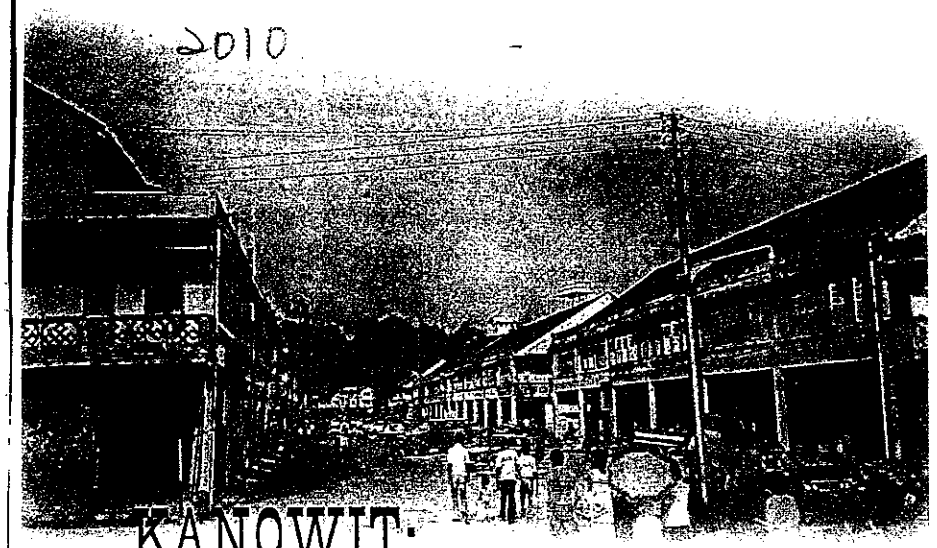

# KANOWIT: AN OVERSEAS CHINESE COMMUNITY IN BORNEO



RICHARD C. FIDLER



SARAWAK CHINESE CULTURAL ASSOCIATION

2010

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Indispensible to the success of my field research was the friendship and cooperation of the people of Kanowit Bazaar. There are too many to whom I am indebted for the kindness and hospitality, understanding and assistance, to mention them all here; I single out only a few who made my fifteen months in Kanowit so memorable:

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Su'ud bin Suhaili
Lee Chai Thien
Father Gerardus Bruggeman
The District Officer and his staff
The Peace Corps and Commonwealth Volunteers
The Members of the D*O*G Club
Lee Chai Tee, for sharing a part of his world with me

# FOREWORD

Richard Fidler--Rick--first came to Kanowit in 1970-71 to begin writing about "An Overseas Chinese Community in Borneo". But that year or so was just the beginning of his long-term connection with the Kanowit community. Six years later he brought his new wife Carol to introduce her to Kanowit, and, beginning in the 1990's, he brought his daughter, Kathy, and then his son, Ben.

A two-way path was eventually established. Friends from Kanowit came to visit in Providence, Rhode Island, where Rick and Carol both taught anthropology. These friends brought news of people and of changes, such as the building of the temple and the arrival of the road. In years when he didn't visit, Rick kept up with Kanowit friends by mail. He took his last trip the summer before his death in June 2009. Among his last requests was the wish for his ashes to be scattered in the Rejang.

How did a boy growing up in several small towns in Pennsylvania, U.S.A., develop such a keen interest and lasting affection for Sarawak? He himself credited his early reading of adventure writer Richard Halliburton's books, especially The Flying Carpet. Later, as a student at the University of Pennsylvania, he acquired an interest in Mayan culture, but after graduation, during the time he served in the newly established Peace Corps, he turned his sights toward Southeast Asia.

Rick's preparation for the Peace Corps included "boot camp" in Hawaii, culminating in a rigorous swimming test in the bay at the City of Refuge. His permanent assignment, however, was to the town of Tenom in Sabah, where his primary responsibility was teaching English in a Chinese language school. In addition, as a volunteer, he helped prepare students at St. Anthony's private school for advanced exams in English and world history. This two-year Peace Corps stint was the basis of his interest in Chinese



bazaar towns, an interest he pursued personally and professionally for the rest of his life.

After teaching in Tenom Rick returned to the University of Pennsylvania for graduate work. He knew he wanted his doctoral project to be the study of a Chinese community in Borneo, but at that time Sabah wasn't granting research visas. Sarawak proved more accessible. Working through the Sarawak Museum, he received a visa and chose to study the bazaar town of Kanowit on the Rejang River.

Kanowit, at that time, was a center from which locally grown pepper and forest products were sent downriver, while manufactured goods were imported to local Ibans and Malays, with Chinese merchants serving as middlemen. There were no roads. People and goods alike traveled up and down the Rejang River. Even though there were no roads, there were schools, a library, a cinema, a post office, a Catholic mission, Protestants churches, a main bazaar, and the Malay kampung. People of three main cultures and ethnicities—as well as numerous subcultures—mingled in the bazaar. Rick was fascinated with how they all fitted together into a functioning community.

Trained as an archaelogist and informed by the theories of Julian Steward, Rick approached community study differently from the methods of traditional ethnographers. Instead of formally interviewing informants and restricting his records to transcriptions of those interviews, he began mapping the bazaar, shophouse by shophouse. He determined which goods and services flowed into and out of each.. He determined which families were associated with each shophouse, and he listed all their members and relationships. He copied every written record he could find—census, marriage, school, library, cinema—and then he sat in a coffee shop and strolled through Main Bazaar listening to everything and taking pictures.

Rick took more than 200 black and white photographs and

more than 100 color slides, each labeled with names, event, and other information. The photos were of men talking in the coffee shop, children playing in the street, crowds waiting for the express boat, festivals, funerals, pepper drying, incense burning. These photos, along with voluminous written records and "listening records," were the raw material he used for his dissertation.

"Life in an Overseas Chinese Community ..... "was produced at the beginning of Rick's career, but his interest in learning about his subject never lessened. Of all the courses he taught through the years at a number of universities, his favorite was "The Kanowit Course," in which he tried to show American college students what it was like to live in a town like Kanowit. He took pride in collecting up-to-date statistics, media material, and photographs, so that an American student in 2009 was delighted to find in Rick's course magazines which were a Malaysian counterpart to his own favorite graphic novels.

In addition to his teaching, Rick, a founding member of the Borneo Research Council, gave papers at most of their biennial meetings. He was a strong advocate for the inclusion of local scholars and lay people in the meetings, an advocate who never ceased emphasizing the important contribution of Chinese culture to the Malaysian community.

Robin Brancato



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# NOTE ON ROMANIZATION

All non-English words in the text have been italicized, with the exception of Proper Nouns. The language or dialect of each word is indicated in parenthesis, with its English translation, if the latter is not clear from the context of the sentence.

Proper Nouns have been Romanized in their conventional Sarawak spellings.

Chinese words are all given in the Mandarin dialect, unless otherwise indicated. They are Romanized by the Wade-Giles system, which indicates tone by superscript number (e.g. hsien$^4$). References for Romanization and translation are:

Shau Wing Chan
1955 A Concise English-Chinese Dictionary. 2nd edition. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

MacGillivray, D.
nd Mandarin-Romanized Dictionary of Chinese. Tainan, Taiwan: Universal Book Company.

Malay words are Romanized in the standard National Language (Bahasa Kebangsa'an). Reference for Romanization and translation:

Wilkinson, R. J.
1959 A Malay-English Dictionary (Romanized). 2 vols. London: Macmillan.

Iban Words are Romanized and translated as in Scott, N. C.
1956 A Dictionary of Sea Dayak. London: London University, School of Oriental and African Studies.

# PREFACE

Kanowit Bazaar is a multiracial, multicultural bazaar town on the Rejang River in central Sarawak. While its population has more Chinese than any other race, the latter are divided among a variety of different dialect groups, so that no one groups dominates the town. At the same time, Chinese culture does not dominate either, as the history of the Chinese experience in Sarawak has led them to adopt many non-Chinese customs, while the non-Chinese members of the community continue to practice many of their traditional patterns of behavior as well. Over both of these segments of the community, and affecting both equally, was laid the government of the Brooke Raj, and, later, Colonial Civil Service, bringing Western culture and Western education to the diverse peoples of Sarawak.

The town is a bazaar, a market, and the Rejang River is the highway that connects it with its suppliers and ultimate customers in the interior, and with its markets and source of manufactured goods in the city of Sibu and the ports of the world. Kanowit Bazaar lives on its middleman trade. The necessities of this trade for the survival of the community have led to the development of business practices, specifically the towkay-Iban symbiosis, that have, in turn, led to new forms of behavior and attitudes of racial tolerance needed to sustain the economic system. The primacy of the middleman trade in local subsistence has also affected the town through its declining prosperity; the population is failing to grown, and is losing young people to the cities downriver. As changes in the technological and economic environment endanger the continuation of the bazaar's existence, and the prospects of a good life for its children in years to come, the residents, especially the Chinese, have, by necessity, come to accept that changes in traditional ways of social, educational, and cultural behavior must



be made to face the challenges of the future.

While some of the old institutions continue to function - the dialect associations and the Kapitan China, for example - they no longer meet the needs of providing a secure and rewarding life for the citizens of the community. The path to future success is seen by many to lie in using the new institutions provided by the Sarawak society, solving Sarawak problems with Sarawak solutions. Education is often believed to be one of these solutions. It provides an excellent agent for social change, as the concept of an education is well established and highly valued in Chinese culture, and the idea of success through education requires no traumatic cultural or philosophical changes for the Chinese of Kanowit. The education their children receive, however, is nothing like the traditional Chinese system. It instills them with values, concepts, and ideals as foreign to their natal cultures as English, the medium in which they learn these new patterns, is from Chinese. Education also brings the young of all races together, and gives them shared experiences and shared goals that promote inter-racial understanding and cooperation.

As old economic practises fail to meet the challenges of a new environment, changes are made in them to respond to the situation; as old institutions no longer satisfy social needs, new ones are development that will meet these demands. The same is true of religion and the family. The old gods were left at home in China, in the ancestral halls and the earth-god shrines; their truncated survivals in Kanowit are remnants of cultural heritage, not of religious philosophy. The family organizations that worked so well in south-eastern China do not satisfy the needs of living in a multiracial community; their remnants are also of tradition and nostalgia, not of deep-seated conviction.

Murdock has been severely criticized for his statement that changes in economy, property, and religion lead to changes in, first, residence patterns, and later, the structure of kin groups and

terminologies. Some feel it is too strongly deterministic, that it does not take into account the multitude of additional factors that influence social life. Others feel it is an artificial concept, created in the libraries at Yale and then applied in toto to the real world, without regard for the diversities in concept formation that differentiate the two. Both of these criticisms are well founded. It is folly to believe that all changes in social structure, wherever they occur and whoever is conceptualizing them, can be traced to Murdock's neat thesis of economy / residence / descent / kin terms.

It happens, however, that the thesis of Murdock describes the situation in Kanowit exactly. Economic motives do lie behind all of these changes among the Chinese of the town, and many more in addition. A desire to change their economic position led the founders of Kanowit to leave their lineage lands and ancestor shrines and come to Sarawak and a new environment, a new residence, a new way of life. To survive in this new world, new patterns had to be developed - new ways of earning a living, based on trade rather than on property, and that trade required close relationships with a very different race of people. New types of family ties had to be forged, drawing on kinsmen previously neglected in favor of the dominant and powerful lineage organizations. By economic necessity, the agnatic lineage village has given way to the bilateral nuclear household. Murdock's thesis of economic determinism does fit when applied to a group determined to survive economically.

Many others have written about culture change among the Overseas Chinese. Some have been anthropologists, some political scientists, some government bureaucrats, some business analysts. All seem concerned with The Problem of Assimilating the Chinese; all dwell upon the Chinese acculturating to the culture of their host country. All have been written about small percentages of Chinese surrounded by a massive and dominant native culture. This does not exist in Kanowit Bazaar, and neither does Chinese



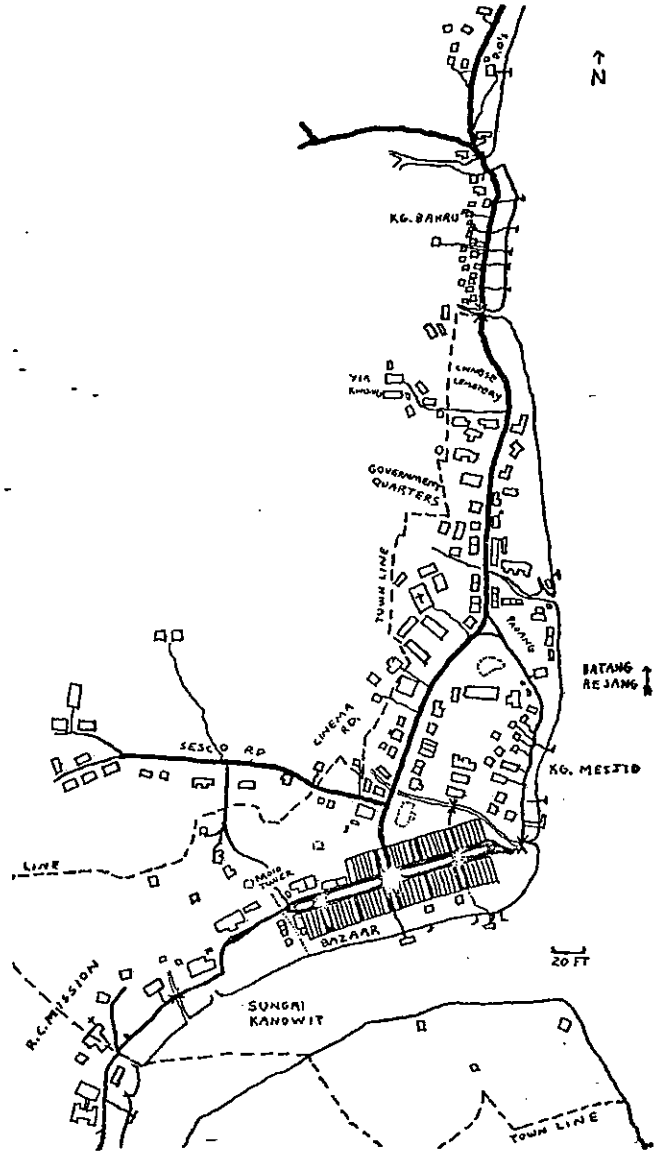
acculturation, as there is nothing well enough established for them to acculturate to. What they are doing instead, slowly, painfully, and not without some hesitation, is participating in the development of a new culture, blending their ideas, their beliefs, their ways of approaching and handling problems, with those of their cultural neighbors. All put into the common culture, all derive benefits from it. The medium of this new culture is largely English, as it is a neutral language, weighed in favor of no one ethnic group. It is also a language that is suitable for the communication of these new ideas, as it has helped to form and conceptualize them. But it is not English culture; the culture is the direct product of its multiethnic input.

The new multi-culture of Sarawak is only in its infant stages. Not all of the problems have yet been defined, let alone solved. But by necessity the people of Kanowit are drawn to it, and it is this necessity that gives it a chance to survive its difficult period of incubation.

Not all of the races of Kanowit "love" each other. Racial bias still exists; racial fears still threaten; racial chauvinism still blinds the eyes of its adherents to the realities of modern survival and success. But survival and success have led to tolerance, and even if bred of necessity, even if only a manifestation of outward behavior rather than of true desire for social justice, the tolerance of the people of Kanowit Bazaar is a lesson for the whole world to learn.

Richard C. Fidler
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Hari Kebangsa'an - National Day
August 31, 1972.

FRONTESPIECE
MAP OF
KANOWIT BAZAAR






# CHAPTER 1: LOCATION AND SETTING

## THE RIVER

The Rejang is the longest river system in Sarawak. From its headwaters in the Nieuwenhuis Mountains, where its watershed forms the political boundry between Sarawak and Indonesia, it flows 350 miles to its extensive delta mouth on the South China Sea. Along its banks and tributaries lives a cross section of the multitude of ethnic and linguistic groups that form the multiracial people of Sarawak.

More than 160 inches of rain fall each year on the Nieuwenhuis Range, feeding the myriad streams that form the Rejang's headwaters. This is the land of the nomadic Punan, the last of the true hunters and gatherers of the Sarawak jungle. The river here is called the Balui, and its flow, first west, then north, passes through the lands of the settled Kajang and Kenyah peoples. In the great bend of the river, a sharp turn from northeast to west to southwest, live their relatives, the Rejang Kayan. Into this region flow the streams of the Dulit Range; along them, and north, beyond the watershed and into the Baram and Tinjar basins of the Fourth Division, the Kayan and Kenyah build their longhouses and plant their swidden hill rice.

At the western end of the bend lies Belaga, the most interior of the Chinese bazaar towns on the Rejang. New concrete government buildings stand next to the older Chinese shophouses, built in the same style as the local longhouses. Chinese-native intermarriage is high, and Kayan is the Lingua franca. Below Belaga the Kayan lands give way to those of the Iban, who advanced upriver into this area a century ago. Downstream from Merit, the Pelagus Rapids form the last barrier to river travel; from here to the sea, 180 miles away, the Rejang is navigable to rapid express boats and the ubiquitous Chinese motor launches, the workhorses

of river trade. When the Rejang is joined by the Baleh, a river system strong in Iban culture, it becomes a broad, deep highway. Along this highway and its tributaries live 25% of the people of Sarawak.

