.

The neo-colonialists cannot block the way of progress because our Chinese brethren are strong enough to overcome any obstacle placed before them. They are not timid. The neo-colonialists will finally be defeated.

That is all for now; we will continue later.

#### Leaflets dropped by the Indonesian Aircraft shocked the Neo-Colonialists

Early last month an Indonesian aircraft dropped leaflets in Kuching, Sibul, Sandakan and Api Api.

These leaflets were written in Indonesian and signed by Soekarno, the President of Indonesia and Supreme Commander of the Revolutionary Government of Indonesia. The contents of the leaflets were as follows: (1) As from 25<sup>th</sup> January 1964 a ceasefire

was declared. (2) Be ready and be prepared for safety with arms in your hands. (3) Be ready for the new order for the next movement.

Why did the Indonesian aircraft drop these leaflets? It did this because of the boastful and hostile puppet of the colonialists, Tengku's party, which enraged Indonesia. During the ceasefire the Government of the puppets or so called Malaysia violated the agreement, broadcast anti-Indonesian campaign and dropped leaflets to frighten the Indonesian guerrillas. The puppet Government impressed that Soekarno would withdraw his guerrillas from the Indonesian/Malaysian border. In the leaflets dropped by the Malaysian aircraft the interpretation of Soekarno's leaflets was different. So Soekarno gave full explanation of his leaflets to his guerrillas, and asked them to stand by and stay where they were and not to withdraw. Due to the violation made by the Malaysians, Soekarno's regime had to take action. Soekarno asked his troops to distribute the leaflets over Sarawak. So the neo-colonialists and their dogs were shocked.

#### Morocco did not welcome the Malaysian Mission

Bad Malaysia is rejected by the people of the world. Sooner or later it will be isolated by other countries in the world.

The Mission which claim [sic] itself as the Malaysian Mission at the end of last month visited some countries in Africa in order to explain to the Africans the Malaysian position and to cheat people in Africa by their words. It did not do as well as it claimed. When they arrived at Morocco the Moroccan Government protested against their coming. The Moroccan Government not only did not welcome the Mission on their arrival, but did not publish any statement of their visit. The Moroccan Foreign Minister boycotted the Mission's arrival led by Lee Kuan Yew and a request made by Lee Kuan Yew to see the king of Morocco was turned down by its Government.

Now, how do you feel Ali ("Hali") Lee Kuan Yew? We will ask him this. What will be his answer?

#### The Puppet Government reinforces its Troops in order to contain our Fighters from Kalimantan Utara

Recently because the puppet Government wanted to condemn our fighters for freedom in Kalimantan Utara, who wanted to liberate the people from hardship to independence and peace, it broke the ceasefire agreement and violated the Indonesian border. The government sent aircraft and dropped bombs from British bases in Sarawak and Singapore.

According to radio broadcasts the Kuching airport has been declared a protected place. All sorts of artilleries, guns, anti-aircraft weapons and light weapons have now been installed around the airfield.

The Malaysian Government has also declared that as from 8 a.m. 25<sup>th</sup> February any (foreign) aircraft is forbidden to fly over Sarawak and Sabah territories. Any such aircraft which does not obey this order will be shot down and will only have itself to blame.

It is learned that the Tengku's Government will call for 20,000 soldiers to protect Sarawak and Sabah. Large towns will be protected.

Now the neo-colonialists are hampering our movement towards independence but our movement can easily come through. We fight for the survival of our generation and we must forget the mishap which might befall us as a result of our struggle. So comrades we must get ready for armed struggle to fight freedom and liberation – remember armed struggle.

### Forces News

The neo-colonialists usually claim that their soldiers are strong and equipped with better weapons; that their weapons are good; and that their stories are true. Let us study from the details given below.

On 6<sup>th</sup> February a British helicopter landed at Sibu and crashed when it touched the ground.

On 10<sup>th</sup> February another British helicopter landed at Simangang and again crashed when it touched the ground.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> March a jet aeroplane exploded in the air and landed in Labuan in Sabah, burning when it reached the ground. The pilot was killed like a dog.

All these aeroplanes were badly built. Just within a month three were damaged. How many would be damaged in the next few months or in the future? In addition to the plane crash due to its poor built, we can shoot a lot. You know all the stories.

On 21<sup>st</sup> February in Lundu District the National Soldiers (Tentera Negra) made contact with British soldiers and in the engagement one British Corporal was killed and four others were wounded. There were no casualties on the side of the National Soldiers.

On 25<sup>th</sup> February in Kuching District one British soldiers' post was attacked by the National Soldiers. Two colonial soldiers were killed and six others wounded. The Tentara Negra suffered no casualties.

All news items on the above were broadcast by Radio Sarawak and from the broadcast the neo-colonialists admitted that the Tentara Negra suffered no casualties. They were right. So we know the true stories. But in other incursions we should not deny that we have suffered the casualties broadcast by Radio Sarawak. Our enemies sometimes do not disclose their casualties. Sometimes they just disclose a few of their casualties but we know a lot of them have not been disclosed.

The colonial soldiers are not as well trained as they say. Therefore once our fighters attack them they will be killed.

## **APPENDIX B – THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF A DISTRICT OFFICER**

(A talk given by the author in Kuching in 1962 to new arrivals of the American Peace Corps - i.e. a year before Malaysia Day)

The District Officer's job is changing all the time and, when I look back, I can see that the job now is very different from what it used to be in 1952 and no doubt in 1972 it will be very different again, that is if it still exists. As such I think the best way to tackle this talk to-day is for me to start with what the job used to be like and how it is changing. As the main change in the job is due to the emergence of local government carried out by elected councillors, I will lay special emphasis on this aspect of the job.