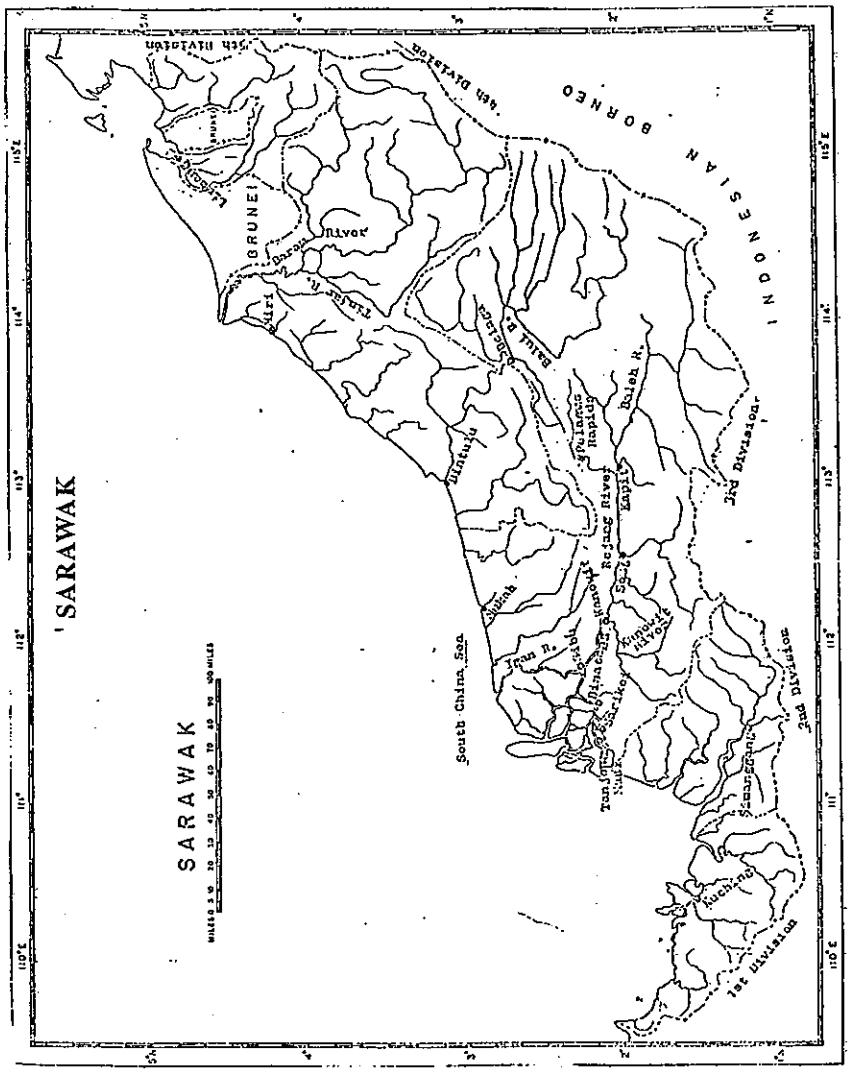
Much of this population lives in the rural interior, along the tributary streams, in the valleys, and in the extensive delta system. But on the banks of the Rejang itself lie a number of small towns and settlements of a type called, in Sarawak, "Bazaars." A bazaar is a market; the word is derived from the Malay pasar, and ultimately from the Old Persian bazar. As used in Sarawak, "bazaar" has a dual meaning and usage: a bazar is a market place, a street of shops and businesses, a place set aside for the buying and selling of goods and the conducting of commercial and economic activities. The term is also used to refer to the community, the town or settlement, in which such a marketplace is located. Thus, the precise meaning of "bazaar" is determined by its context - in contrast to the rural agricultural or jungle areas, the bazaar is the town itself; an Iban or Chinese farmer goes "to the bazaar" from his longhouse or smallholding. Within the bounds of the settled community, the "bazaar" is the district of shops and commercial offices, rather than the residential or governmental areas of the town; one goes from his home "to the bazaar" for shopping or social activities. Hereafter, for the sake of clarity, the term "bazaar town" will be used when the broader definition is intended, with "bazaar", "market" or "shophouses" referring exclusively to the commercial district within it. Outside of the three main cities, Kuching, Sibu, and Miri, the bazaar town is the most common form of urban settlement in Sarawak. Such towns are found along rivers, highways, and the sea coast - along all communications routes. Each has as its nucleus a district of Chinese owned and operated shophouses and commercial establishments; each may also contain government offices and facilities, mission stations, and private residential units for a variety of racial and



ethnic groups.

160 miles from the sea, below the confluence of the Rejang and Baleh rivers, is Kapit, the bazaar town that forms the frontier to the sparsely settled and heavily forested headwater regions. Kapit has recently been a "boom town," growing large, rich, and vigorous from the increasing timber exploitation in the interior zones. Its population has greatly increased from the 1,848 of the 1960 Census. It is the last, most upriver, stop for the rapid express passenger boats that ply the Rejang, linking the bazaar towns to the city of Sibu and the outer world. Iban and Kayan tribesmen come to trade in its two bazaars, and to visit its government offices, schools, and mission hospital. Chinese launches carry jungle produce and tow rafts of logs to their markets downriver, returning with manufactured goods for the town's Chinese merchants.

The land along the Rejang around and below Kapit is inhabited by Iban farmers. Little virgin land remains near the river; most is covered with secondary growth, interspersed with the swidden fields of Iban hill rice, planted by the traditional "slash and burn" technique. During the town or three years of their use a Langkau (Iban: field house) provides shelter for those farmers too far from their longhouse to return daily. As the river flows westward, it passes large riverside longhouses and smaller bazaar towns - Song, at the mouth of the Katibas River, being typical of the latter. Small bazaar settlements, too small to be called "town," have developed at each major nanga (Iban), the point at which a tributary stream (Malay: sungai) joins the main river (Malay: batang) - Nanga Ngemah, Nanga Dap, and Nanga Poi. Each has a floating jetty, a small clearing, and a half dozen wooden Chinese shophouses. Below the Poi, 120 miles from the sea, the land along the banks of the Rejang changes: it is lower, less steep, and no longer used for swidden farming. It is Mixed Zones Land, the only land in Sarawak that can be owned by Chinese as well as native peoples; and it is divided into parcels of several acres, farmed on an intensive basis




Base map source: Borneo Literature Bureau 1962



by smallholders. Downstream from Sengayan these agriculturists are most often Chinese, who raise vegetables, chickens, and pigs to supplement their cash crops of rubber and pepper. From here to the sea the banks of the river are continuously inhabited, cleared, and in production. Behind the narrow strip of settlement lies the dense Sarawak jungle.

In the midst of these smallholdings, 105 miles from the sea, at the nanga of the Kanowit (Kah-NAH-wit) River, lies Kanowit Bazaar. The rivers provide its only access for transport and trade. No roads enter or leave the town; it faces the river, and the river is its highway, its sustenance, its raison d'etre.

The Rejang at Kanowit is one-half mile wide, and the town is located on a bend in the river. Therefore, while the general course of the Batang Rejang is from west to east, and the Sungai Kanowit from south to north, at the town site the Rejang flows past in a due north direction, the Kanowit entering it from the east. The town is built on this north-south axis. Paralleling the Kanowit River is a wide, paved street with a narrow central mall - Main Bazaar Road. Facing it on both sides are blocks of concrete shophouses, thirty-four shops on the south and twenty-four shops, a market shed, and a government clinic on the northern side. Behind the southern row were the Kanowit River and the main wharfs and jetties of the town. In the narrow space between the shophouses and the river are storage sheds, piles of timber and firewood, and two gasoline stations, facing the river, for the boats are their major customers. Access to these, and to the wharfs, is by narrow dirt paths between the shophouse blocks.

To the east, Main Bazaar Road enters the compound of the Roman Catholic Mission. An unpaved path winds past its school, church, and hospital, becoming a jungle trail leading to the Iban longhouses of the Kanowit and Ranan rivers. In the center of Main Bazaar Road is an intersection, and from it another road, unpaved, leads north, past a moving picture theatre, from which its name,

Cinema Road, is derived. An unpaved track to the east provides access to several government facilities, residences, and pepper gardens in the nearby jungle. Cinema Road continues north past private housing, government offices, and government residential quarters, past the Chinese cemetery to a Malay kampong (village) and on to the hilltop home of the District Officer. From that point north it becomes another jungle trail, following the river through the Chinese gardens of Panto Mali, Sah, and Lukut.

The definition of "community" given in the Outline of Cultural Materials (1967: 89) - "the maximal group of persons who normally reside together in fact-to-face association" - is ideally suited to the area just described, for only within it is the land cleared of trees and brush, open to the sun; beyond it is the jungle, broken only by tiny pockets of farmhouses and small fields. This mile-long clearing, from the mission hospital on the east to the D. O.'s house downstream to the north, is an island in the jungle, within which the three concepts of "community" used herein to define Kanowit Bazaar - the town's political boundries, the area of face-to-face association, and the land "which is not jungle" - coalesce.

The land along the banks of the Rejang downstream from Kanowit is continuously settled, mainly by Chinese, but with occasional native longhouses or smallholdings. The fields of rubber trees merge with the jungle behind them; the even rows of pepper plants with their nearby wooden farmhouses are more distinct. The area is sufficiently populated to necessitate occasional clearings for a small Chinese primary school, or a church of the Roman Catholic or Methodist missions. Fifteen miles below Kanowit is Durin Ferry, where the motor highway from Kuching to Sibu crosses the Rejang; the land here, 90 miles from the sea, is already so low-lying and swampy that it was necessary to loop this road ten miles upstream from the city to find land stable enough to support its foundations. This is the closest road connection to



Kanowit, and is increasingly drawing away the entrepot trade on which the bazaar town exists.

Sibu, the second largest city in Sarawak, can be reached by ocean-going freighters, even though it is 80 miles from the South China Sea. While silting and sand bars in the delta prevent the larger, more modern vessels from reaching it, its docks are continually occupied by the Chinese river launches transferring their goods to the waiting ships for transport to Kuching, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Japan. Sibu, like Kapit, has experienced vast growth in the last decade, doubling its population to a present total of over 50,000. Its Chinese mercantile community, many from the Foochow dialect group, are among the wealthiest citizens of the state, and the lavish homes of its timber and banking millionaires along Queensway Road stand in sharp contrast to the nearby Malay kampongs and small Chinese farms. Sibu is the hub of Sarawak's Third Division, the center for its political, economic, cultural, and educational activities. All communications, shipping, trade, and banking for the whole Rejang basin pass through Sibu. It can be reached by water, road, and air; it is the terminus for the launches and express passenger boats of the river, the buses and lorry of the state highway system, and the frequent plans of Malaysia-Singapore Airways. It is the headquarters for the government offices of the Third Division and the seat of its Resident. Its bazaar has many hotels, restaurants, schools, church, branches of all the major banks, five cinemas, and hundreds of shophouses and business offices for both domestic and foreign companies.

Kanowit is linked to Sibu by four express boats daily, and its townspeople make frequent trips to the city for both business and pleasure. From the isolation of the Iban longhouse, Malay kampong, Chinese smallholdings, or interior bazaar town, via Kanowit, it requires only one and a half hours and two Malay dollars[1] to reach the urban environment of Sibu. Its influence upon Kanowit Bazaar, its people, and its local culture, is omnipresent.

Sibu is the ethnic dividing line between the Iban of the central Rejang basin and the native peoples of the delta, the Malays and Melanaus. Down river are the two large Chinese bazaar town of Binatang and Sarikei, the new deep-water port of Tanjong Mani, and many coastal fishing village. The Moslem Malays have lived in this delta for centuries; the Melanaus, many of whom are now also Moslems, or Christian, are its oldest inhabitants. It is here that the Rejang River enters the sea.

## ENVIRONMENT

The bazaar town of Kanowit is located at the latitude of 2° 06' north of the Equator and the longitude of 112° 09' east of Greenwich, in the Malaysian state of Sarawak on the island of Borneo. Borneo, the world's third-largest island, has a total area of 268,969 square miles. Sarawak, with an area of 48,250 square miles, is the largest state in the Federation of Malaysia, though it contains only 10% of its population. It is nearly as large as West Malaysia (Malaya) and comprises 38% of the total area of the Federation. It is located on the north west coast of Borneo, between 0° 05' and 5° North Latitude and 109° 36' and 115° 40'East Longitude, with a coast line of 450 miles on the South Chinea Sea.

Borneo is geologicall an extension of the continual mainland known as Sunda land or the Sunda Shield. It is formed on a base of Palaeozoic schists and volcanic deposits overlaid with Tertiary and Quaternary sedimentary rock. In the area around Kanowit, Palaeogene deposits of the Tertiary age predominate, comprised mainly of hard sandstones, greywicks, siltstone, shales, and slates (Jackson 1968: 20). Post-Tertiary erosion periods, specifically the Peneplanation and Jerudong Cycles, have reduced the elevation of the hills in the central Rejang basin to an average height of 200-300 feet, as compared to the 3,000 to 4,500 foot elevations of the



interior headwater regions near the Indonesian borders. A series of rising and falling sea levels in the Pleistocene resulted in deeply incised river valleys with deposits of sand, sandy clay, and gravel, with some alluvial terracing as found in the lower Rejang basin (Jackson 1968: 22). Below Kanowit the land along the river banks is barely above sea level; from Kanowit eastward low hills begin to rise. Kanowit Bazaar is still, however, subject to occasional flooding when the Rejang overflows its banks during periods of intense monsoon rains, usually in late January.

The climate of Sarawak is tropical, characterized by heavy rainfall, uniformly high temperatures, and high relative humidity. All of Sarawak receives more than 100 inches of rainfall each year, and some areas, especially the highlands of the Fourth Division, normally receive more than 200 inches. A large part of the state, including the central Rejang valley, receives an average of 120 to 140 inches per year. There is, however, a wide fluctuation in the averages: Kuching, with a mean annual rainfall of 158 inches recorded only 109 inches in 1914, but 226 inches in 1882; fluctuations measured in Miri varied 30 inches below and 43 inches above its mean average of 124 inches in the four year period 1937-1940 (Jackson 1968: 26). Even settlements as close to each other as Sibu and Kanowit, both on the Rejang River and only twenty-five miles apart, record great monthly variation: Kanowit measured 19.11 inches for September, 1970, and 12.84 inches for October, compared to only 10.83 and 5.21 inches for Sibu during the same period. In April of 1971, however, Kanowit had only four days of rain and 6.87 inches while Sibu received 15.78 inches during fourteen rainy days (see Table 1).

There are four "seasonal" periods in the Sarawak annual cycle. During the winter months of the northern hemisphere, December through April, the warm airmasses from the Equator flow toward the colder north Asian steppes, collecting moisture over the s4as of Indonesia and bringing the four-month North-

east monsoons, known in Sarawak as the Landas (Malay), to the island of Borneo and the South East Asian mainland, dropping from 10 to 23 inches of rain per month on Sibu during the 1970-71 monsoon season. Eight or ten weeks of light rainfall follow, until the arrival of the less intense South-west monsoon of July, August, and September - the hot air formed by the summer sun in north Asia picks up less moisture in crossing the South China Sea during its flow towards the colder mass of the Australian continent, and deposits less rain on the islands in between. Another ten week period of drier conditions follows before the advent of the next North-east monsoon. The figures for the number of days during which rainfall was records during 1970-71 at Sibu and Kanowit, compared to the amount of rainfall measured, shown in Table 1, demonstrates that it is not the absence of rain but its variable intensity which marks the changing seasons of Sarawak. Much of this monsoon rain falls at night. During November, 1970, when Sibu received to 10.53 inches of rain, it had a mean of 5.25 hours of bright sunshine each day; in January, 1971, when it received its highest rainfall for the year, 23.34 inches, bright sunshine mean hours only declined to 3.34 hours per day. The month of least rainfall during the year here recorded (July, 1970, to June, 1971), June, 1971, with 5.29 inches of rain, still had only 7.23 mean hours of bright sunshine, thought at that time of year dawn breaks about 6:00 am and sunset occurs at about 6:30 pm. During seven of the twelve months in this period there were only five to six mean hours of bright sunshine per day, though the length of the day never varies more than one hour throughout the year.

This heavy cloud cover also affects the mean air temperature. As measured at Sibu from July, 1970, to June, 1971, (Table 2), there was only a 5.8° difference between the maximum mean temperature in the warmest and coolest months (91.6° - 85.8° ). The daily variation is usually less than 20 degrees, and the highest absolute extreme temperature in this yearly period was only 95°.



Relative humidity varies from 98% at night to 70% during the middle of the day; this humidity, combined with the directness of the sun's rays at this low latitude, makes work in the sun uncomfortable at this time, and mid-day breaks are common practice in Sarawak. These conditions of rainfall and sunshine not only affect the working hours in the central Rejang, but also the planting cycles and the safety of river transportation. Some interior longhouses are accessable by boat only during the monsoon periods, while at the same time the merchants of Kanowit Bazaar must guard their stores against possible flooding. The influence of the seasonal cycle on Iban agriculture and life in the Third Division is well recorded in Freeman (1955), and the economics of the Chinese merchant in the bazaar are in turn affected by the annual cycle of their Iban clients.