To a certain extent, the job varies from one district to another. This variation is considerable when one compares, on the one hand, the job of the D.O. of a district with a large urban population and with many Government departmental offices in the same block as or only a few blocks away from the District Office and, on the other hand, the job of a D.O. in a very ulu, backward area, where he is king pin and everything revolves around him. There is very little penetration by the towns people of places such as Kuching or Sibu into even the nearby rural areas, much less into the far ulu, and many towns people here have a nearly complete ignorance of what the country people are like or, rather, they have an idea but it is a completely false one, and so the towns people often fear and yet scorn the ulu people. The job I shall be describing to you to-day will be mostly that of an outstation or ulu D.O., such as the D.O. Serian or Kapit rather than my job here in Kuching.

When someone is appointed to be a D.O., there is nothing much laid down to tell him what to do, when to do it or how to do it, though naturally there are many laws, rules and regulations passed by Government covering all aspects of our lives and we are supposed to know the whole lot of them – a few of them do specify what the D.O. can and cannot do. However, generally speaking, the D.O. is not bound by narrow limits as are for instance a customs officer or a treasury officer. One cannot administer a large area of land with many people of various races, religions and problems in it by set rules. Indeed a D.O. must often have to use his judgment and may even decide on occasions to ignore or go against some rule. He is the senior representative of Government in his district and has to have a very good general knowledge of what is going on there and so have a finger in a great many pies. In the old days, when communications were poorer than they now are and before Sarawak was rushing along the road to 'merdeka', the D.O. had a lot of executive powers, but he has been and still is handing these over to Local Authorities or to various committees and so for that matter is his immediate boss, the Resident. In fact now the D.O. has remarkably few powers left to him when compared with long ago.

In the old days, for instance, the D.O. would have dealt with a case of charity. Now he informs the Local Welfare Council of such cases and leaves the Council to deal with them. Pre-war, the D.O. and Resident between them did 90% of the work now done by local councils. There were then very few councils and those that were in existence consisted of appointed members who listened politely to what the D.O. had to say and then agreed with his views. Furthermore those councils had no staff of their own but used the district office staff. People here can well remember, even post-war, of what used to happen in many places. Who was it who then ordered the drains or ditches or

footpaths to be cleared? The D.O. Who passed building plans? The Resident with the advice of the Divisional Engineer. Who excused people from paying head tax? Who decided where roads would be built? Who ordered the cutting down of trees that overhung public roads, the supervision of markets or fire fighting, the issuing of village shop licences or deciding how many boat hawkers there should be? All this was done either by the D.O. or the Resident with, where necessary the advice of a departmental officer and/or a local headman. These two officers also dealt with such matters as controlling livestock in bazaars or kampongs, regulating the letting off of firecrackers or authorising cinema shows or other public entertainments and many other matters that affected people locally.

Though the D.O. has handed over so many of his powers to a local authority, yet, in the view of the local people, he still has a considerable aura of power and they still go to him, in preference to any other body, whenever they have a problem. I must say that there have been many occasions when I have had great sympathy with some individual who has begged me to sort out his problem for him instead of shoving him off to an amorphous rural district council, within whose competence the question lay or to go and see his local councillor, who might well be of a different race to him. The trouble is that the ulu farmer or bazaar towkay only has to think back 4 or 5 years to recall that in those days if he wanted something, he knew that the best way to get a decision on his problem was to go to the D.O. or in some cases the Resident, who would check-up on what the law said or otherwise use his judgement. And I must admit that for a member of the public, who has come on a long journey from the ulu, it is very often easier and pleasanter and certainly quicker to deal with a D.O., who will say "yes" or "no", giving his reasons and the individual can always go and see the Resident if dissatisfied. An approach to a Councillor will result in him saying that he cannot give a definite answer, as he has no power outside the council chamber, until after its next meeting, which will be in six weeks' time. Many ulu people, whose thoughts change slowly, have still not realised that local government now exists in Sarawak and you would be surprised at the number of people who think that when a Council has ordered an increase in the rates it is because the D.O. has told it to do so.

Initially, the D.O. was the chairman of a council and the next step was that he was automatically a member and in due course he ceased to have any say in what the council decided. No-one can learn without practice and trial and error, and one of the main jobs of the D.O., while leaving the various councils in his district to get on with their jobs themselves, is to interfere as little as possible and, while avoiding upsetting the councillors, if he sees that disastrous decisions may be taken that will affect the general public, he can always talk privately with the clerk to the council and point out what he fears might be the result of their decision or advise him that the Council has no powers to reach any decision on the matter in hand. Some D.Os. convey their views by visiting many coffee houses and leaning confidentially across the table talking to influential councillors. There are no set rules for D.Os. to apply the indirect method, and each D.O. does as he thinks best according to the type and character of the people that he is dealing with. In any case, such matters require a greater degree of skill and finesse than used to be required of him when carrying out his job. Indeed this relationship between the D.O. and the local council is so important for the good of the public that I will enlarge on it to-day.

When D.Os. ceased to be chairman or a member of a council, it would be an embarrassment if he listened in at public meetings, which though true, makes the D.O's. job of being an adviser to the council very difficult, for it often results in the council making a mistake or taking an illegal decision. Clerks to a council have rarely had any legal or administrative training to fit them for their job. When the D.O. gets to hear of the council making a bad or illegal decision, there is nothing left for him to do other than advise the chairman or clerk how best to get out of the pickle it has got into. Government often seeks the views of local councils in matters of interest to the central government and when it does so, it is the duty of the D.O. to ensure that the council fully understands what is involved.