**TABLE 1**

**RAINFALL IN INCHES, SIBU AIRPORT AND KANOWIT BAZAAR**

**July, 1970 to June, 1971**

| | SIBU AIRPORT | | | KANOWIT BAZAAR | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Month | Total | Most in one day | Number of days | Total | Most in one day | Number of days |
| July, 70 | 9.53 | 1.98 | 20 | 7.40 | 1.21 | 11 |
| Aug, 70 | 8.50 | 1.98 | 20 | 10.06 | 2.46 | 12 |
| Sept, 70 | 10.83 | 2.43 | 21 | 19.11 | 4.30 | 12 |
| Oct, 70 | 5.21 | 1.38 | 18 | 12.84 | 4.73 | 24 |
| Nov, 70 | 8.30 | 1.35 | 27 | | no data | |
| Dec, 70 | 10.53 | 2.27 | 24 | 8.72 | 2.37 | 25 |
| Jan, 71 | 23.34 | 3.62 | 25 | | no data | |
| Feb, 71 | 20.41 | 3.52 | 22 | 16.24 | 2.10 | 19 |
| Mar, 71 | 12.22 | 3.17 | 20 | 8.30 | 1.59 | 9 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Apr, 71 | 15.78 | 3.18 | 14 | 6.87 | 3.62 | 4 |
| May, 71 | 5.45 | 1.40 | 16 | 10.01 | 1.63 | 18 |
| June, 71 | 5.29 | 1.28 | 11 | 6.42 | 1.21 | 10 |
| | 135.39 | | 238 | | | |

Sibu Airport
2° 20' North Latitude
111° 50'East Longitude

Kanowit Bazaar
2° 06'North Latitude
112° 09'East Longitude

Source: Sarawak Gazette, 1970, 1971

**TABLE 2**
**AIR TEMPERATURE IN DEGREES FAHRENHEIT**
**Sibu Airport**
**July, 1970 to June, 1971**

| | MEAN TEMPERATURES | | ABSOLUTE EXPTEMES | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Month | Max | Min | High Max | Low Min |
| July, 70 | 89.5 | 72.0 | 94.4 | 66.7 |
| Aug, 70 | 89.7 | 71.8 | 94.4 | 69.4 |
| Sept, 70 | 89.1 | 71.5 | 95.0 | 68.3 |
| Oct, 70 | 89.8 | 71.9 | 93.5 | 70.0 |
| Nov, 70 | 88.4 | 72.2 | 92.4 | 69.1 |
| Dec, 70 | 88.6 | 71.7 | 92.8 | 69.4 |
| Jan, 71 | 85.8 | 71.4 | 90.6 | 68.7 |
| Feb, 71 | 85.8 | 71.3 | 90.5 | 69.0 |
| Mar, 71 | 88.7 | 70.6 | 93.3 | 67.7 |
| Apr, 71 | 90.9 | 71.1 | 94.6 | 67.8 |
| May, 71 | 91.4 | 71.8 | 94.4 | 68.9 |
| June, 71 | 91.6 | 70.9 | 95.0 | 69.0 |



Sibu Airport
2° 20'North Latitude
111° 50'East Longitude

Source: Sarawak Gazette, 1970, 1971

The nature of the parent rocks and the extensive leaching caused by the heavy rainfall have given Sarawak very poor soils for agriculture. Only two conditions Mititgate this poverty, volcanic activity in the recent geological past and the silting caused by floodwaters (Lee 1970: 14). Three kinds of soils occur in the Kanowit area (Dunsmore 1968: 314): in the hilly and mountainous areas, especially those used by the Iban for their shifting hill rice, there are skeletal soils, strongly weathered and leached acid yellow soils, and shallow red-yellow podsolic soils, generally thin and rarely exceeding two feet in depth. The podsols are derived from sandy material, are strongly acid, and have low agricultural potential. These podsolic soils, both red-yellow and grey-white, also dominate the moderately rolling terrains, along with some lateritic and silty clays. More fertile are the flood-plain areas, with peat soils, gleys, and recent alluvial deposits. (See Lee 1970: 15-17; Jackson 1968: 30-32)

Three-quarters of Sarawak is still covered by primary jungle. The plants and trees of these forests have great economic importance, providing logs, sawn timbers, shingles, poles, firewood, and charcoal. $136 million[1] in logs and sawn timber were exported in 1967 (Statistical Handbook of Sarawak, 1967: 65). Two of the most valuable of these are ramin (Gonystylus bancanus), a light hardwood similar to beech used for furniture, mouldings, and plywood, which comes from swam forests, and a variety of dipterocarp timbers (kapur, meranti, and keruing), from the interior dry forests. The best-known timber is belian (Eusideroxylon zwageri), the Borneo ironwood, one of the heaviest

and most dense Asian timbers. Its sources are scarce, and production is limited, with little exported. It is used locally in the construction of both native and commercial buildings, for wharfs and bridges, and for pepper posts. Its high resistance to moisture and insects makes it the most durable of local woods. The indigenous tree species of Sarawak are estimated at over 2,500 of which about 10% have commercial value (Jackson 1968: 35). Until a freeze on timber licenses in 1970 reduced timber cutting in the Third Division, Kanowit served as a transshipment center for a number of these export timbers.

Other jungle products play a minor role in the trade of Sarawak and Kanowit Bazaar. Their importance has declined to only 2% of the state's exports. One exception is engkabang (Iban), also called illipe nuts, various species of the genus Shorea. Similar to the "candlenuts" of the Pacific, engkabang has a high content of vegetable fat, which is extracted and used in the manufacture of cooking oil, soaps, and chocolate. The fruits of the engkabang ripen in January and February, and must be gathered shortly after they fall, for germination is rapid. The fruit is shelled and the seeds dried. The Iban, main collectors of illipe nuts in the Rejang basin, bring them into the bazaar in gunny sacks, and sell them to the local Chinese merchants for about $50 a picul[2] (133 pounds). They are then shipped to Sibu, and before export are graded by size and color.

Engkabang is produced only by nature - there is no commercial production - and the crop is highly irregular and unpredictable. In 1961 only $10,000 worth were available for export; in 1962 the production was valued at $16.01 million (Statistical Handbook of Sarawak, 1967: 65). Exports in 1966 were valued at $4.61 million, and there was no crop at all in 1967. In those years when the flowers of the engkabang tree are not destroyed by the heavy rains of the North-east monsoon, all available hands leave the longhouse to gather and prepare them



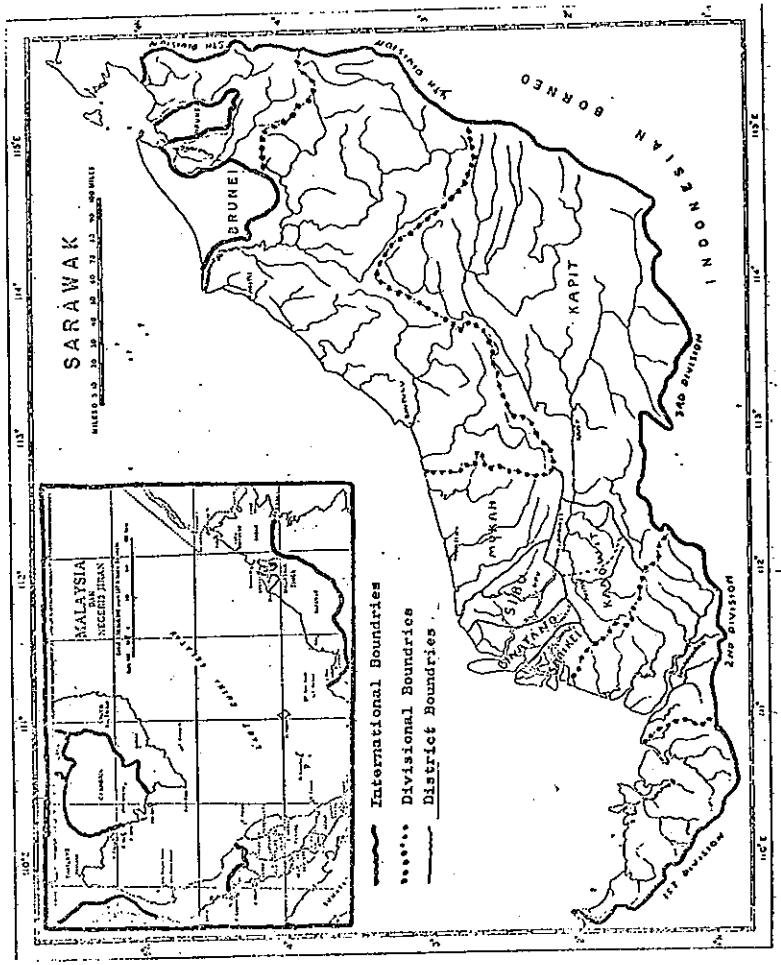
for sale. The windfall of cash is equally appreciated by the rural Iban (who often use profits from engkabang to finance their large capital expenditures such as outboard motors, radios, and short guns), Chinese shopkeepers in the bazaar, and the exporters in Sibu.

Of the agricultural crops of the central Rejang valley, rice is the dominant crop and main staple of the interior Iban. It is dry, hill rice, planted on shifting fields cleared by the "slash and burn" technique. Extensive details of the Iban agricultural cycle and its influence on Iban culture can be found in Freeman (1955). Very little of this crop is sold on the market; most is kept for domestic use by the family of production. Only small amounts find their way into open sale in Kanowit's Bazaar, for if the Iban have a surplus for sale to the merchants, the Chinese shopkeepers frequently keep it for their own use, many preferring the taste of the hill rice to the imported Siam or China rice, the staple of the town diet. Sometimes the two are mixed for a better flavor. Beras chelum (Iban: black rice), dark purple in color with a flavor similar to popcorn, is especially enjoyed. There is no wet rice grown in the areas near Kanowit.

Farmers near the town raise vegetables, chickens, and pigs, which they sell on the streets of the bazaar or in the market shed. Many of the vegetables sold in the bazaar are imported from Sibu, however, as is some of the meat and most of the fish. Some fish can be caught in the river, as can fresh-water shrimp; most of these are kept for personal consumption. The two main cash crops of the Kanowit area, rubber and pepper, will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3, along with their economic role in the life of the bazaar.

## LEVELS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INTEGRATION

Kanowit is the largest bazaar town in its district, and the headquarters for the government of Kanowit District. Kanowit




**MAP 2**
**MALAYSIA AND SARAWAK**
**Districts of the 3rd Division**

**Base map source: Borneo Literature Bureau 1962**



District is one of seven districts in the Third Division of Sarawak. The five Divisions form the State of Sarawak, with its capital at Kuching. Sarawak is one of the two Malaysian states on the island of Borneo; with Sabah and the eleven states of West Malaysia (Malaya) on the mainland it forms the Federation of Malaysia, with its federal capital at Kuala Lumpur. Between the Thai border and the Philippine island of the Sulu Archipelago two other national entities intervene - the independent Republic of Singapore off the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula and Brunei, a British-protected self-governing sultanate formed by two enclaves within north-western Sarawak.

Kanowit District is divided into two sub-districts. Kanowit Sub-district includes Kanowit Bazaar, the north and south banks of the Rejang with its Chinese small-holdings, the small bazaar settlements of Nanga Poi, Nangai Dap and Sunga Ngemah on the Rejang and Machan on the Kanowit River, and the watersheds and courses of the Sungai Poi and Sungai Ngemah. Up the Kanowit River from the Rejang is Julau, a bazaar town smaller than Kanowit. It is the headquarters for the Julau Sub-district, which includes Julau Bazaar, the small bazaar settlements of Pakan and Meluan, and the headwaters of the Julau and Kanowit rivers. The seat of this district government is in Kanowit Bazaar; an Administrative Officer represents the district government in Julau Bazaar. Formerly all communications with Julau were by river and hence, via Kanowit. Recently, however, Julau has been linked by a spur to the Kuching-Sibu state highway. This has given it almost complete economic and social independence (at the expense of the merchants of Kanowit Bazaar), and some amount of political autonomy as well. The total population of Kanowit District in the 1960 Census was 41,588, of which 18,713 lived in Kanowit Sub-district and 22,875 in Julau Sub-district.

The state government is represented in Kanowit District by a District Officer, an Assistant District Officer, and one or more

Sarawak Administrative Officers, a government Treasurer, and a staff of clerks, specialists, and office employees. Various departments of the state government - Agriculture, Public Works, Education, Health, and the Police - also maintain staffs in Kanowit, and their employees are responsible to the local District Officer as well as their Divisional departmental offices.

Local government in Kanowit consists of the Kanowit District Council (KDC), with twenty-four elected members, each representing one ward. Kanowit Bazaar and Julau Bazaar each form a ward (the 20th and 21st respectively); the other twenty-two represent the small bazaars and interior areas. Its chairman in 1970-71 was Penghulu Masam anak Radin, an Iban from Ulu Ngemah. Lee Ghim Cheng was the councilor for Kanowit Bazaar.

The District Officer of Kanowit and his staff are administratively responsible to the Resident of the Third Division, with his seat and headquarters in Sibu. The Third Division, the largest and most populous in Sarawak, consists of seven districts; the 1960 Census of 261,487 was divided between:

Mukah - 38,724
Sarikei - 28,154
Binatang - 34,693
Sibu Urban - 29,630
Sibu Rural - 47,652
Kanowit - 41,588
Kapit - 41,046

Divisions do not have any locally elected governmental establishment; they serve only as administrative units for the state government. Each department maintains an administrative staff in Sibu to oversee the execution of state policy throughout the Division.

The State of Sarawak is governed by an elected legislature, the Council Negre (State Council), with 48 seats. Residents of Kanowit District elect four of these members, from the



constituencies of Pakan (with 3,851 registered voters in 1970), Meluan (including Julau Bazaar) (3,789 voters), Machan (including Kanowit Bazaar) (5,495 voters), and Ngemah (4,673 voters). Thomas Kana was chosen in 1970 to represent the Machan constituency in Council Negri. The 1970 election to Council Negri resulted in the formation of a Coalition Government formed by members of the Alliance Party (itself a coalition of three pro-government parties) and the Sarawak United Peoples Party (SUPP), an opposition party. This Coalition government is led by Chief Minister Dato Haji Abdul Rahman Ya'kub, two Deputy Chief Ministers, Stephen Yong and Simon Dembab Maja, and a number of state Ministers. (For details on the 1970 elections and the Structure of the Sarawak State Government see Leigh 1971.)

Voters in Sarawak elect twenty-four Members of the Federal Parliament, which meets in Kuala Lumpur and governs The Federation of Malaysia. Kanowit District selects two of these Members of Parliament, one from the Kanowit constituency (10,168 voters) and one from Julau (7,640 voters). Joseph Unting anak Umang was elected in 1970 as MP for Kanowit. The twenty- four Mps from Sarawak and the sixteen from Sabah join the 104 members from the eleven West Malaysian states (where each constituency is more populous than in East Malaysia) to elect the Prime Minister of Malaysia (Tun Abdul Razak), his Deputy (Tun Dr Ismail), and the cabinet of Ministers who administer the various departments. One of these ministers is the Federal Minister for Sarawak Affairs, a post held in 1970 by Tan Sri Temonggong Jugah, an Iban from the Baleh River of the Third Division.

The Federation of Malaysia is a constitutional Monarchy, and the chief of State is the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, or King. Nine of the Malay states - Johore, Pahang, Negri Sembilan, Selangor, Perak, Kedah, Kelantan, Trengganu, and Perlis - are headed by their own sultans. These sultans, in council, elect one of themselves to serve a five-year term as Yang di-Pertuan Agong. The present

King, elected in 1971, is the former Sultan of Kedah. The King, in turn, appoints Heads of State for the four states without sultans - Penang, Malacca, Sabah, and Sarawak. The (1970) Chief of State, or Governor, of Sarawak is Tun Dato Tuanku Haji Bujang. The Council of Sultans has powers over religious and cultural affairs affecting the Malay people; the duties of the Governors are largely ceremonial.

## HISTORY

The history of Sarawak, as presently known, begins at Niah Cave in the Fourth Division, where extensive archaeological excavations conducted by the Sarawak Museum have uncovered evidence of human occupation in the form of Mid-Sohan-type flakes and skeletal materal of Homo sapiens of the Late Middle Paleolithic period, dated by Carbon -14 to 40,000 B.C. Mesolithic, Neolithic, and Bronze Age remains show the cave to have been intermittently inhabited into the Christian era. Excavations in the Santubong district, near Kuching, show extensive trading contacts between this coastal area and China and other Asian ports from the 7th to the 15th Centuries. During this period Borneo was probably under the influence of the Hinduized Srivijaya Kingdom of Sumatra (Zainie and Harrisson, 1967; Cheng 1969).

During the 15th Century, seafaring merchants and traders from the Moslem states of Majapahit in Java and Malacca on the Malayan peninsula visited the coastal towns of northern Borneo, including Brunei. The businessmen of these towns, converted to the Islamic faith, acquired political, economic, and religious control of the northwestern coastline and established the Sultanate of Brunei. Continued warfare between the merchant states of Java (Mataram, Bantam), Sumatra (Acheh), and the mainland (Malacca, Johore), and the arrival of the Portuguese and their intervention in the trading relationships of the archipelago during the late 15th



and early 16th Centuries caused a decline in the influence of the major states on the Sultanate and allowed Brunei to develop free of Malaccan hegemony (Tarling 1966: 30-42). The first Europeans to visit Brunei, the crew of Magellan's ships, who arrived at Brunei Town in 1921, described it as a rich and thriving city. The Sultans of Brunei at that time held lands from the present borders of Indonesian Borneo to the main islands of the Philippines. Sarawak, originally only the small area around the town of Kuching, was the southern-most province of the Sultanate of Brunei (Rawlins 1969: 13-14)

In August, 1839, a British adventurer, James Brooke, visited Sarawak, which was then in revolt against the Sultan and his viceroy. When, on his return in 1840, he found the revolt still in progress, James Brooke made an arrangement with the uncle of the Sultan, the Rajah Muda Hassim, to pacify the country for the crown. With his small gunboat, the Royalist, Brooke subdued the area, dispursed the local coastal pirates, and on September 24, 1841, was rewarded by being installed as the Rajah of Sarawak, an area approximately that of the present First Division. The United States recognized Sarawak as an independent state in 1850. In 1853, in return for further favors, the Sultan of Brunei ceded additional lands, the present Second Division.