The D.O., by the nature of his work, is in contact with a lot of people who will often put ideas into his head, and the D.O. can tell the local councillors of that ward or the council's chairman or secretary of what he has heard and perhaps suggest ways in which the council could improve matters. The suggestions could range from suggesting the building by-laws be made applicable to a certain kampong, to passing on information that people in a certain area were criticising the council because it hadn't built the bridge it had promised to do, to telling the secretary confidentially that a certain L.A. teacher has a very bad reputation for chasing the unmarried girls of the village. There are times when tact is no longer effective and sometimes the D.O. or Resident must abandon the indirect method and write a very clear forcible letter to the council warning it that if it persists in a certain wrong line of action what the consequences will be. If need be the whip must be used and, since the councils do not have enough revenue of their own but have to rely heavily on central government subsidies, the old story of parliament versus the king can be repeated here in a modified form. Finance has a powerful effect on all of us and councillors are no exception. If a council insists on mispending money and ignores the D.O's. advice, a little word to the chairman's ear to the effect that if the fault remains unchanged and if the auditor's attention should be drawn to the matter he would probably object and say that this is unauthorised spending of public money and so the councillors, who authorised it, would have to refund it from their private pockets, produces a surprisingly quick reaction from those councillors, who would be affected and who thereupon become very willing to reverse their previous decision.

All the council's contracts have to go through the D.O. before being passed and council's staff appointments are approved by him, the Resident or the Chief Secretary depending on the salary of the person concerned.

It is just as well if the D.O. does do more than merely glance at these documents. On one occasion I read a contract and found the word "not" had been left out so that a sentence read "The council shall be responsible for any damage done by the contractor"! One council once copied the wording of a contract used by another council for building a school, and in it appeared the phrase "The Contractor may be paid when the work has been completed to the Engineer's satisfaction". Now the original council had had an engineer, but the copying council didn't and one can imagine how difficult it would have been to know when the Contractor was to be paid. Another sphere in which the D.O. and the council work together a lot is in the matter of elections. The ward boundaries for the district council are usually made by the D.O. and passed by the Resident with the approval of the Governor. It is the administration that is responsible for making the electoral rolls, though the council usually helps a lot in this. The

administration again supervises the question of candidates and the elections and the counting of votes. When the local elections have been completed, it is usually the D.O. who manages the election of councillors from the district councils to the Divisional Advisory Council.

I have thus stressed at great length the relationship between the local council and the D.O. because it is at present such an important part in the development of local government. I will now go on to other matters.

One aspect of the outstation D.O. that has not changed much is that of Registrar. He is responsible for registering all deeds except land. He is Business Names Registrar, Probate Officer, registers adoptions and marriages, he is not the final registrar of births and deaths, as this is done in Kuching, but all the documents concerning these matters go through him. The D.O. does not register trades unions or societies but, once again, all the papers go through him. He is also labour adviser for his district and workmen's compensation cases are dealt with by him. Even though the D.O. is the senior government officer in his outstation, he does not have direct power over departmental officers such as agricultural assistants or hospital assistants. At the same time one of the most important parts of any administrative officer's job is co-ordination, and the D.O. cannot do his job properly if, for instance, the D.M.O. at Divisional H.Q. or the Divisional Agricultural Officer do not keep him informed of what their staff in his district are doing. The same thing applies to other departmental heads at Divisional H.Q., such as the Section Forest Officer, The Divisional Superintendent of Police, the Education Officer and so on. Chaos would follow if each of these worked purely through his own department. As an extreme case, one could imagine a piece of land under jungle and the Forest Guard going there and arranging with the local people and his own boss for a communal forest to be made there, while the Education Officer had made arrangements for trees to be felled and a central school to be built there, while unknown to both of them, the Agriculture Assistant had arranged with the Divisional Agriculture Officer for a pig farm to be built a little way upriver of the school and, of course, the pigs would root up the small trees and spoil the school's drinking water supply. Each department cannot work on its own. The D.O., if he is to act as a co-ordinator MUST be kept informed, in good time, by each of the various departments of each scheme a department wishes to carry out in his district, so that before he comments on it, he can ensure that any local people affected by it have been consulted, as have any other departments with interests in the area of the proposal. For that matter, the D.O. can be useful in acting as a liaison officer between the local council and the departmental officers, so that they work in harmony together and each is kept informed of those aspects of the other's work that are of interest to it.

In a matter like education it is especially essential that the D.O., the L.A. and the Education Department work together. The D.O. has no control over teachers but he does over the pupils and can affect schools by using his influence in such ways as encouraging people to send more girls to school or in treating the teacher properly. Departments are, to a great extent, concerned with things rather than people. An engineer likes to make the best possible road and would consider proper drainage for it more important than ensuring water to someone's nearby padi farm was not interfered with. An agriculture officer wants the best possible rubber, but this is inconsistent with the people's desire to lead as easy a life as possible. The D.M.O. would like an absolutely uncontaminated water supply, but the people cannot afford to feed the pigs if