The Rajah, through his nephew and heir, Charles Brooke, proceeded into the Rejang River basin while it was still in the possession of Brunei, to further suppress the piracy and raiding that so frequently threatened his borders. The first ship up the Rejang, the Phlegethon, captained by Rodney Mundy with Rajah James Brooke in command, arrived at the village of Kanowit on June 29, 1846, to the "horror and consternation of these wild Dayak ladies" who were bathing in the river nearby (Mundy 1848, II: 121). The contact was peaceful, and a permanent fort, Fort Emma, was established there in 1851, though it was still under Brunei's nominal-rule. The Rejang and its watershed, the present Third

Division, was ceded to the Sarawak Raj in 1861.

Charles Brooke succeeded his uncle as Rajah in 1868, and extended Sarawak to its present boundaries, the Fourth Division being acquired from the Sultan of Brunei in 1882, and the Fifth in 1885, 1890, and 1905. Sarawak was granted British protection in 1888. In the fifty years of his reign Rajah Charles firmly established his government and introduced many European customs and facilities into Sarawak. Headhunting and piracy were suppressed, and trade, immigration, communications, and health were improved. His son, the third and last Rajah, Charles Vyner Brooke, succeeded him in 1917. In honor of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Brooke Raj, a constitution was enacted in 1941. Before it could go into effect, Sarawak was invaded by the Japanese, occupied, and the Brooke family forced into exile in England, where Rajah Vyner died in 1964.

Destruction and stagnation were so severe after the liberation of Sarawak in 1945 that the Rajah ceded his lands to the British crown. After one year of military government, civilian government was established in 1946, with Sarawak as a British Crown Colony. Westernization proceeded rapidly during the seventeen years of British Rule. On August 31, 1963, Sarawak, with a self-elected government, was granted independence and immediately joined with Sabah, Singapore, and the eleven states of Malaya to form the Federation of Malaysia. Brunei, the small, oil-rich enclave, all that remains of the lands the Sultans, chose not to join the Federation. Singapore left the union on August 9, 1965, to become an independent republic, leaving the thirteen states with a 1970 population of 8,801,399, a self elected parliamentary democracy, and the highest standard of living in South East Asia today.[3]



# CHAPTER 2: POPULATION

Kanowit Bazaar is a multiracial, multiethnic, multicultural, and multi-linguistic community.

Yet none of these terms - "racial," "ethnic," "cultural," "linguistic," - is adequate to describe the differences among the peoples of Kanowit. If "racial" is considered in the most common tripartite system, then all but a handful of Kanowit's people are "Oriental" or "Mongoloid." If a five-part division of racial types is made, some of the townspeople would be considered "Malayan" rather than "Mongoloid," but with no distinction between those people native to Borneo and those not. To use "racial" in the sense of "genetic breading population" only confuses matters, for none of the groups involved form isolated genetic populations. In spite of all these drawbacks and inaccuracies, "race," or its Malay equivalent, bangsa, is the most frequent term used in Sarawak to describe the variety of peoples who live there. They are the terms used on census forms, government applications, and National Identity Cards, and are understood to mean the population subdivisions described below. When used hereafter, "race" should be understood with its Sarawak connotations.

"Ethnic" and "cultural" are better distinctions, but they, too, are not completely accurate to describe the differences, and similarities, among the varied peoples. There are differences among the Chinese themselves, from region to region and from dialect group to dialect group, as distinctive as the differences between the Chinese and other "ethnic" groups. Are the Chinese, then, one "ethnic" group or several? A "cultural" comparison would need to include religion in its consideration, yet no one religion in Sarawak is limited in its membership to any one specific group of people, nor is any religion inclusive of all the members of any one group. Harrisson, in his " classifying the People" (1948: 278), has noted this point and eliminated religious considerations from his

advice on classification. Religion can not be completely dismissed, however; it is a necessary factor in any discussion of the Malay group, for, as Jones (1962: 52) has pointed out, "it may well be the case that individuals of other communities after embracing Islam would term themselves Malays if the question was put to them."

Linguistic divisions are perhaps the least faulty of all the approaches to subdividing the peoples of Sarawak. The problem with them, though, is not that they are too general, but that they are too narrow. Linguistic differences are found in the Hokkien dialect from one hsien[4] to another in the districts around Amoy; there is considerable variation in the Iban language as spoken in the Second Division compared to the Third Division. By grouping these languages into major families and sub-families, though, we can derive groupings of more validity than by any other means. The commonly accepted concept of bangsa or "race" in Sarawak uses linguistic differences as a major criterion for the recognition and formation of distinctive native categories.

Two of the terms used in the census in Sarawak also require comment. While the 1947 Census (Noakes 1948) uses the term "cultural (or "Racial") Groups and Certain Sub-Groups" in its tables, this laborious mouthful was eliminated in the 1960 Census (Jones 1962) and replaced by "Community." In the only table (Table 4) to break down Chinese, Indigenous, the others into their constituent sub-division, "Sub-Group" is used. In the text, however, (as in the quotation below), "community" is used to refer to both the super and sub-groupings. The term will not be used in this context hereafter.

Jones, in 1962 (47), used the term "indigenous" in the same manner as proposed by Noakes in 1948 (29):

> If the definition of "indigenous" in respect of the people of a country is Accepted as "living naturally in a country; not immigrant or imported; native;" - then to make an accurate classification one must search for origins at the beginning of time. If it is decided that the "indigenous" people shall be regarded as the descendents of those who lived in the country during a certain period, say sixteenth century, then the pedigree of almost every individual born in the country must be examined. In either case the task is completely impossible, and even if it were possible, the Census returns would be unintelligible and unrealistic.
>
> If the term "indigenous" is confined to those people with their origin in Sarawak or Brunei, or both, then it is necessary to exclude many "natives" (perhaps the majority) who are today indistin guishable from their fellow Borneans. Whatever way one looks at it, differentiation is ridiculous, and so for present purposes "indigenous people" are defined as "those persons who recognize no allegiance to any foreign territory, who regard Sarawak or Brunei as their homeland, who believe themselves to be a part of oneof the two territories, and who are regards as natives by their fellowmen".



This last definition can no longer be recognized as an accurate, valid, and acceptable definition of "indigenous;" if it was ever so is questionable. Since the Chinese of Sarawak are classified in the census as "Non-Indigenous," the use of this definition is not only an incorrect statement about their emotional attachments, but is an inexcusable and unfounded slur upon their political loyalties. The vast majority of Chinese in Kanowit do not recognize allegiance to any foreign territory, do regard Sarawak as their homeland, and believe themselves to be a part of its territory. They are not, however, regards as "natives" by anyone.

The problem is virtually insoluable, short of the full pedigree proposed and rejected by Noakes. There are Chinese - "non-

natives"- whose families have lived in Sarawak far longer than the "native" Selakan or Murut peoples who have immigrated from Indonesian Borneo. For our purposes here, It is necessary only to recognize and identify those "racial" groups that are recognized and identified in the minds of the average Sarawakian. The criteria he uses are many; they are neither completely scientific nor completely accurate, but the people of Sarawak have formulated bangsa concepts satisfactory to their needs in dealing with each other in daily life. Since the people of Sarawak and Kanowit see each other in terms of these self-constructed categories, and these categories "work" for their purposes, there is no need to vary from them here. Ultimately even the Census (1962: 49) has recognized this approach as the only one practical:

> The instructions to enumerators stated that "race" was used in the sense in which it is understood by the man in the street, for instance a person is Sea Dayak or Malay or Australian. They pointed out also the pitfall of confusing race with religion, a confusion which could occur particularly when pagan peoples had embraced Islam; and they also warned against substituting the idea of nationality for race. They told the enumerators to enter for an indigenous person the correct one of the list of 63 indigenous tribes, or for a Chinese the correct one of the list of eight communities given in table 4; for any other race the answer given should be entered. It was then left to the coding staff to classify Bugis as Indonesian, Italian as European, Burmese as Other. And in the training courses it was emphasized that in general an individuals' answer to the question on race should be accepted, for there would be many persons descended from at least two of the tribes listed who would claim one as their own for their own private reasons and with whom it would be quite improper to discuss or dispute those reasons.



These commonly accepted categories, as duplicated in the Census headings, are as follows: Malay, Melanau, Sea Dayak (Iban), Land Dayak (with several subgroups), "Other Indigenous" (including Kayan, Kenyah, Kalabit, Murut, Punan, and a number of others), and Chinese of the Hokkien, Cantonese, Foochow, Hakka, Hylam, Henghua, Teochiew and several other dialects. It should also be noted here that it is the common practice - on census forms, for government procedures, and in the minds of the people - to consider the children of "mixed" marriages as belonging to the ethnic group of the father, unless the child specifically chooses otherwise. (Eurasians are an exception.) Thus, the child of a Malay man and a Melanau woman is a Malay; the child of a Hokkien man and a Cantonese woman, or a Hokkien man and an Iban woman, is considered by all to be Hokkien.

Members of all of these major categories of racial types live together side b side today in Kanowit Bazaar.

## POPULATION SIZE AND COMPOSITION

The population of Kanowit Bazaar during the census period in August, 1970, was approximately 1,720[1]. The area referred to herein is the same as that described in Chapter 1; the mission area from the Roman Catholic hospital to Main Bazaar Road, the bazaar of shops on Main Bazaar Road, Cinema Road and its offshoots, the government housing quarters, and the two Malay Kampongs, Kampong Mesjid near the bazaar and Kampong Baharu north of the Chinese cemetery, and the stretch of path north of the kampong to the District Officer's house, an area about one mile long and varying in width from 300 to 1,000 feet, its borders being the rivers and the jungle. Outlying settlements will be clearly distinguished as such in any discussions hereafter, and will be combined with the population of Kanowit Bazaar itself only when it is required to make accurate comparisons with previously

published census data that also include them (as in Table 7).

There are more Chinese than any other bangsa in Kanowit Bazaar - 72.7% of the population. But if each dialect group of the Chinese is considered as a separate entity, as is frequently the case, since they each speak a distinctly different language, then no one bangsa dominates the population of Kanowit.[2] The largest group is the Hokkien, with 610 people, forming 35.5% of the town population. The second largest is the Malays, with 312 people and 18.1% of the total. All other groups form smaller percentages (Table 3). Nor is the Chinese segment dominated by any one dialect group. The Hokkien are the largest unit, but their 610 people are still only 48.8% of the total Chinese population of the town. While everyone recognizes that Kanowit has more Hokkien than any other group, equal attention is given to and recognition made of the major role played by the other two most numerous dialect groups, the Cantonese (267 people, 21.4% of the Chinese) and Foochow (251 people, 20.1% of the Chinese). Thus it is clear in everyone's mind that while Kanowit Bazaar is a "Chinese" town, it is not a "one-dialect" community. This is in sharp distinction to the other small towns and communities of Overseas Chinese studied in Borneo (T'ien 1953; primarily the Hakka of the First Division; Fortier 1958, 1964: a Hakka farming community in Sabah; Jackson 1970: the Hakka of Indonesian West Borneo) and Malaya (Newell 1962: a Teochiew farm community). The only previous study of a Malaysian town with a multi-dialect community of Chinese is Li Yih Yuan's recent monograph, An Immigrant Town (1970), reporting his research in Muar, West Malaysia, published only in Chinese. Muar's population (c. 40,000) is more than twenty times that of Kanowit's. Multi-dialect communities are definitely not the norm in China and Taiwan, as seen in the works of Fei (1939), Yang (1945), and Gamble (1954) for the former and Gallin (1966), Diamond (1969), and Cohen (1970) for the latter.

A complete breakdown of the population of Kanowit Bazaar



by bangsa can be seen in Table 3. Comparing these figures with those for Sarawak as a whole in the 1960 Census (Table 4) illustrates three important points:

**TABLES 3**
**POPULATION OF KANOWIT BAZAAR BY ETHNIC GROUP**
**AUGUST, 1970**

| ETHNIC GROUP | TOTAL NUMBER | % OF TOWN POPULATION | % OF CHINESE POPULATION |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hokkien | 610 | 35.5% | 48.8% |
| Cantonese | 267 | 15.5% | 21.4% |
| Foochow | 251 | 14.6% | 20.1% |
| Hakka | 78 | 4.5% | 6.2% |
| Hylam | 38 | 2.2% | 3.0% |
| Henghua | 2 | .11% | .17% |
| Teochiew | 1 | .06% | .08% |
| Dialect unknown | 3 | .17% | .25% |
| Total Chinese | 1250 | 72.7% | |
| Malay | 312 | 18.1% | |
| Iban | 111 | 6.5% | |
| Melanau | 16 | .92% | |
| Land Dayak | 10 | .58% | |
| Sikh (Indian) | 8 | .45% | |
| European* | 7 | .40% | |
| Eurasian | 5 | .29% | |
| Murut | 1 | .06% | |
| TOTAL POPULATION | 1720 | 100.00% | |

* including American

## TABLES 4
### POPULATION OF SARAWAK BY ETHNIC GROUP
### CENSUS OF 1960

| ETHNIC GROUP | TOTAL NUMBER | % OF TOTAL POPULATION | % OF CHINESE POPULATION |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hokkien | 28,304 | 3.9% | 12.4% |
| Cantonese | 17,432 | 2.3% | 7.6% |
| Foochow | 70,125 | 9.4% | 30.6% |
| Hakka | 70,221 | 9.4% | 30.6% |
| Hylam | 5,717 | 78% | 2.5% |
| Henghua | 8,278 | 1.1% | 3.6% |
| Teochiew | 21,952 | 2.9% | 9.6% |
| Others | 7,125 | .97% | 3.1% |
| Total Chinese | 229,154 | 30.8% | |
| Malay | 129,300 | 17.4% | |
| Iban (Sea Dayak) | 237,741 | 31.9% | |
| Melanau | 44,661 | 6.0% | |
| Land Dayak | 57,619 | 7.7% | |
| European* | 1,093 | .15% | |
| Eurasian | 538 | .07% | |
| Other Indigenous | 37,931 | 5.1% | |
| Others | 6,492 | .88% | |
| | 744,529 | 100.00% | |

* including American

1) The percentage distribution of Chinese dialect groups in Kanowit Bazaar is not identical with that of Sarawak as a whole. The Hokkien, who form the largest group in Kanowit, are only the third largest in Sarawak; the Hakka and Foochow, the two largest groups in Sarawak, are only third and fourth largest in Kanowit, with the Hakka representing in Kanowit Bazaar only a



small fraction of their Sarawak percentages. This uneven distribution in the tables is caused by, and exemplifies, the uneven distribution of the various Chinese dialect groups in Sarawak. The Hakka and Foochow in particular are clustered together in two division (First and Third), where they form an over-whelming majority of the Chinese population, and are thinly dispersed elsewhere. Occupational preferences of various dialect groups also add to the distribution imbalance.

2) While the Chinese form 72.7% of Kanowit Bazaar's population, they represent only 30.8% of the total population of Sarawak (in 1960). The settlement of Chinese as a whole in Sarawak is not evenly distributed; there is greater preference for town dwelling among the Chinese than in other ethnic groups. The Chinese comprise two-thirds of the total urban population of Sarawak, and in only two towns (Bintulu and Lutong) do they not predominate (Jackson 1968: 65). They are not exclusively an urban people, however; in fact, 52.2% are engaged in primary production - agriculture, fishing, and forestry (51.1%) and mining / quarrying (1.1%) (Lee 1970: 116) - though even there their distribution is imbalanced by the land laws, which restrict them to ownership of Mixed Zone Lands. It is the remaining 47.8% of the Chinese, engaged in other economic activities, who provide the bulk of Sarawak's urban population.

3) Also to be noted in Tables 3 and 4 is a fact of overwhelming significance and importance for any study of social life and culture in Sarawak; No matter who you are, no matte to what bangsa you belong, you are in the minority. Neither in Kanowit Bazaar, nor in Sarawak, nor in the Federation of Malaysia, is there a numerically dominant ethnic group. Behavior towards minority racial groups, and the working relationships among them, is under the constant influence of everyone's being a member of one. The people of Sarawak and Kanowit are constantly aware of this fact, and it can not be overly stressed.

## AGE STRUCTURE AND POPULATION GROWTH

"Kanowit is dying." This is the most frequently stated remark made about Kanowit both in the town and outside of it. Anyone in Sarawak who has heard of Kanowit at all has heard that it is dying, and has been for twenty years (for this statement is not only recent). A.R.G. Morrison, in his District Officer's Report for the second Quarter of 1953 stated: "Business in Kanowit Bazaar can only be described as dead; there are six shops completely empty and a further three have only a part of the ground floor occupied, customers are few and far between and in most cases stocks are small." Nineteen years later a young man writes: "Life in Kanowit become worse and worst, many people are thrown out of employment.....You have told me to stay in Kanowit, but this is no future for me to stay here.....I wish to fly, fly away." An analysis of the age structure, marriage patterns, and population growth figures for Kanowit during the past ten years shows that this is exactly what the young people of the town - especially the Chinese - do: "fly, fly away."

In Figure 1, age pyramids for the Chinese, Malay, and Total Sarawak populations, drawn from the data in the 1960 Census, demonstrate two interesting features of the Chinese age structure in Sarawak in 1960 as compared to the population as a whole: 1) the "bulge" in the male Chinese ages 40-69, 2) the "inset" in the Chinese children ages 0-4. There is a noticeable imbalance in the male-female ratio in the age brackets 40 through 69 in the Chinese population, with males far outnumbering females in both total numbers and percentage of the Chinese population. This is a completely understandable result of the even greater imbalances in the Chinese male-female ratios of the early 20th Century, caused by the uneven ratios of immigration. For example, in 1931 and 1932, Kuching and Sibu noted 8,554 male Chinese immigrants, but only 2,540 females (Lee 1964: 519). Figures for earlier years,



in this case 1900 to 1930, are not available, but the ratio of female immigrants to males was not likely to be any greater. By age 70 actuarial probabilities have evened out the ratio, though not until age 75 do the females outnumber the males. Chinese immigration came to a virtual halt with the Japanese invasion in 1941. When it resumed, under new controls, in 1946, it was at a greatly reduced rate. Chinese population gains by immigration are estimated at 5,000 for the period 1939 to 1947, and only 10,088 from 1948 to mid - 1960 (Jones 1962: 35). It thus accounts for such a small percentage of the Chinese population that it is no longer a significant factor.

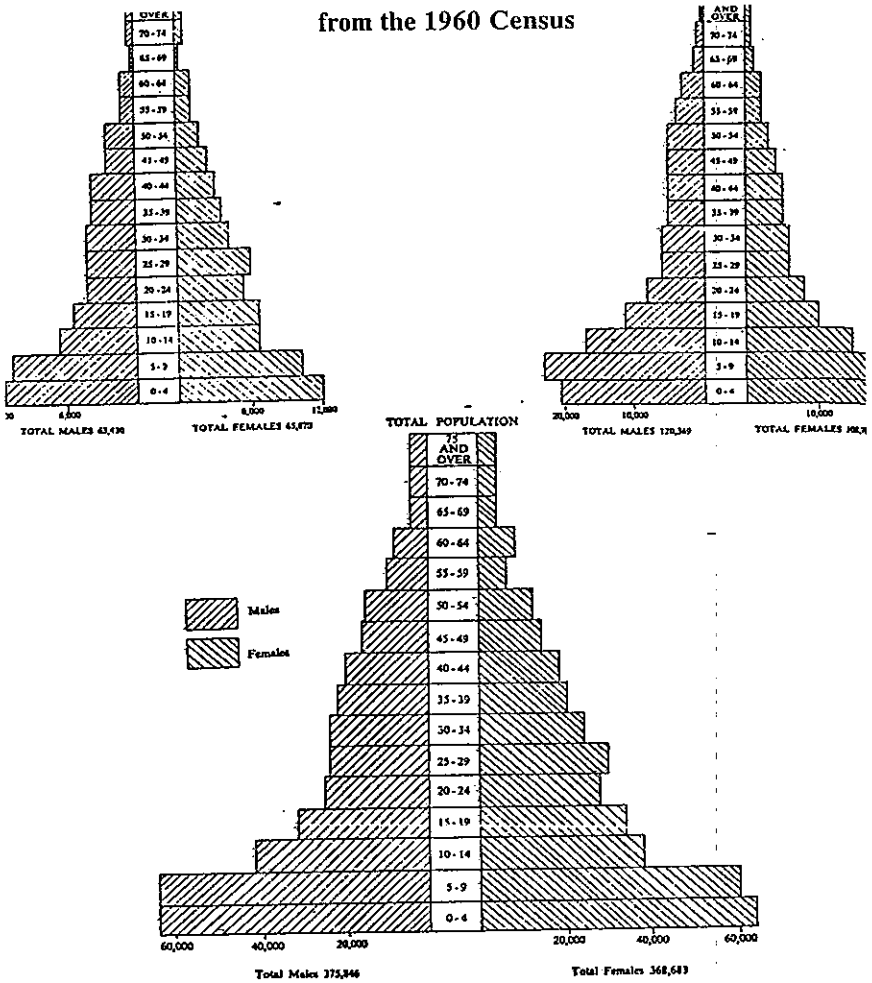
This same imbalance can be seen in Kanowit in the figures given in Table 5. While the Chinese population between the ages of 30 and 39 is nearly balanced between the sexes, from 40 through 64 the males outnumber the females for the same reasons as stated above. Above age 65 the ratio again balances, as the females live longer, with the thirty Chinese over that age being evenly divided by sex. (It is interesting to compare these figures with those for the Malays both in Sarawak and Kanowit - above age 45 the noticeable imbalance in favor of females is reduced to near equality, 23 males over age 45 to 21 females, in Kanowit Bazaar. Those Malay women who live through the childbearing years have a good chance to reach old age, but the numbers of those who do survive is lower for Malays than for Chinese women of the same age.)

The second noticeable feature of the Chinese age pyramid in 1960 is the "inset" in the 0-4 population; that is a reduction in the total number and percentage of children aged 0 to 4 compared to those aged 5 to 9. While the 0-4 bracket still outnumbers the 10-14 set, and all senior brackets, the Chinese are the only bangsa thus scaled in the Census to demonstrate such a phenomenon. Several explanations have been suggested for this decrease; Jones (1962: 39) states:

**FIGURE 1**

**AGE PYRAMIDS**

**from the 1960 Census**




**SOURCE: Jones 1962: 44**



The large bulge in the 5 to 14 group in conjunction with an average proportion in the under 5 numbers suggests that the increased growth of the whole population took effect rather earlier in the Chinese community and now the result of it is evident in the 5 to 14 group; it is also the case, as will be seen subsequently, that more children survive to the later ages in the Chinese community than in the others. Here the Chinese way of over-stating age according to western reckoning should not be forgotten because the system makes it more than likely that a few people declared in the census as 15 or 16 years old were really under 15; this would make the under 15 group even bigger in fact than is shown by the figures.

Jones' first point, the general increase in the growth rate reaching the Chinese first, is a valid one. From 1947 to 1960, while the annual growth rate for the Sarawak population as a whole averaged 2.5%, the Chinese increased at an average of 3.5% per year. Growth rates before 1947 were even lower for the total population, about 1.4% per year (Jones 1962: 35). The Chinese, living in more urban areas and, in addition, being generally better educated, are likely to have learned of, had access to, and adopted modern health facilities and practices earlier than most other groups. The "inset," then would reflect (as Jones seems to indicate) the average, after a "boom," rather than a decrease from a progressive norm. The greater survival of older children is undoubtedly true, but is not a feature limited to the 5-14 bracket; it would apply equal, and perhaps more influentially, to the infants from 0 to 4. Lee (1970: 110) notes that Chinese mothers age 25-29 years lose only 3.4% of their children while women of the same age in the indigenous bangsa lost from 17 to 24%. This greater survival rate is also related directly to the urbanism/education factor, providing better health care, plus the traditional Chinese customs concerning the care and preparation of food and drinking water.

The third factor is the most intriguing, as it is a definitely

cultural behavior pattern. It has been the custom of the Chinese for as long as anyone can determine to consider an infant as one year old on the day of his birth. Since many people would not use the date of their birth as the base point in the yearly cycle of their age, but add one more year to their count at each New Year, it was possible that a child might be considered to be two years old if he had been born only a few days before New Year - one year the day he was born and one additional year at the next New Year, a few day late. While this latter custom is not as widespread in Sarawak as it once was, it is a factor to be considered. Being one year old at birth, and thus one year older than the western way of counting, is still a feature in Sarawak Chinese life, where most young or educated Chinese will state their ages in both systems of reckoning. If the census enumerators in 1960 were not extremely conscientious in checking this point, and Jones (1962: 40) indicates that they were not, it would weight the counting of the 0-4 bracket in favor of the non-Chinese. For the Chinese, there would be no children aged 0; for all other groups there would be. Two children, one Chinese and one non-Chinese, both born on the same day, 49 months before the census count ,would be placed in two different brackets: the non-Chinese, "four years old," in the 0-4 group, and the Chinese, "five years old," in the 5-9 group. For the non-Chinese, children "under 5" are born during a 60 month period; for the Chinese, the "under 5" bracket only covers a 48 month period. In actuality, all this is quite relative, as all the data on age in the census are subject to innumerable variation. Jones, in his chapter on age (1962:37-45) recounts a number of these problems, some of them quite amusing, such as the "massive preference for ages ending in 0 and 5."

The ages of Kanowit Chinese, as given in the Kanowit census of 1970, and shown in Table 5, are, perhaps, not 100% accurate, but they have eliminated the greatest of the above problems. Each person was asked to state, if possible, the day , month, and year of



his birth on the western calendar (rather than age in year), and a large percentage of the Chinese were able to do so, accustomed to this practice by years of dealing with governmental procedures and applications. Since 93% of Kanowit's Chinese are Malaysian-born, and the majority was born since the Second World War, birth certificates are widespread, and it was common practice for the enumerators in Kanowit Bazaar to ask for, and receive, them in the course of collecting data. Needless to say, their success on age accuracy decreased with the increasing age (and the bangsa) of the informant. For the Chinese youth, however, the data are highly accurate.

**TABLE 5**
**AGE STRUCTURE OF KANOWIT CHINESE AND MALAYS**
**AUGUST, 1970**

| | CHINESE | | | MALAYS | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AGE | TOTAL | MALES | FEMALES | TOTAL | MALES | FEMALES |
| 0-4 | 166 | 72 | 94 | 60 | 26 | 34 |
| 5-9 | 215 | 110 | 105 | 47 | 21 | 26 |
| 10-14 | 218 | 105 | 113 | 44 | 21 | 23 |
| 15-19 | 144 | 54 | 90 | 27 | 10 | 17 |
| 20-24 | 67 | 30 | 37 | 17 | 9 | 8 |
| 25-29 | 81 | 34 | 47 | 17 | 9 | 8 |
| 30-34 | 59 | 28 | 31 | 18 | 6 | 12 |
| 35-39 | 62 | 31 | 31 | 16 | 10 | 6 |
| 40-44 | 50 | 31 | 19 | 15 | 4 | 11 |
| 45-49 | 36 | 19 | 17 | 8 | 4 | 4 |
| 50-54 | 41 | 25 | 16 | 10 | 3 | 7 |
| 55-59 | 33 | 21 | 12 | 10 | 6 | 4 |
| 60-64 | 29 | 18 | 11 | 6 | 5 | 1 |
| 65-60 | 15 | 7 | 8 | 4 | 2 | 2 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 70-74 | 9 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| 75+ | 6 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Unknown | 19 | 9 | 10 | 7 | 3 | 4 |
| | 1250 | 602 | 648 | 312 | 142 | 170 |

These data from Kanowit Bazaar show several extremely important facts that contribute to the question "Is Kanowit really dying?" 1) There is an enormous drop in the Chinese population in the 20-24 age groups; it is even lower than the 25-29 year bracket. It is also noticeable, though not to nearly the same degree, in the Malay population. From the 59 Chinese aged 30-34 and the 81 ages 25-29, it drops to 67 in the 20-24 year group. The figure of 144 Chinese aged 15-19 is probably also lower than the norm would indicate, but there are too many variables to make a definite statement on it. What is clear in this bracket (15-19) is the incredible difference in the male-female ratio - only 54 males to 90 females among the Chinese (and 10 males to 17 females among the Malays). Where are those young men? Where are the 20-24 year olds? The "fly, fly away."

2) Those young people who do remain are frequently unemployed, and live in their parents' households. Lack of employment, caused by lack of business opportunities, leads to a lack of income and the lack of sufficient resources to marry. While the males are more likely to leave town looking for work than the females, not all of them do. But those who remain in Kanowit also tend to remain single. Of the 118 Chinese males ages 15 to 29 living in Kanowit Bazaar today, only 29 - 25% - are married. Of all the people of all races aged 15 to 29 in Sarawak in 1960, there were only 4% more who were single than married (88,319 single to 85,800 married); among the same age group, for both Chinese and Malays in Kanowit Bazaar in 1970, there are more than 100% more single - more than twice as many single as married - 242 single versus 111 married. (see Tables 6a and 6b) (These marriage



patterns are discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.)

Therefore it is not surprising to see a noticeable decline in the numbers of Chinese children aged 0-4, from 215 in the 5-9 bracket down to 166 in the 0-4 group. This is not due to age reckoning, health statistics, or any "return to the norm." Their potential parents simply did not stay in Kanowit, or did not marry, or did not have children.

Table 7, Population Increase in the Kanowit Bazaar Census Area, 1960 to 1970, emphasizes these same points: 1) While the Sarawak population increased 31.2% in the ten year period, the Kanowit population increased only 13%, because 2) the young men (and some women) are leaving town; while male-female birth ratios are nearly balanced, the female population increased 20.4% while the male increased only 5.7%. 3) These

**TABLE 6a**

**MARRIAGE STATUS OF KANOWIT CHINESE AND MALAYS AGES 15 THROUGH 29**

| | CHINESE | | MALAYS | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| STATUS | MALES | FEMALES | MALES | FEMALES | TOTAL |
| Single* | 89 | 120 | 15 | 18 | 242 |
| Married | 29 | 54 | 13 | 15 | 111 |
| TOTAL | 118 | 174 | 28 | 33 | 353 |

**TABLE 6b**

**MARRIAGE STATUS OF KANOWIT SAMPLE COMPARED TO SARAWAK 1960 CENSUS DATA, AGES 15 THROUGH 29**

| | MARRIAGE STATUS | |
|---|---|---|
| | SINGLE* | MARRIED |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Kanowit Males | 104 | 42 |
| Kanowit Females | 138 | 69 |
| Sarawak Males | 51,389 | 29,850 |
| Sarawak Females | 36,930 | 55,950 |
| Kanowit Total | 242 | 111 |
| Sarawak Total | 88,319 | 85,800 |

* including widowed and divorced

**TABLE 7**

**POPULATION INCREASE IN KANOWIT BAZAAR CENSUS AREA* 1960 TO 1970**

| TETHNIC GROUP | 1960 POPULATION | 1970 POPULATION | % OF INCREASE(+) DECREASE (-) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Chinese | 1,044 | 1,256 | + 20.3% |
| Malay | 200 | 312 | + 56.0% |
| Iban | 267 | 148 | - 44.6% |
| Melanau | 19 | 16 | - 15.8% |
| European** | 8 | 12 | + 50.0% |
| Land Dayak | 7 | 10 | + 42.8% |
| Other Indigenous | 2 | 1 | + 50.0% |
| Others | 8 | 8 | 0.0% |
| TOTAL | 1,555 | 1,757 | + 13.0% |
| Total Male | 787 | 843 | + 5.7% |
| Total Female | 766 | 923 | + 20.4% |
| Total SARAWAK Population | 744,529 | 977,013 | + 31.2% |



* Kanowit Bazaar plus Sungai Keriring settlement
** including American and Eurasian

"15%" who left, along with their brothers and sisters who are delaying marriage, did not produce the new children needed to keep the Chinese population growing at the rate of either the state average or of their more sedentary neighbors, the Malay. Kanowit is not "dying," it is simply failing to grow at a time when other areas are increasing.

## LANGUAGES

Kanowit is not only a multiracial and multicultural town, it is also multilingual. That is, nearly everyone in Kanowit Bazaar is able to speak several languages, and does so daily. There are seven distinctly different languages spoken commonly in the town - spoken by people to whom they are not native - and at least four others used almost solely by their native speakers. It is not at all uncommon to find a Kanowit townsman - especially a Chinese one - who is conversationally fluent in as many as five or six of these languages, and literate in more than one as well. (To be literate in any one Chinese dialect is to be literate in all, as all use the same characters for the same referent, regardless of the spoken form of the word.)

Unfortunately, there are no concrete statistics on the languages spoken by each resident of Kanowit. The Personal Date Forms of the 1970 census on which this information would have been gathered were withdrawn at the last moment in three Third Division districts, including Kanowit District, and replaced by a briefer, less detailed form that did not solicit a list of the languages each individual could speak. Informants in the town, however, list these seven as those most widely spoken in both inter- and intra-bangsa communications; English, Iban, Malay, Mandarin, Hokkien,

Foochow, and Cantonese.

English is the language of the government schools. It is also widely used in government affairs today, and previously was even more so. It is frequently spoken on the radio (both domestic and foreign), heard in films, and encountered in business affairs. The local English-language press is widely read. Informants estimate that 30% of all Chinese in Kanowit, and 30% of all the total people, can speak English. This is probably an underestimation, for more than 30% of the people have been exposed to government educational facilities, where English is the medium of instruction. (The people of Kanowit generally underestimate their linguistic abilities.) Nor is English limited only to the government schools; it is a required subject at all stages of the private, Chinese-medium schools as well. The young man who wrote about his future in Kanowit has had only Chinese-medium primary school education, yet he can pick his way through an article in Time or Newsweek. Several general statements about English can be made: 1) Every government civil servant above the level of office boy or boat driver is literate in it and speaks it fluently. 2) At least one person, and usually several - the young - every shophouse and business establishment speaks English. 3) The Chinese are more likely to speak it than the Malays and Ibans. 4) In any given situation, if the individual does not speak English himself then there is someone else present who does. In this multi-tongued town, running translations are not infrequent in any case. 5) English is definitely a second language; only a handful of people speak it at home among their families. Among Chinese in particular it is a very highly regarded skill, however, and is sometimes used in place of a native language for prestige or stature. Two examples of this include its use among the young, who use "Sarawak Jive," a sort of 1950's-type slang popular with the "groovy" set, and among the highly westernized, where English is their medium for communicating modern concepts, especially across racial lines. Its use, then, is



not limited to communications with Europeans; it is the public language of the modern educated. There are English speakers in Kanowit Bazaar as fluent in it as any average American or Englishman.

It should be noted in passing that three different means of communication were used to collect these data in the field. In order of frequency of use they were: 1) direct English to English conversation; 2) translations from English to other languages through an interpreter; 3) direct conversations in the Mandarin dialect of Chinese.