they are in pens so the pigs wander over the water supply area. The D.O. largely has to deal with people and it is one of the most interesting jobs trying to get the understanding and co-operation of the people in improving themselves and allowing the departmental officers to help him in this. If the D.O. is to do his job well, therefore, he must know his people and they must know him. He must know how they live, what they are thinking, what their difficulties are, and to do all this he must know the countryside geographically. He must know what a river is like when it is low tide and high, or in flood and dry weather. He must know what the land communications are like and what sort of crops the soil produces best and whether the rubber is of poor quality in an area or new high yielding rubber and where the lalang is and how quickly its area is increasing and, very important indeed, how long it will take each villager to reach District H.Q. under different conditions. And the only way he can achieve knowledge about all these things is by travelling. There are D.Os. whose personal knowledge of their districts is limited to one mile around the office and to where a Landrover or boat can easily get, but I think you will find that most of them are used to travelling. When the D.O. goes travelling, it is sometimes comfortably by boat, sometimes uncomfortably in pouring rain in a tiny perahu, sometimes with a heart that is protesting that it cannot survive another step up a nearly vertical mountain-side and sometimes he is cursing as he tries to keep his hold on slippery batangs or falls up to his middle in a ricefield. When he arrives at a village and has recovered his breath, the D.O. likes to get his business done and keep to his announced programme. Some visits are for a special purpose such as to elect a new headman or to hear a court case over a land dispute. Other visits are just routine from village to village to see what is going on and in such cases what happens at one village is much the same as at another. On his journey, he will have been watching to see the state of the crops, see signs of villages breaking up (this can badly affect the school attendance rates), finding out where high yielding modern rubber or good coconut or oil palms have been planted, and always listening to local gossip. If there are any isolated shops or schools on the way, he will like to call in. He can often judge on these trips whether the local headmen and councillors are doing their job properly or not. Once he reaches the village, he will make a point of noting its condition, whether rich or poor, whether built or in much need of repairs, where the water supply comes from, what the sanitation is like, what is the livestock situation, whether Christianity/the Moslem religion and/or political parties are making headway. Doubtless he will have various messages or instructions to give the villagers and they should also be encouraged to take advantage of his presence to announce their complaints or applications for firearms or office work to be done, as now is the time to get these attended to without all the expense and fuss and bother of going to District H.Q. On tour the D.O. will spend many consecutive nights staying with the various headmen in their villages and getting to know the people well. I find that I usually set out with enough food for myself for the whole period I shall be away and then bring back more than half of it as the locals have insisted that I should eat with them. In some cases hospitality goes further than I really like, as when they get offended if I prefer to use my own bedding rather than theirs, or resist a large piece of tepid pork fat held in dirty fingers being shoved into my mouth after my hosts have given me too much to drink and my stomach is feeling queasy.

Many people say that the Dayaks are lazy. Don't you believe it. Their energy may be misplaced, but when, as a D.O., I have waded through their swamps or climbed up their hills and become exhausted doing just that, though carrying nothing except my camera, I can only admire their strength and fitness in working there daily when I was merely

walking. These trips to the ulu have a two way value in keeping the D.O. up-to-date regarding what is going on and by keeping the people informed about government policy.

The D.O. has the job of trying to improve the people's standard of living, but I must say that I mostly find they are not very receptive to his bright ideas and exhortations and this is not very surprising. If you had been working hard all day in the open air on an often insufficient diet, I doubt whether after supper you would be prepared to listen long to anyone giving you an improving talk! You might perhaps be prepared to join in a party with the D.O. but listening to advice is another matter. Some matters may seem more important to them than to me but after a day's work their minds are not over receptive to too much thinking. It is always fatal if you allow them to cajole you into starting a party before your official work has begun.

Another of the D.O.'s jobs is that of magistrate. He acts as magistrate in the normal civil and criminal courts and also in the native courts, and, especially on tour, the conditions under which he hears his cases would often horrify an orthodox judge, for he is often squatting on a longhouse mat at about 10 p.m. competing with crowing fighting cocks, squabbling dogs and wailing babies apart from everyone talking at once, and when it comes to calling the witnesses, he possibly finds to his surprise that the person who earlier on had pressed him to quaff copiously of his brew is the complainant, while the defendant looks very much like that woman who sang to him a while back. It goes without saying that it is virtually impossible to hear a case while all the witnesses, that are to be called, are kept out of sound's reach till their turn come to give witness.

The D.O. is helped in his office by one or more Sarawak Administrative Officers (S.A.Os.), some of whom will be probationary and some very experienced and the senior of whom has to act as D.O. in his absence, and by some clerks such as the treasury clerk, the clerk doing registration of births and deaths, the probate clerk, who deals with the estates of dead persons, etc. Apart from officers, who are controlled by the D.O., there are others, in the district office, over whom he has little control as their bosses are at Divisional H.Q.

I will now give you a short example of what a typical day in the D.O.'s office might be like in an outstation and remember that an S.A.O's. job is on much the same lines. First thing one morning, the D.O. may make a surprise check on the treasurer's cash or the postal clerk's stamps. Going back to his desk he may find that the chairman of a school committee is sitting at his desk and asking for permission to run a public concert to raise funds for a new school building. He has to be told that the D.O. no longer has the power to grant such permits and he must take his application to the local council. However, the D.O. still has the job of censor so he will want to see the script to ensure that nothing indecent or treasonable is taking place. He starts reading his post but is disturbed by hearing a loud noise at the other end of his office, which is an indignant Dayak who is demanding to know why a young whipper snapper of an S.A.O. refuses to allow him to have 20 rounds for his gun. In fact, the D.O. has, out of the corner of his eye, been noting how the S.A.O. has patiently and repeatedly explained the rules to him and now the D.O. has to repeat them all over again. The Dayak, now convinced that he will not get what he wants, goes away dissatisfied. He is replaced by a policeman and an illegal immigrant and the policeman requests the D.O. to sign a deportation order. This the D.O. should not do unless he has convinced himself that all the necessary

rules and regulations have been complied with. While this was going on, a car has arrived and out of it have stepped the Divisional Medical Officer, the Divisional Engineer and the Superintendent of Lands and Surveys, who had come together from Divisional H.Q. for the special purpose of hopefully reaching a conclusion with the D.O. on which of alternatives sites the new dispensary should be built and it is the D.O. who will try to ensure that the D.M.O. and the D.E. can reconcile their differing views with what can be fitted in within the town planning regulations, the cost of one less desirable site with the cost of another where much earth filling will be necessary. Once the decision has been reached or no decision can be reached, the D.O. will take advantage of having these officers with him to discuss other matters concerning each of them, which are done much more satisfactorily over a table than by letter or by 'phone. The D.O. often has to sit on committees and because he has his finger in so many pies, he can be very useful on them. Members of the public will have been waiting for their turn to be heard by the D.O. Having eventually got home after office hours and the D.O., is resting reading the previous day's Straits Times or is thinking of going to join in on a game of badminton, when perhaps the 'phone rings and he is told that a longhouse has been burnt down and so instead of relaxing, he has to set about organising relief work – without, of course being able to claim overtime allowance. Many evenings people from far away may come into his house and hope he will do work for them then and there or perhaps they have just come in for a chat, a friendly smoke and a drink or because they wish to say something to him confidentially.