Iban is probably the most widely spoken language in Kanowit Bazaar. 90% of its people can speak Iban. 70-80% of its Chinese - all but the very young and the very old - speak it. It is possible to live and deal daily in every facet of Kanowit life speaking only Iban. No other single language is so widely spoken. Kanowit Bazaar is surrounded by Iban. Business depends on the Iban. The government offices are oriented toward the Iban interior. The Roman Catholic Mission works almost entirely among the Iban. Speaking Iban is as natural in Kanowit Bazaar as speaking one's own native language, and all non-Iban groups are able to do so.

Malay is the National Language of Malaysia. The 18% of the people in Kanowit who are Malay naturally speak it as their first language. In addition, it is estimated that 40% of the Chinese speak it also (though frequently it is very heavily "Ibanized.") It is now taught in all schools, and will become increasingly more widespread as it takes on an even larger role in education in the future. There are actually several different varieties of Malay spoken: 1) Bahasa Kebangsaan, the National Language, taught in the schools. It is a bit more "polished" than 2) the Malay spoken in the local kampongs, which has some rural usages in its speech. 3) "Bazaar Malay," a simplification of the National Language, ignoring its prefixes and refinements, a frequently used lingua franca throughout Malaysia, and 4) the heavily "Ibanized" Malay of the

Chinese shopkeepers, who interpose Malay terminal phonemes onto similar-sounding Iban words, and vice versa.

Hokkien is the most widely spoken Chinese dialect. Even though only 48.8% of the town's Chinese are Hokkien, it is estimated that 90% of the Chinese can speak it. It serves, in all of the South East Asian cities, as a frequent shophouse lingua franca. There are several variations on it, based on the region of Fukien Province from which the speakers originate, but a standard amalgam much like the type spoken in the rural hsien[4] outside of Amoy city is the most common in Kanowit. Foochow is spoken by 40-50% of the Chinese, and Cantonese by perhaps the same number. A frequently heard "language" is an ad hoc combination of Hokkien and Foochow, an amalgam suited to the local communication needs and containing strong local usages.

Mandarin is the language of the Chinese (private) schools, and is the National Language of China. It is estimated that 70-90% of the Chinese in Kanowit speak it, though this seems high. In addition to being heard in the Chinese-medium schools, it is an elective subject in the government secondary schools, is heard on the radio and in the very popular Chinese films from Hong Kong and Taiwan. It is the language of Chinese scholars, businessmen, and politicians - the language of the Chinese elite. Even one Malay family in Kanowit is reported to speak good Mandarin. Mandarin is spoken in Kanowit with a very heavy southern (China) accent; not only are the usages different but the southern dialects lack several of the phonemes of northern Mandarin, such as the "sh" sound. A speaker of kuo[2] yu[2] from Peking or Taipei must adjust to the Mandarin spoken in Sarawak.

The number of residents in Kanowit who speak only one language is very small. For the Chinese population, the figure is about five percent; for the Ibans and Malays it is a higher percentage. They are the very young ,too young to go to school or mix with many playmates, and the very old, especially women, who immigrated from China in middle age and have found it hard to learn a new language late in life. They stay with their families a great deal, communicating in their native language or, to others, through other family members. All dialect groups seem equally adept at language skills, though the members of the smaller dialect groups - the Hakka, Hylam, Henghua, and Teochiew in Kanowit - have much greater need for learning additional languages. One informant states that the Hokkien speakers find it harder to learn new languages, while the Cantonese can learn them more easily; the informant is Cantonese.



## THE BANGSA OF KANOWIT

The 1,720 residents of Kanowit Bazaar represent fourteen different ethnic groups. Each of these groups has entered Kanowit within the last 150 years; the earliest known inhabitants of the nanga of the Kanowit River, the Kanowits, no longer live along the river that bears their name. The few remaining Kanowits now reside in Kampong Bedil, several miles upstream from the town, along the Rejang. Seven of the fourteen ethnic groups in Kanowit are Chinese, originating in the south China provinces of Fukien and Kwangtung (Map 3). Four other groups have lived in Borneo since historic times, sufficiently long to call them "native" or "indigenous." Three are recent arrivals, coming with the advent of the Brooke Raj. All now live side b side, intermixed, in the town of Kanowit.

**Kanowit in the mid-19th Century**

> 1846, June 29...Shortly after noon our pilots pointed out the neck of land round which, in a small bay, was situated the village of Kanowit; and above the trees we caught sight of numerous flags, and the matted roofs of houses. The admiral [Rajah James Brooke] now ordered the steamer to be kept as

close as possible to the overhanging palms; and with our paddle-box just grazing their feathery branches, we shot rapidly round the point, and the surprise was complete; so complete, indeed, that groups of matrons and maidens who, surrounded by numerous children, were disporting their sable forms in the silvery stream, and enjoying, under the shade of the lofty palms, its refreshing waters, had scarcely time to skreen themselves from the gaze of the bold intruders on their sylvan retreat.

It would be difficult to describe the horror and consternation of these wild Dayak ladies as the anchor of the Phlegethon dropped from her bows into the centre of the little bay selected for their bathing-ground. The first impression seemed to have stupefied both old and young, as they remained motionless with terror and astonishment. When conscious, however, of the terrible apparition before them, they set up a loud and simultaneous shriek, and, fleeing rapidly from the water, dragged children of all ages and sizes after them, and rushed up their lofty ladders for refuge; then we heard the tom-tom beat to arms, and in every direction the warriors were observed putting on their wooden and woollen armour, and seeking their spears and sumpitans.

In ten minutes all seemed ready for the fight, though evidently more anxious to find the extraordinary stranger inclined for peace. Meanwhile, the steamer swinging gradually to the young flood, and so drawing her stern within a few yards of the landing-place, brought into view the whole of the under part of the floor of this immense building erected at the very brink of the stream; for the piles on which it was supported were forty feet in height, and although at this short distance, had these savages chosen to attack us, a few of the spears and poisoned arrows might have reached out decks, it was evident that their own nest thus raised in the air, though containing 300 desperate men, was entirely at our mercy.

...The chief, who was a very old man, with about thirty followers, then came on board. He was profusely tattooed all over



the body, and, like the rest of his savages crew, was a hideous object. The lobes of his ears hung nearly to his shoulders, and in them immense rings were fixed. Round his waist he wore a girdle of rough bark which fell below his knees, and on his ankles large rings of various metals. With the exception of the waistcloth, he was perfectly naked. He knew that this old rascal and the whole tribe were pirates downright and hereditary.....

...Having dismissed our visitors, we all landed, and some of us mounting the ladders of these extraordinary houses, presented ourselves as objects of curiously to the women and children... I could stand upright in the room, and looking down at the scene below, might have fancied myself seated on the topmast cross-trees. Having traversed every part of the long gallery thus level with the summits of the trees, and distributed the few gifts we had to bestow on the women and children, we turned our backs on the pendant human skulls, and retracing our steps to terra firma; immediately proceeded to the Phlegethon...

The "wild Dayaks" described by Captain Rodney Mundy in his Journals for 1846 (1848: 121-126) were the Kanowits, though there were other tribes of people living in the area as well. The Kanowits are of Melanau stock, both culturally (with perhaps some Kajang influences) and linguistically. Tuton Kaboy (1965: 207), a Kanowit, refers to them as the "Melanau of Kanowit;" Alfred Hudson (personal communication) has tentatively classified their language as related to that of the peoples of Oya, Matu, and Mukah in the lower Rejang delta. The Kanowits of 1846 lived on the northern bank of the Rejang, opposite the nanga and the present town, near the site of what is now the Kanowit Government Secondary School. They had social rankings - aristocrats, middle class, and slaves. Their art work, especially basketry, is still well known, and provides a source of income for them in the Kanowit Bazaar of 1970. Their forty foot high longhouses of Captain Mundy's report are now gone, and only early engravings of them

remain. They were remarkable, as the average Iban or Kayan longhouse today if elevated less than half as high off the ground.

The government of Rajah Brooke built a fort at Nanga Kanowit in 1851 - Fort Emma, named for the sister of Rajah James who was the mother of Rajah Charles. When Charles, then Tuan Muda of Sarawak, visited Kanowit in 1859, he described it as follows (Brooke 1866: 326-27):

> ....In two days we reached Kanowit, and there the eye was relieved by rising grounds, with cultivation of padi and fruit-trees. The village and place which was called a Fort was a picturesque piece of irregularity and dilapidation. Some few Chinese traders had ventured to settle, but they were to all appearance a mob of rapscallions. The Kanowit village was situated on the opposite side to the fort, and the river here was 800 yards wide. An Englishman had been in charge of this isolated locality for the last eight years, and was now so accustomed to the life, languages, and people, that he told me he should be sorry to exchange it for any other. For months together no strange boat made its appearance, in fact, could not do so, as the freshes ran too strongly down in the rainy season. Sarawak even was a distant and highly civilized point to the Kanowit inhabitants, who for three or four months every year were wholly dependant on their own resources. The Kanowit stream lay on the left bank, and ran up into the interior in the direction of Sadok and head of Batang Lupar. This stream is inhabited by sea Dayaks, who had for the last fifteen or twenty years been migrating from the Saribus and Sakarang districts for the purpose of obtaining new farming grounds. These exoduses took place overland between one river and another. Such parties would do their four or five days' march, then build their houses, and proceed to farm one or two years, after which they would recommence their march, and so on, until they arrived at their final destination.

A few days after the visit of Charles Brooke, before he had even left the Rejang basin, the two British officers, who had been



so contented with their life at the fort, were killed by some local tribesmen, the famous Murder of Fox and Steele. (See Kaboy 1965, Pringle 1965, Baring-Gould and Bamfylde 1909 for details.) By the time of this murder, June 25, 1859, other ethnic groups - Chinese, Malays, and Ibans - had already begun to arrive in Kanowit.

## THE CHINESE

There is evidence that the Chinese began contact with the island of Borneo as early as the Han Dynasty (206 BC - 220AD) (Cheng 1969: 1). In 631 AD, missions from Po-ni, as the Chinese texts refer to Borneo, arrived in the court of the T'ang Emperor at Ch'ang-an to pay tribute. Chinese maritime trade with the islands of the south seas flourished in the T'ang (618-907) and Sung (960-1279) periods, and porcelain fragments of those periods have been excavated in Sarawak. The great explorer of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), Cheng Ho, a Chinese Moslem, led a number of expeditions into southern waters. There is no evidence that Cheng Ho himself ever visited Borneo, but Chinese sources report that the ships of his fleet, especially during the Second Expedition, 1407-1409, visited Po-ni, Su Ching-Jen (1967: 206) translates a passage from the Ming-shih texts that describes the visit of King Ma-na-jo-chia-na (Maradja Kala) of Po-ni to the Ming capital, where he was received by the Emperor. This king, probably of the royal court of Brunei, as it is from that name that Po-ni, and Borneo, derive, paid tribute to the Emperor, saying "Your Majesty has received the heavenly mandate to unify all countries. Though living in a far away island I have enjoyed your Imperial favour and the investiture of a title of nobility... I came here with my family and ministers to return my gratitude." The king died in China and was given a royal burial. His son, Hsia-wan, was invested as his successor by the Emperor.

The port town of Santubong, in the delta of the Sarawak River below Kuching, has been extensively excavated by the Sarawak Museum. This Chinese trading port, specializing in iron working, metals, and ores, was an active port and regular Chinese trading center from the 7th to the 9th Centuries. (For details see Cheng 1969, Harrisson and O'Connor 1969, and Zainie and Harrisson 1967.) Though there was probably no permanent Chinese settlement at Santubong, perhaps there was in Sabah, on the Kinabatangan River, for a Chinese noblewoman from there is reported to have married the second Sultan of Brunei in the mid-15th Century (T'ien 1953; Appendix 1:5).

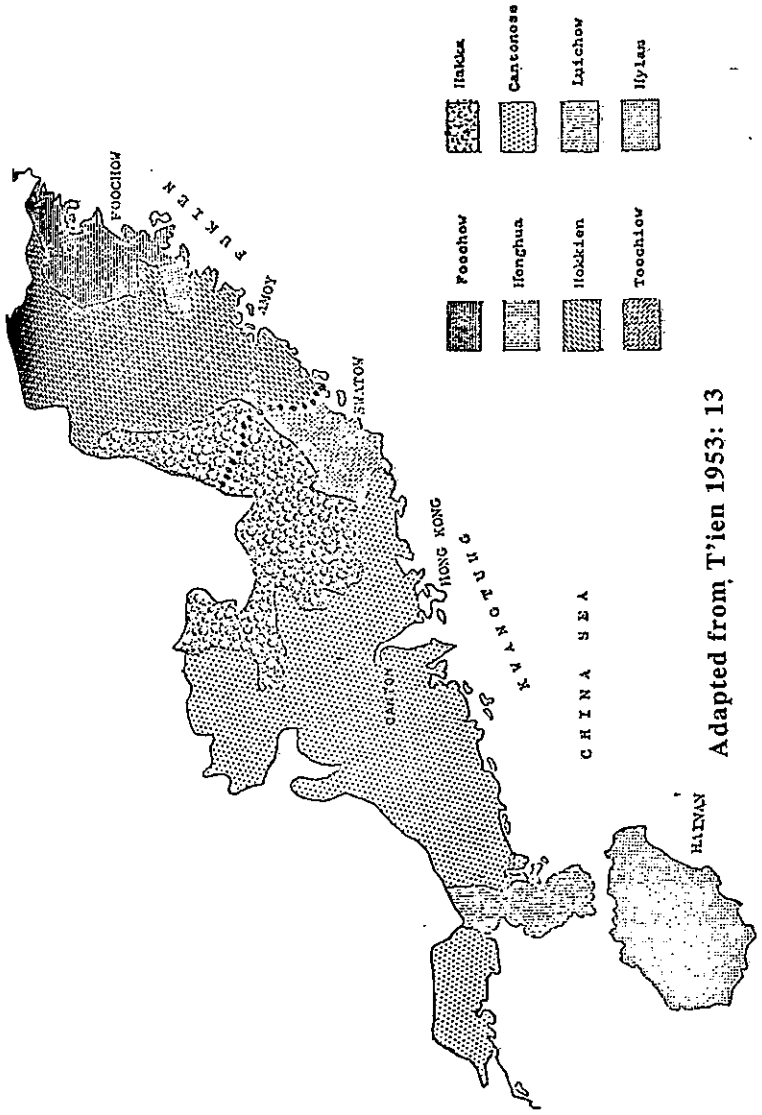
Unquestionable permanent Chinese settlement in Borneo begins with the Chinese gold miners in Indonesian West Borneo (Kalimantan Barat), in the regions near Sambas, Montrado, and Pontianak, in the mid-18th Century. Between 1790 and 1820 the influx became so great as to amount to a "gold rush," and by 1810 the Chinese population of that region was probably in excess of 40,000 (Jackson 1970: 24). These Chinese mining settlements are a fascinating chapter in Borneo history themselves, for the Dutch colonial government allowed the Chinese to establish a number of self-governing kongsi, corporate communities, which organized themselves into federations with ruling councils, elected leaders, and a republican style of government. (Details of these independent settlements can be found in Mundy 1848, Ward 1954, Lo 1960, and Jackson 1970.) It is from these kongsi that the first Chinese in large numbers, mainly Hakka gold miners, came to Sarawak in the early 19th Century. The revolt of these gold miners from Bau (First Division) against the government of Rajah Brooke in 1857 - they attempted to overthrow him and establish their own kongsi-type government - is well recorded in all Sarawak histories. While it made the Brooke government cautious of the Chinese, it did not stop their immigration, which increased in growing amounts during the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. The need for skilled and/or



dependable labor in Sarawak encouraged such immigration. Most immigrants planned to return to China after making their fortunes. Some did; some died; many stayed to become the ancestors of the present Chinese people of Sarawak.

The Hakka originally came to Borneo from the interior regions of southern Fukien and northern Kwangtung Provinces (Map 3). In those provinces, and in Sarawak today, they are often called the "Kheh" (Mandarin K'o$^4$: guest), the "guest people," in reference to their migrations from northern China to the south in the 13th Century. The southern lands were already settled by Chinese, and the newly-arrived "guests" settled in the rocky and barren hills, scraping out their living from the earth the other dialect groups had rejected. Thus, they are highly skilled "plain dirt" farmers, who manage somehow to subsist on the most impoverished soil. Their newcomer status, and the fact that they did not bind the feet of their women, remained a stigma to them in old China. While the term Kheh remains to them in Sarawak today, and also their skill at farming, the stigma does not. They are the largest dialect group in Sarawak - 30.6% of the Chinese population in 1960 - but are concentrated mainly in the First Division. Few have migrated into the central Rejang Basin, or to Kanowit.

While the First Division, "Sarawak proper," was settled by Chinese from Kalimantan Barat (and later from China directly), the Third Division, the Rejang River, had its ties directly to the outer world. Ships from Singapore sailed directly to the Rejang, and their destination, in the late 19th Century, was Kanowit. Sibu was then not more than a Malay kampong; Kanowit had the only government fort, and protection of the Raj, on the lower Rejang. The Chinese merchants followed closely in the wake of the Brooke government, and began to build their shops and homes in the protective shadow of Fort Emma. These traders, the "rapscallions" of Charles Brooke's account, were Hokkien speakers. They first




**MAP 3**
**SOUTH CHINA PROVINCES: KWANGTUNG AND FUKIEN**
Showing approximate regions of origin of dialect groups

Adapted from T'ien 1953: 13



came from Singapore, a city still dominated by this dialect group. Others later came from Fukien Province itself, especially from the district (hsien[4]) near Amoy. Many Kanowit Hokkien originated in the hsien[4] of Haiteng, Anki, and Shenhu. Changchou, Paishuiying, Anhai, and T'ungan, all in the basin of the Kiulung River, are frequently mentioned. They came as traders and merchants, occupations they still engage in. Outram (1959: 119) reports:

> The Rejang River, however, owes nothing to Kuching. It must have been in the 1870's that Hokkien merchants from Singapore first penetrated the Rejang. At that time, the port to which they sailed was not Sibu, Sarikei, or Binatang, but Kanowit, and as the present Kapitan China of Sibu, Mr. Teo Cheong Loh, will tell you, when he first came over to Sarawak with his aunt from Singapore in 1892 at the age of fifteen, the only place in the Rejang of which he had heard was Kanowit. At that time trade was largely on a barter system, a trader from Singapore bringing over cloth, jars, salt, and other necessities of life and, in exchange, returning with rottan, the hides of wild cattle, gutta percha, camphor, rhinoceros horns, monkeys' gall-stones for Chinese medicine and other jungle produce.