Thus you can see that, in his station, the D.O. or an S.A.O leads a very varied life and his mind is always having to leap from one subject to a totally unrelated one and, for a lot of the time, he is dealing closely with individuals and has to be patient with them, tactful and a good listener as they natter on interminably instead of concentrating their words purely on the business in hand. Sometimes, especially when he has other urgent priorities to get on with, this way of dealing with someone else's request may greatly tax his patience!

In some ways, the D.O. is, or rather was, the father of his area as people come to him with all sorts of requests and demand his advice in all kinds of strange matters, for some of which he may not feel himself particularly qualified. For instance marriage quarrels. When I was a young bachelor, I used to find it easy to reach a decision on the marriage problems of others, but now that I am married and with the greater experience of advancing age, I can no longer see clear solutions to such problems. On one occasion, I found it difficult in knowing how to advise a Dutch woman, who was going to marry a New Zealander in Sarawak on the next day and then travel immediately to Singapore and she wanted an immediate answer about what to do about a passport. The D.O. tries to sort out problems such as these, but people who come to him thinking that he knows the solution to each of their problems are sadly mistaken. To sum up, I would say that a D.O's. job is now administration, co-ordination with and advice to the L.A. and the doing of all the jobs that remain to be done when everyone else has done his share.

## APPENDIX C – THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ENJOYMENT OF FOOD IN MY LIFE

This treatise has only a limited connection with Sarawak, however, I can safely say that one of the reasons why I was able so greatly to enjoy my time in Sarawak was that I was helped by my ability to like the meals offered me – even those few, mostly in the ulu, that I could not truthfully say were very stimulating to the taste buds. I do not recollect ever having had food poisoning and certainly never had dysentery. In my life I have experienced with surprise the illogicalness of people's likes and dislikes in food.

It is with astonishment I have noted how different the experiences of many other individuals have been and of how so many are creatures of habit or have an imagination that hinders them eating what others offer them expecting that they will enjoy what has been put in front of them. Of course there are people who may genuinely hope to enjoy some food that is new to them and are then disappointed that they just cannot like it – I am thinking of such strong tastes as durian, garlic and chillies, which some enthuse over, some dislike and no-one can be indifferent to them. Since I can enjoy these, I feel sorry for those that cannot. Such people often only like bland food, which I certainly have no objection to but cannot enthuse over.

I have to thank my parents that, from as far back as I can remember they always insisted that my sister and I must finish what was on our plates. Until I was about ten years old, we were living in villas in France or hotel/pensions style in Italy and Switzerland and our food was far from being traditional British. The first cook that I can remember was Paquita – a Spanish Basque – so I was certainly introduced to garlic early on. Before going to India in early 1940, I had never had chillies. In India I was startled that in the Officers' Mess on Sundays for breakfast, we traditionally had very spicy hot mulligatawny soup, as it was felt that after the entertainments of the previous night, this would either cure us of our hangover or decide us to go back to bed.

In India I was taught that water was useless to counteract the burning effect of chillies and that the taste buds soon began to cope with eating them. I was also told not to breathe in while eating chillies lest the flavoursome breath from them went down the wrong way and into the bronchial tubes causing one to cough. Clearly, when one thinks of the huge number of Indians alone, without counting the many other races, that eat chillies from childhood, there is nothing inedible about them. Because chillies do not grow in England, we have no word for distinguishing heated food from hot spicy food. The Malays have 'panas' for a hot temperature and 'padas' for a hot spicy food.

My father, who had lived in Egypt for many years, couldn't do without his yoghurt (and a very different taste it had from what is called 'yoghurt' today). Cooking was forbidden in our pension bedrooms but this did not deter him. He travelled around with a small primus stove and a saucepan and a small bottle to contain a dollop of the last yoghurt he had made and which would act as a starter for the next batch. On one cold night in our pension in Brittany, he had started producing a batch of yoghurt, when he heard footsteps outside. He hurriedly hurled the contents of the saucepan out of the window and hid his utensils under the bed. The landlady, as she talked to us, looked suspiciously round the room but found nothing to object to. Next morning my father was astonished, as he looked out of the window, to see that the half-cooked yoghurt had congealed as it flew through the cold air and was hanging in strips from the electric wires outside.

Bunty and I also insisted on our children eating up all that was put in front of them and soon introduced them to garlic and curries (not too strong to start with). This ability to eat non-British foods has been very useful to them as they have wandered round the world and been able genuinely to enjoy what was put in front of them and not to cause their hosts to lose face. Bunty took every opportunity to collect recipes from local ladies of dishes that she had liked and is a dab hand at producing proper Malay or Indian curries as well as various Chinese dishes. In Marudi, she asked the wife of Kapitan China, Ah Bah, to show her how to make 'keropok' (prawn crispy crackers). Mrs Ah Bah decided to use a fish and Bunty was fascinated on how nothing was wasted. The flesh was put on one side for the keropok making. Such items as the head and bones were used to make fish soup and what remained of the fish, including the eyes, went into the pig bin.

In 1942, I was in charge of a small army mess and a new officer had joined us. For the last 12 years he had been in India and risen through the ranks and had now been commissioned. When he came in for his first breakfast he looked at me aghast and said "What are you eating?" I looked at him in great astonishment for he had been 12 years in India and did not know what papaya (pawpaw) was. He absolutely refused to try any because it was foreign food, added to which it had strange black seeds in it and he even, very kindly, hoped that I would not have stomach troubles or worse by eating it. Apparently he was willing to eat oranges and bananas as they were not foreign foods, though he could not recall that any grew in Great Britain! Why would he not at least try a mouthful or two of papaya (having discarded the seeds as he would have done with a melon) or even a mango or some lychees and then possibly find that he had added a delightful new taste and healthy food to his repertoire?

During my time in India there was a terrible rice famine in Bengal. Eventually, the Government brought in wheat. There was much adverse comment from the British soldiers that some Bengalis died either because they would not eat flour or they vomited it back once they had swallowed it.

In 1943, during the Siege of Imphal, I was high up near the India/Burma frontier and during the night we woke up with our anti-personnel mines going off. Daybreak revealed that a wild sow and her piglets had been blown up. Our diet, during the siege, was monotonous and pretty tasteless. I expected that fresh pork would be appreciated by all the soldiers. By most it was. However an appreciable number refused to eat it as it was foreign food or, if they reluctantly agreed to try it, they vomited it straight back. The fact that their ancestors were happy to eat wild boar caught in Britain made no impression on them. In this connection, I mention that many of the Chinese people never drink milk after ending suckling and, as a result, have a lactose intolerance.

In the mountains near Imphal, I went on a patrol and, in an abandoned native village, I found a store of grains (I think it was Job's tears – a plant that grows rather like oats). We carried it back to our camp. There was a hiatus when the Company Commander called for a pestle and mortar and was startled to be presented with a pistol and 2" mortar. In due course the grains were ground down and served up as quite a palatable porridge – once again I presumed that this would be a welcome change of diet. The same soldiers who couldn't stomach wild boar could not accept a porridge that was not made of oats. Probably some of these soldiers had doubtless been contemptuous of Bengalis who were unable to replace rice with wheat!

In India I asked a Hindu colleague of mine if, lost and famished in the desert, what he would do if he found a tin of bully beef. A look of utter distaste showed on his face and, instead of answering my question, he asked me if my companion and I were lost and famished in the desert and one of us was shot through the heart by a passing plane, would I start eating his body?

I remember how astonished I was at the number of British who accepted jobs in Sarawak but only shopped at the international type super market and then only to buy the food they were used to in Britain. They largely ate out of tins and never went to the market to buy fresh vegetables or other foods. It is not only the British that are like this. Many Chinese think their diet is the best in the world and, if offered a foreign dish, refuse to try it. The thought of eating cheese or yoghurt appals them. I remember a Chinese professor, who had had a hot lunch with us in Croydon, was disgusted at being offered cold meat and salad for supper and refusing to eat it!

If Bunty knew that guests had been invited who never dreamed of eating local food, she would do her best to find some local lady in the market or squatting at the roadside, who was selling Fern Tops and she served this up without telling them what it was. The guests would usually comment on the nice asparagus flavoured veg and what was it and were mightily surprised at Bunty's unconventional, almost, in their view, dangerous habit of buying food outside the supermarkets.

Blachan is a case in point – ripe bloaters are the nearest British equivalent, though I admit that I rarely see bloaters on display nowadays and many British no longer know what a nice fish dish this is. When I pass a guest a block of blachan (a most healthy strong smelling paste of a dark purplish colour with, to me, a delightful flavour akin to anchovy paste) and they ask me what it is, I sometimes mischievously but truthfully say "It is a paste made up of shrimps that have gone bad while being sun dried." with the inevitable result that they refuse it and look at me in amazement when I cut off chunks of it and consume it with enjoyment. If however, I refrain from speaking the full truth and say "It is a shrimp paste, full of goodness and for people like the Land Dayaks in the ulu, who but rarely can afford to eat meat, Blachan is a cheap main source of protein" they will probably try some. Having said all this, Blachan is certainly not one of those bland tastes, that no-one can enthuse over and no-one can object to. Blachan is a taste no-one can be negative about – you either like it or you don't.

I happen to be fond of grilled liver and bacon or tripe and onions. I realise that raw liver and raw tripe are healthy foods. However, if I was famished I wonder if I would eat them. I have never met anyone to tell me what raw liver or tripe taste like and while I realise that the uncooked appearance of such foods is a poor guide to tastiness, I guess that I would have to be very hungry indeed before I could control my mind over matter and decide to accept such a diet. I don't wish to be offered a sheep's eye, but as the Arabs find it delicious, I would be prepared to eat sheep's eye and as I did so, I would be most interested to find how tasty or not I found it.

In the far inland jungle in Sarawak, Tim Dix was dealing in timber. I happened to coincide with him and was offered a dish of wild boar, that had been shot several days ago and he had no fridge. When I realised that I could smell the smell of decaying flesh I thought of refusing his offer but politeness made me eat it and, in fact, I enjoyed it and had no bad after effects.

Travelling on foot in the far interior of Sarawak with a retinue of Kayans and Nomadic Penans, we came across a large fruit bat covered in wild life feeding on its decaying flesh. The Kayans and I were astonished when the Penans picked it up for their supper, saying, "This what makes us strong!"

I have never been offered the Chinese recipes below. Parts of the method of treating the food is not usually met with in British recipes and might even be called 'unacceptable' by some of the more conventional British. I guess, however, that if given this food (before being told how the dish had been produced) they would most likely have congratulated the cook on producing such an excellent dish.

#### Drunken Doves:-

Let 4 doves each drink a small cup of brandy. Tighten their mouths until they die. Singe and remove everything in the doves. Put them in a big boiler with 3 cups of water and boil for 10 minutes then add 1 oz of sherry and 2 tsp of salt and simmer on a low fire. Pierce them with a fork. If the fork gets through easily, they are ready to be served up. The meat of the doves is white because their blood went back to their hearts. This dish will taste even better if they are steamed in a bowl big enough to hold the four doves but this will take 20 minutes to cook.