The traders stayed in Kanowit, and their descendants are now the largest single ethnic group in the town.

The Cantonese, from the cities of Canton, Macao, and Hong Kong, and the rural hsien[4] near them, especially Hwei-chou and Chaoching, came to the Rejang in the 1880's. There they engaged in the export of timber, especially belian, the Borneo ironwood. Their settlement in and around Kanowit dates to the early 20th Century. They are the second largest dialect group in Kanowit Bazaar - 21.4% of the Chinese - and are even more numerous in the surrounding pepper gardens and smallholdings.

The history of the arrival of the Foochow Chinese to the Rejang River is worthy of a lengthy account in its own right. Brief accounts have already been written of it and its hero, Wong Nai

Siong, by Chiang (1955) and Cooper (1968). It deserves more detailed treatment, for it is a perfect example of the incredible cultural complexities that have combined to produce the multiethnic people of Sarawak today. Briefly, their story is this:

Wong Nai Siong was born to a poor farming family at Mintsing, Foochow district, in 1849. He received no education until he was seventeen, when he met an American Methodist missionary who supported his instruction. He learned to translate the Bible, hymns, and Methodist tracts from English into the Foochow dialect. He then began a classical Chinese education and achieved an Imperial degree. His conversion to Christianity led to persecution during the Boxer (Anti-western) movement in the 1890's, and he fled to Singapore, where he learned of the desire of Rajah Charles Brooke for Chinese laborers to immigrate to Sarawak.

With the aid of Ong Tiang Swee, the leading Chinese citizen of Kuching, Wong negotiated a Thirty-One Article Agreement with the Rajah to settle Foochow people in the Rajang basin, receiving a loan of $30,000 to finance the project. The loan was to be repaid within five years, and Wong decided to tax the new settlers two-thirds of their annual produce to finance it. (The loan was never repaid.) Seventy-two Foochow arrived in late 1900, and were settled in a new community - six huts - at Sungai Merah, a few miles from Sibu. Five hundred more arrived a short time later, and more in 1901 and 1902. Life was a struggle for the immigrants; poor harvests and the new climate, combined with the very heavy tax, made things difficult. However, the Foochow built their schools, churches, and farms, eventually spreading throughout the whole lower Rejang, those from Mintsing on one bank and those from neighboring Kutien on the other. They settled in Binatang in 1908 and Sarikei in 1910, two towns where they now dominate, and came to Kanowit in 1910 also, where they are the third largest Chinese group.



In 1906, Wong Nai Siong returned to China; he died in Mintsing in 1924. When he left Sarawak he handed over his functions as Kang Choo - leader of the Foochow people - not to another Foochow but to an American, the Reverend James Hoover of Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, a Methodist missionary. "Tuan" Hoover led the Foochow people until his death from malaria in Kuching in 1935. Today in Kanowit, Foochow Chinese, non-Christian as well as Methodists, revere his memory, and speak of him, telling anecdotes and memories, as if he had only left them yesterday.

Unlike other Chinese dialect groups, there are no major Foochow settlements anywhere else in the world outside of China except in the lower Rejang valley. Sungai Merah remains as one of the most conservative, and most Methodist, communities in Sarawak, and in the lower Rejang one can walk along Wong Nai Siong Road, eat at the Hoover Restaurant, or stay at the Hoover Hotel.

**TABLE 8**

**KANOWIT CHINESE BORN OUTSIDE OF MALAYSIA**

**As stated in the 1970 Census**

| DIALECT GROUP | MALES | FEMALES | TOTAL | % OF TOTAL DIALECT GROUP |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hokkien | 19 | 16 | 35 | 5.7% |
| Cantonese | 11 | 10 | 21 | 8.0% |
| Foochow | 14 | 10 | 24 | 9.5% |
| Hakka | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3.8% |
| Hylam | 3 | 1 | 4 | 10.5% |
| Henghua | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Teochiew | 1 | 0 | 1 | 100.0% |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 50 | 38 | 88 | |

Total Chinese Population - 1,250
Total Percent Born Outside Malaysia - 7%

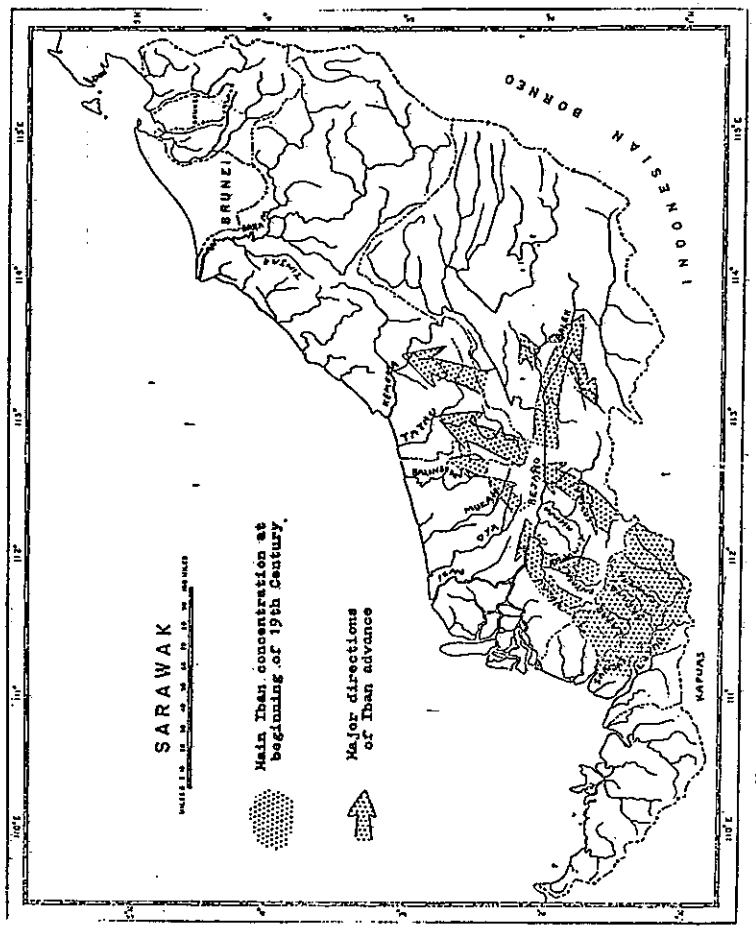
## TABLE 9
### KANOWIT CHINESE BORN OUTSIDE OF MALAYSIA AGE STURCTURE

| DIALECT GROUP | 20's | 30's | 40's | 50's | 60's | 70's | 80's | 90's | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hokkien | 1 | 3 | 6 | 10 | 9 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 35 |
| Cantonese | | 1 | 1 | 7 | 8 | 3 | 1 | | 21 |
| Foochow | | 3 | 4 | 9 | 7 | 1 | | | 24 |
| Hakka | | | | 1 | 2 | | | | 3 |
| Hylam | | | 1 | 1 | 2 | | | | 4 |
| Teochiew | | | | | 1 | | | | 1 |
| | 1 | 7 | 12 | 28 | 29 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 88 |

The days of large-scale Chinese immigration into Sarawak are over; an overwhelming majority of the Chinese are now locally-born. G. William Skinner, in his studies of the Chinese in Thailand (1957: 382), has stated that the ratio of China-born is a major factor in the rate and success of their assimilation. In Kanowit in 1970, 93% of the Chinese residents are Malaysian-born, and many can trace their families in Sarawak, and in Kanowit itself, for three, four, or more generations. (Table 8) Of those born in China, only 7% of the total, more than two-thirds - 68 out of 88 - are over fifty years of age. While the memory of China remains alive, and some people return there to visit their relatives, none openly expresses the desire to resettle there permanently. For most, it is a foreign country that they have never seen and probably never will see.



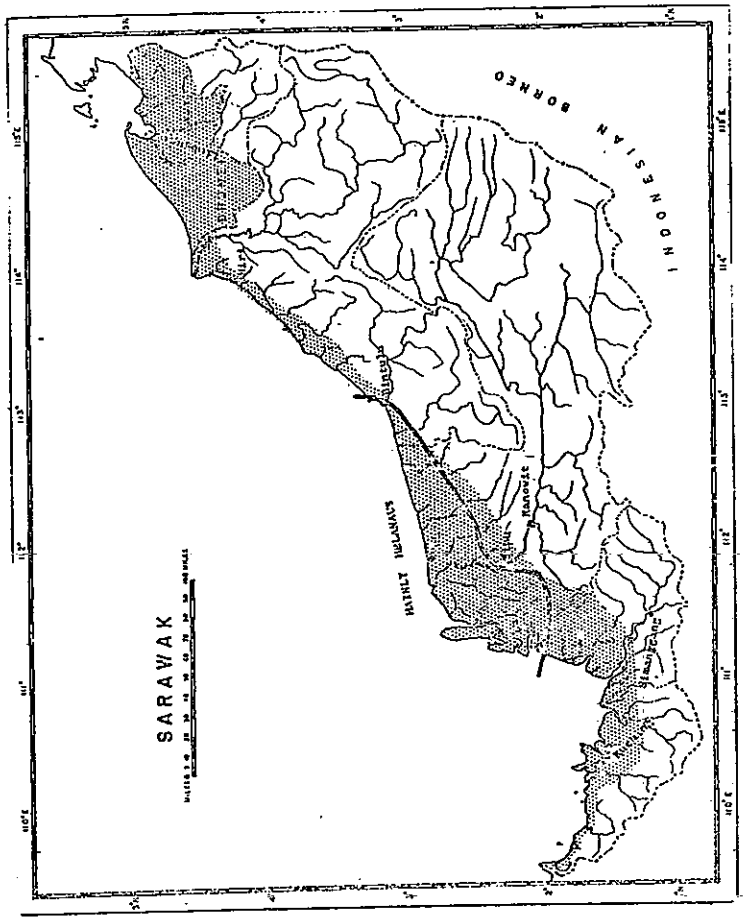
MAP 4
RECENT MIGRATIONS OF THE IBAN SINCE 1841




Base map source: Borneo Literature Bureau 1962
Data Source: Jackson 1968: 46

MAP 5

DISTRIBUTION OF MALAYS AND MALANAUS, 1970




Base map source: Borneo Literature Bureau 1962
Data Source: Lee 1970: 63



## THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The movements of the Iban people from their original homelands in the Kapuas River region of Kalimantan into the Second Division of Sarawak, and from there up the Lemanak, Skrang, and Layar rivers, over the watershed, and into the tributaries of the Rejang, has been well documented in the past, especially by Sandin (1968) and Pringle (1967). Some migrated looking for virgin lands to use for their slash and burn agriculture. Others moved to escape the power of the Brooke Raj, which forcibly prevented their raiding, piracy, and headhunting. Their entrance into the Kanowit district only briefly proceeded the arrival of the Europeans and the building of the fort. Many of the Kanowit Iban display the distinctions of a Lemanak River origin, but Father Bruggeman of the Roman Catholic Mission, Kanowit, an outstanding authority on local Iban culture and language, gained from living among them for thirty-five years, reports that other Second Division areas are represented as well. Map 4 displays the general movement of the Iban people into the Third Division in the mid-19th Century. The Iban and other native groups spawned a large number of trouble-makers for the Brooke government in the latter half of the 19th Century; Peter Stevens, in his History of Kanowit District (1970: 39), lists twenty-four separate government expeditions into Kanowit water between 1849 and 1906 to pacify the country.

A full description of Iban culture is not necessary here; there are many excellent sources on them, and Freeman's Iban Agriculture (1955) remains the standard classic. Although the Iban were the largest bangsa in Sarawak in the 1960 Census (31.9%), they form only 6.5% of the population of Kanowit Bazaar. Outside the town, away from the banks of the Rejang, however, it is completely Iban territory. Their influence upon Kanowit is enormous; their trade in its bazaar is its lifesblood. Kanowit Bazaar is oriented toward

the Iban, and lives in a symbiotic relationship with them. These influences and relationship will be discussed as they arise in particular situations in later chapters.

The largest group of indigenous people in Kanowit Bazaar are the Malays. The Malays of Sarawak are not, however, immigrants from Malaya. They are, for the most part, locally derived peoples who have, over the centuries, adopted a language and culture that was first introduced along the Borneo coasts centuries ago. This language is Malay, and though it has many local usages, it is distinctively different from other indigenous languages in Sarawak. The culture is dominated by its religion, and this religion is Islam, and despite all advice to the contrary. It is Islam that identifies a Malay to his fellow Sarawakians of all ethnic groups. The terms "Malay" and "Moslem" are, in Sarawak, virtually synonymous.

Harrisson, in his major work of the Sarawak Malays, states (1970: 159):

> We are faced, then, with something of a paradox. A people, everywhere recognized as a distinct racial group, who have in our setting no origin as such, and a very large part of whom appeared as Malays only in comparatively recent times, as the result of proselytisation and (more usually) drift from other groups - towards the coast, a coastal code, vacant land, a "positive belief and many other advantages. There was no bulk migration of Malay peoples form elsewhere. A small minority including original leaders came and continue to come in (e.g. the individual Trengganu Malays settled in the delta in this century). Yet this largely derived, polyglot and emergent group has distinctive features.

For our purposes here, Jackson's (1968: 47) summation of the identification problem will suffice; "Essentially, in the Borneo territories Malay is one who regards himself as such and is so regarded by his fellow-men."



The Malays have lived in Kanowit Bazaar as long as the Chinese, for them, too, were traders, plying their boats on these rivers under the protection of the Raj. They have been superceded in this occupation by the Chinese, however, and are now mostly employed, in Kanowit, in agriculture, fishing, and government service. They, alone, of all the peoples in Kanowit, retain a distinctive style of housing, preferring to live together in their tree-shaded kampongs; The maps of residential housing patterns by race in Kanowit (Maps 6 a-e) show the Malays to be the most segregated of all the groups. Since the maps are based on the race of the head-of-household, however, they do not demonstrate one pervasive feature of the Malay life, their love of and desire for children, which leads them to adopt, and raise as their own, any child of any race who needs a home. The kampong may be Malay, but the Malays of Kanowit include such names as Abdul Chen and Aminah Lim.

## OTHER BANGSA-

Several other ethnic groups appear in Kanowit in small numbers. There are Melanaus, both Moslem and non-Moslem, in government services; the District Officer in 1970 is one example. Some Land Dayaks from the First Division serve in the police, a Murut from the Fifth Division was a popular government officer, and there is one family of Sikhs, also with the District Office. Small in numbers but influential in effect is the European community. Six Europeans are clergy of the Roman Catholic Church. The four nuns who administer, among other duties, the hospital and its clinic for children are comfort to mothers of all races in Kanowit; the two priests, members of the Mill Hill mission society, are popular and familiar faces in all activities from the most important civic councils to the most casual entertainments.

The direct western influence of the British expatriate civil

servants is gone from Kanowit; its government, civil service, and staff are all Sarawak-born. The missionaries remain, though only one of them is British. The American Peace Corps has had volunteers in Kanowit in varying numbers since their first group arrived in 1962, but in 1970 the last remaining volunteer left the town. Three Peace Corps and one Canadian volunteer were teaching at the Kanowit Government Secondary School, across the Rejang from the town, in 1970, but their contact with and influence on the bazaar is primarily through its children in their classes. European people never formed more than a fraction of one percent of the town's population, and even those numbers are steadily declining. But western concepts, western ideas, flourish, transmitted from, through, and toward the people of Sarawak, one to another, as a leaven in the fermentation of a new Sarawak culture.