#### Drunken Shrimps:-

Select 1 lb of the best lively very fresh shrimps and trim off the whiskers and tails with a pair of scissors. Wash them clean and rinse with cold boiled water. Put them in a bowl and pour in 4 tbsp sherry, 1 tsp salt and 2 tbsp soya sauce. Cover with a saucer so that the shrimps won't be able to jump out from the bowl after they are drunk. About one hour later put them on a plate and mix with chopped ginger and vinegar. This is a good accompanying dish for wine.

The above recipes were published by Esther Chan in Singapore in 1952. The book has useful information, such as the best description I have seen anywhere to help one to decide whether fish is fresh. It explains how to kill a turtle by laying it on its back and, as soon as it stretches out its head, cut it off at once. Interesting, but not very helpful, is the fact that in Chinese there are more than 100 different characters or words denoting 'cooking'. The dullness and small number of traditional methods of British ways of cooking may be exemplified by the fact that each of the words Hsia, Cha, Chien, Chao, etc are translated into English by the one word 'fry'. The shades of difference are so obscure that they are untranslatable and any attempt to be too precise could only result in confusion. The foreword to Esther's book was by Commissioner General Malcolm MacDonald and the preface by Peng McNeice, wife of the Mayor of Singapore.

Some British are put off entering a Chinese restaurant merely by the sight of the duck carcasses displayed hanging in the window. The same people will probably get upset if the cooked duck that is put on the table still has its head and neck on. Would the duck have tasted any differently if the head and neck had been cut off just before arriving on the table? I do remember that, for some reason, even I was somewhat dismayed the first time a large dish of whole carcasses of tiny birds (smaller than a wren) that were a pest when flocks of them flew amongst the rice, was served up for the delectation of the guests. I watched as the Chinese picked up a carcass with their chopsticks and popped the bird, head, feet, bones and all into their mouths and contentedly crunched away at them. It turned out that the flavour was excellent. Several of the British ladies present

blanched at the sight put before them and refused this succulent food. In fact, although I don't like the thought of offering guests whole cooked birds, I must admit that they tasted very nice.

I assume that one of the reasons I have had so few tummy troubles in my life is that since 1939 I have lived and eaten in countries that do not have the best reputation for cleanliness and bit by bit my body has been taught how to cope with impunity with bugs that do not exist in my home country. It is a pity that the whole world doesn't have the same standards of cleanliness, but the undoubted fact is that it doesn't and until it does (not in my lifetime), I would recommend that people adjust themselves to that fact. I have been told that I have a cast iron stomach. Perhaps this is because, before I was married, I did not supervise the kitchen staff as closely as my wife does.

Finally, I feel very sad for those people who are finicky about trying strange food, even when they see others around them enjoying it and who clearly are suffering no unpleasant after effects after enjoying one of life's great pleasures. They may even suffer a qualm if they notice their host's disappointment or even embarrassment because they refused his offering.

## APPENDIX D – EXTRACT FROM A LETTER HOME

Date and recipient unknown but after 1957

"It was January with the rain outside pouring down sometimes vertically, sometimes nearly horizontally, but on and on day and night. Everything is damp – cushions, this desk, the bed clothes and drying the washing is a problem. The writing paper in the drawer has absorbed so much moisture that the ink runs and it is advisable to dry it under the grill before starting to write. The only compensation is the temperature. It is essential to snuggle up to one another at night and we can really enjoy a hot bath. Last night we went out to dinner and for pleasure rather than for show, Bunty wore her fur stole – the temperature was perhaps as low as 70<sup>0</sup>F; it probably reached 65<sup>0</sup> later that night! We had a mere 30.05 inches in 5 days (10 ins more than London's annual). The neighbouring township of Bau had 30.05 inches. Incidentally, if you ever have occasion to put a Christmas card in an envelope for these parts and intend to tuck the flap inside the envelope, please put the card in with the picture side towards the front of the envelope – i.e. the flap will then be covering the back of the card – and it will not matter if, as usually happens, as it goes through the postal channels the flap sticks to the card due to the dampness of the climate. You wouldn't believe how many of our cards are spoilt by the flap being well and truly stuck to the picture."

## GLOSSARY

Abang	Elder brother. In Sarawak it is a hereditary Malay upper class title. The Brunei equivalent is 'Awang'
Adat	A custom
Adat lama	An ancient, well established traditional customary behaviour or law
Amok	A rare state of murderous frenzy, usually found only amongst Malays
Run Amok	To rush forward, with a dagger or similar weapon, slashing without reason at anyone within the person's reach
Anak or ak	A child. In Iban & Orang Ulu languages 'Son or daughter of', e.g. Linda(f) ak Anggau
Astana the	The palace of the Rajahs (and later the residence of the Governors) in Kuching. In Malay it is usually written as 'Istana'
Atap	Leaves woven together to act as roofing material. 'Atap belian' is roofing shingles of Belian wood. See also 'Kajang'
Batang	A tree trunk, branch, stick, log – hence, used with another word, as an indication of length in such words as 'Batang Balleh' meaning 'The mighty River Balleh'
B.B.C.A.U	Borneo British Civil Affairs Unit
B.C.L.	Borneo Company Ltd.
Bedarah	A ceremony using blood. See also 'Pirieng'
B.E.M.	Borneo Evangelical Mission
Bin (binti)	In Malay, son (daughter) of
Bilek	A room, a family apartment in a longhouse
Belian	A slow growing extremely hard jungle tree, whose wood is heavier than water and is useful for building wharves as it resists the effect of sea water beasties
Borak	The Orang Ulu word for 'rice beer'
Bukit	In Sarawak native languages it means 'a hill, though it is often used for what would be a small mountain in Britain
Bumiputera	The Malay word for 'Native person(s)'
C.C.O	Clandestine Communist Organisation
Damar	Resin from a jungle tree, that used to be burnt on a saucer to give light or to act as a torch
Daching	A hand held weighing scale
Datu(k)/Datoh	Grandfather. A title of distinction, initially limited to Malays, though now awarded to all races in Sarawak
D.O.	District Officer
Engkabang	Illipe Nut of value in the making of chocolate
Gantang	A cubic measure of capacity approximately 1 gallon/4.5l
Gawai	An Iban spirit ceremony/festival
Gamelan	Originally a Javanese largely percussion orchestra
Gendang	A drum
Godown	A warehouse
Gunong	A mountain
Haji	A Moslem pilgrim, who has been on the 'Haj' to Mecca
Hari-Raya	Islamic religious festiva, better known as Eid al-Fitr which marks the end of Ramadan and fasting
Inche (Ince)	Mister
Jawi	The Arabic script adapted for use with the Malay language

Kajang	Waterproof sheets of woven leaves used to cover goods or people in carts or small boats. Overlapping sheets used as roofing for huts or jungle shelters
Kaki lima	a 5 foot wide covered walk (sometimes on stilts) in front of a line of shops to give shelter to pedestrians from sun and rain
Kampong	In Malay a village. In Iban, jungle
Kapitan	Chinese headman
Kati	Unit of weight, approximately 1 lb/60gr
Kenyalang	In Iban a hornbill. A large wooden hornbill highly carved in a traditional manner and used in certain Iban gawais
Kerangan	A shingle beach in a river bed that becomes visible at low water
Keris	A Malay dagger
Kuala	Mouth of a river in Malay
Kubu	A wooden fort. A stockade
Lalang	An invasive long, sharp grass that appears when land, especially hillsides, has been overused. It is extremely difficult to eradicate well established lalang and it makes the land infertile
Landas	Monsoon season
Langkau	A temporary hut of more substance than a Sulap
Long	Mouth of a river in Orang Ulu languages
Maderasah	A Moslem school, often a religious one
Majlis	In Malay an assembly. 'Majlis Islam' is Moslem Council
Mandor/Mandur	Leader of a group of workers
Merdeka	Malay word for independence
Muara	Mouth/estuary of a river in Malay
Nanga	Mouth of a river in Iban
Negri	A country, a state. 'Council Negri' is the Sarawak state parliament.
Ngagat	Form of Dayak dancing
Ngayap	Traditional iban form of flirting, usually between young people nocturnally
N.O.	Native Officer
Orang Ulu	Upriver people
Padang	In Malay, a grass covered area or open space in the centre of a town
Padi	Unhusked rice. Rice in the field.
Pantang	In Malay, 'forbidden'. In Iban, when, due to sickness or death, a restriction is put on outsiders from entering a longhouse and often on those inside it from leaving it
Pantu	Wild hill or jungle sago tree. The starch from the tree
Pengarah	Title of an Iban headman between Penghulu and Temonggong. Senior headman of a group of longhouses in a smaller river
Penghulu	Headman of a group of longhouses
Perahu	A boat that can range in size from a one man paddled river boat, through a river longboat powered by an outboard to small sea-going coastal boats
Pikul	A unit of weight, 113lbs/51.25kg
Piri(e)ng	In Malay/Iban a saucer. In Iban, a plate ceremony to the spirits. See also 'Bedarah'
P.W.D.	Public Works Department
Resident	The senior government officer in a division – equivalent to a provincial commissioner in many African colonies

Ruai	Iban longhouse balcony or village street
Rumah	In Malay, a house. In Iban, also a longhouse
Sambal	Condiments, etc. put on the table as accompaniments to a Malay curry
S.A.O.	Sarawak Administrative Officer
S.O.L	Sarawak Oilfields Ltd
S.S.O.	Sarawak Shell Oilfields
Sulap	A small, temporary shelter built near a ricefield for a farmer(s) to rest in while protecting his crops. A flimsy shelter built for jungle walkers for overnight protection from the rain
Sungei/sungai	A river (e.g. Sg. Tinjar)
T.A.B.	An inoculation programme giving protection against typhoid and paratyphoid fevers
Tahil	Unit of weight, approximately 1.4 ozs/40gr. 16 Tahils = 1 Kati
Tajau	Earthenware jar. 'Tajau lama' a precious old jar – sometimes from China or Siam – that has become a much prized heirloom
Tamu	In Sarawak, this is a periodical Government organised and supervised trade meeting to ensure fair play when the Nomadic Penans exchange their produce/goods for such items as cloth, salt, ammunition with their Orang Ulu neighbours
Tanjo	A veranda
Tanjong	A cape (geographical)
Temonggong	Nowadays an Iban or Orang Ulu title awarded to a paramount chief of all the longhouses in a major river
TNKU	Tentera Nasional Kalimantan Utara, National Army of North Borneo (see chapter on Brunei rebellion)
Tong	A tub, barrel or concrete container in a kitchen or ground floor bathroom for collecting rainwater from the roof
Towkay	A business owner
Tua	Old in Malay. In Iban 'Tuai'
Tua Kampong	Head of a Malay/Moslem village
Tuai Rumah	Head of an Iban longhouse
Tua Rumah	Head of an Orang Ulu longhouse
Tuak	An Iban traditionally brewed rice beer
Tuanku	A form of address when speaking to a Malay prince. In Sarawak, a hereditary high title. See also 'Wan
Tusun Tunggu	Iban code of traditional laws, fines and customs
Ulu	Upriver; also by extension Far Inland and Not Easily Accessible
Uma	Orang Ulu for house/longhouse
Undang Undang	Sarawak Moslems' code of law, fines and customs
Wakil	Deputy, representative of a firm
Wan	In Sarawak, a title given to the son of a Tuanku'