## Maps 6 a-e
### RACIAL PATTERNS IN RESIDENCE IN KANOWIT BAZAAR AUGUST, 1970

CODES:
Racial (bangsa) types:

| Chinese: | Non-Chinese: |
|---|---|
| HOK = Hokkien | MAL = Malay |
| CAN = Cantonese | IBAN = Iban (Sea Dayak) |
| FOO = Foochow | MEL = Melanau |
| HAK = Hakka | LD = Land Dayak |
| HYL = Hylam | SIKH = Sikh (Indian) |
| HENG = Henghua | EUR = European & American |
| TEO = Teochiew | E-A = Eurasian |

A blank rectangle represents an empty building
terms written in ("Chinese") represent households outside of the Kanowit Bazaar Census Area
households within a building are ordered as in the 1970 Census returns

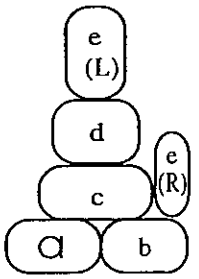
Housing types:

= shophouse building

= other building = Government-owned building

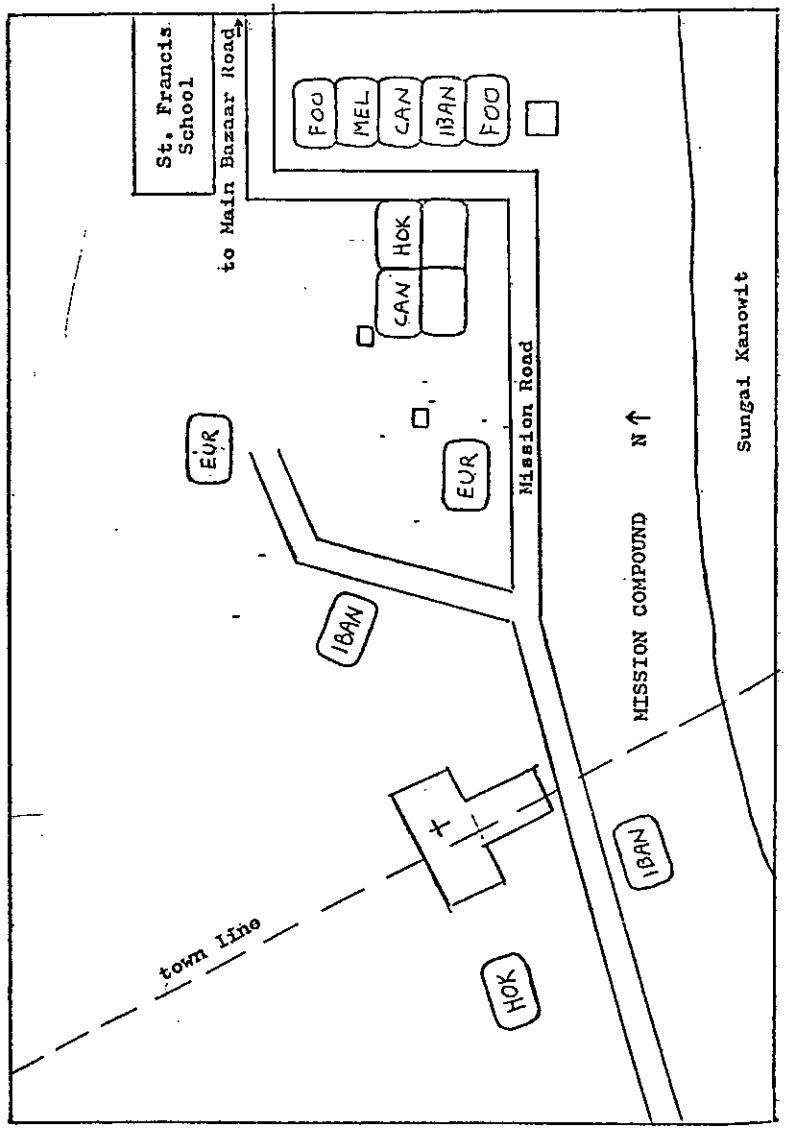
= households within building

COORDINATION OF MAPS:



MAP 6a

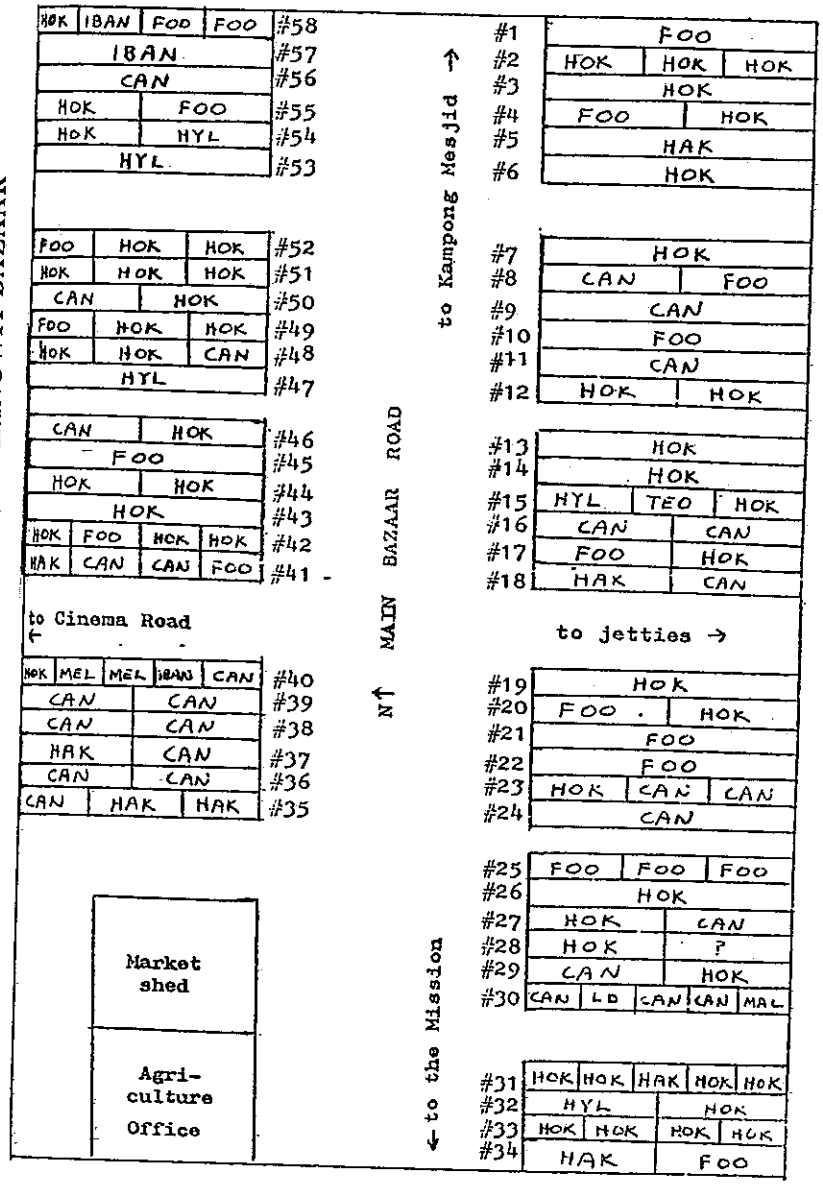
RACIAL PATTERNS OF RESIDENCE IN KANOWIT BAZAAR





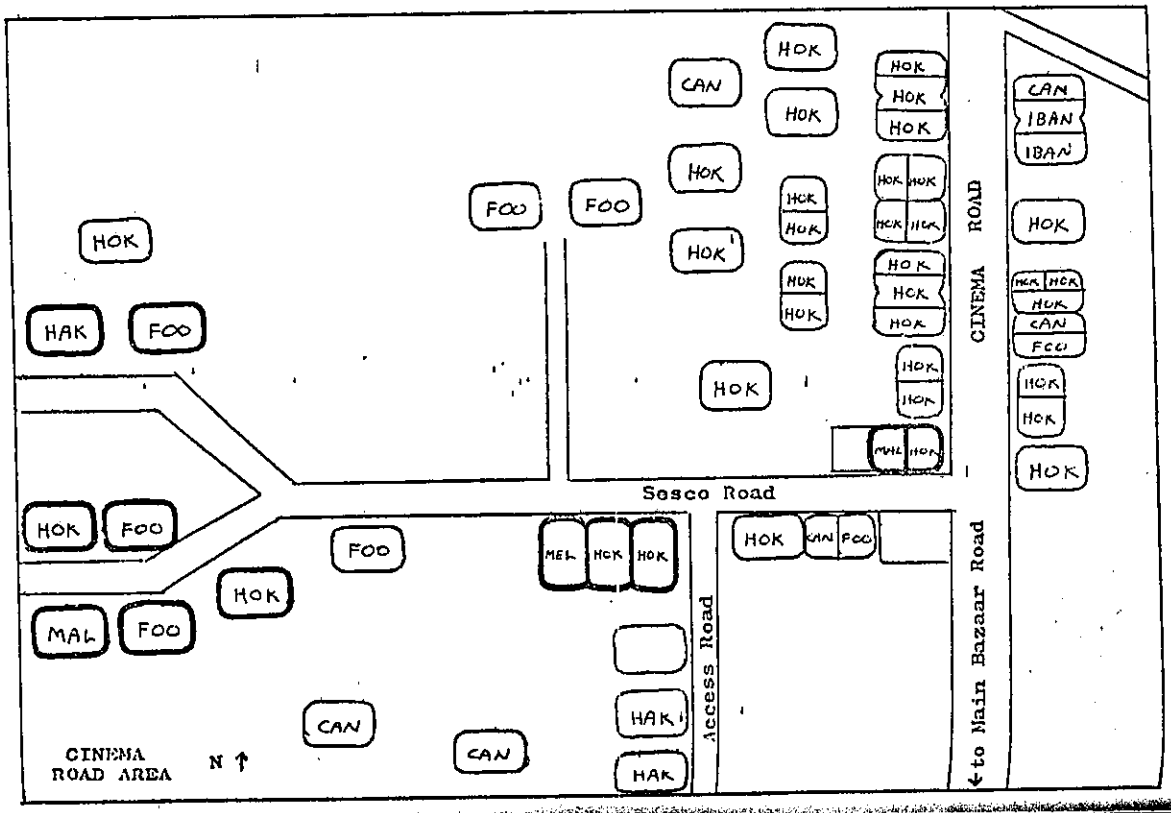

MAP 6b

RACIAL PATTERNS OF RESIDENCE IN KANOWIT BAZAAR



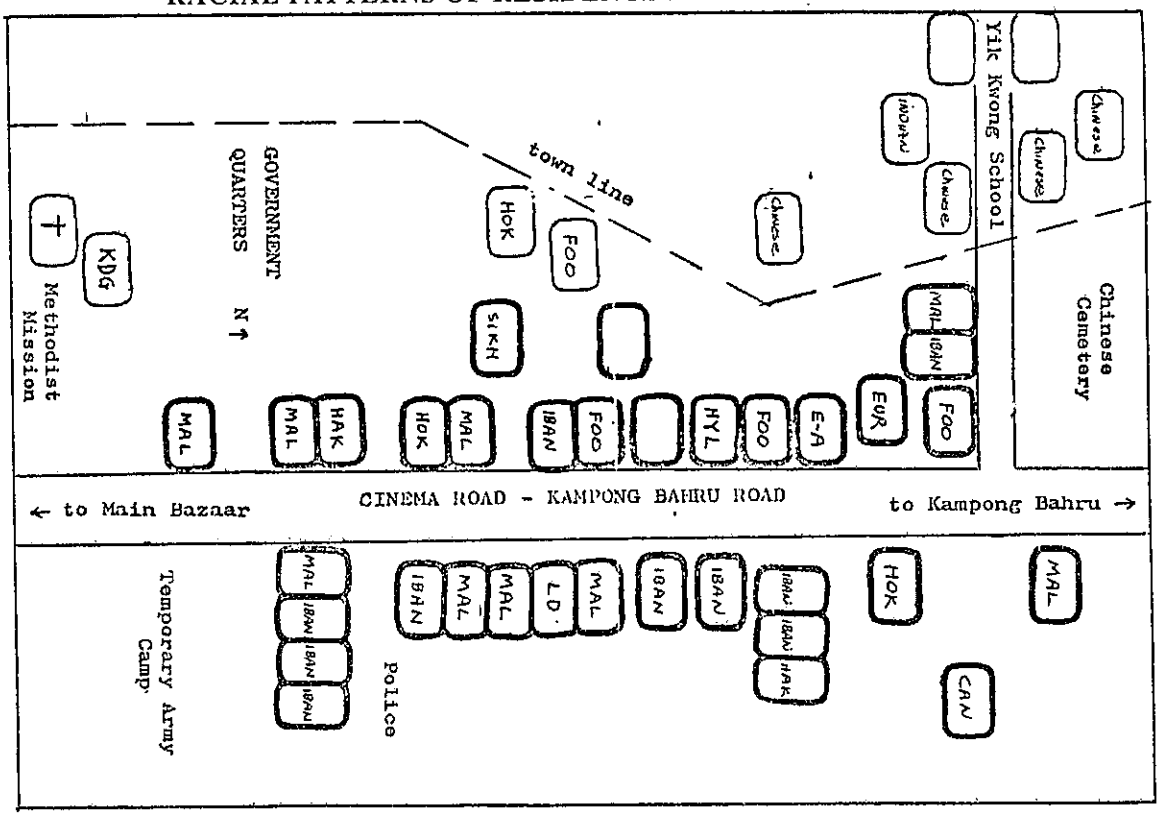
## MAP 6c

### RACIAL PATTERNS OF RESIDENCE IN KANOWIT BAZAAR



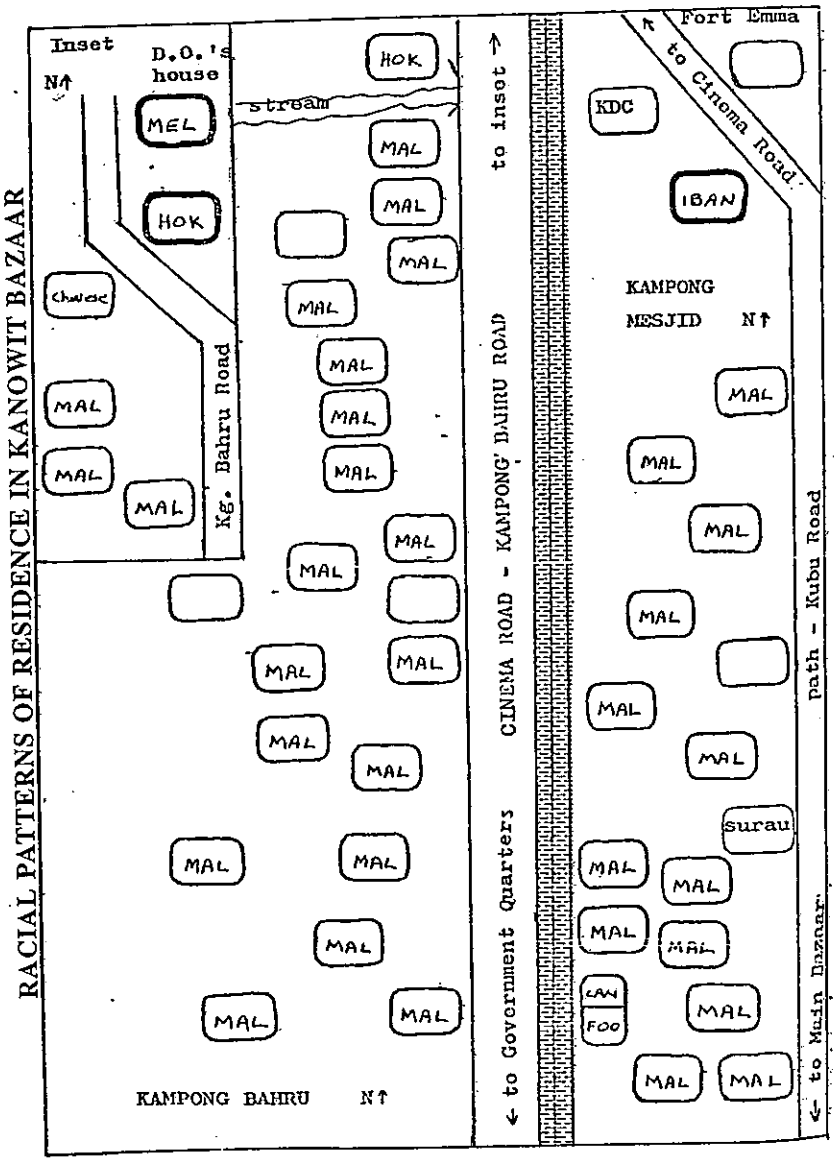

## MAP 6d

### RACIAL PATTERNS OF RESIDENCE IN KANOWIT BAZAAR



MAP 6e

RACIAL PATTERNS OF RESIDENCE IN KANOWIT BAZAAR






# CHAPTER 3: ECONOMICS

Kanowit is a bazaar town. A bazaar is ā market, a center for the exchange of goods. It is this exchange of goods - not their production, processing, or manufacture - that gives life to Kanowit; it is the reduction in this exchange that is leading to the town's decline.

It was Kanowit's commanding position on the Rejang River that led to its establishment and growth. Even before the Third Division became a part of their realm, the Brooke Government recognized that control of the land required control of the rivers, and Kanowit's location was central a to the whole lower Rejang valley. It was chosen as the site for their first fort in this frontier territory - a watchful eye on the four directions from which threats to its security were most likely to arise.

Foremost among these was to the south, toward Sarawak itself. The Brooke Raj had been founded, ten years before Fort Emma, on the surpression of piracy - piracy on the land and rivers as well as on the open seas. Raja James' victory over the sea pirates at Murudu Bay in Sabah in 1845 did not put an end to their threats; Illanuns, Bajaus, and other of the "Sea Gypsies" continued to endanger these waters well into the 20th Century. The Murudu Bay battle did, however, remove the Rajah's greatest security concern, and allowed him to transfer his attentions to the safety of his land base. The local natives of the area, especially the Iban, were long accustomed to raiding and marauding, for adventure and headhunting as well as for the plunder of goods and lands. The war canoes of the Iban allowed them to descend the rivers to raid the coastal villages along the South China Sea (thus their English name, Sea Dayaks), then to retreat up the streams to the security of their dense jungles and mountain strongholds. The Brooke government pursued them into their homelands on the Lupar,

Saribas, Layar, Skrang, and Ai rivers, acquiring the Second Division from Brunei in 1853 to place these lands in firm hand. The Iban retreated (and their search for new agricultural lands led them) into the headwaters of these rivers, then over the watershed into the tributaries of the Rejang. From these strongholds, beyond the immediate reach of the British overlords, they could continue their raiding and piracy upon Sarawak lands. A fort at Kanowit on the Rejang cut off their retreat, placing the guns of the Raj at their backs. The control of piracy attacks on "Sarawak Proper" was the prime reasons for the establishment of Kanowit (Runciman 1960: 107-113).

From Fort Emma the Rajah could also keep watch on two other trouble spots. Downstream, in the delta, were a number of local pirates, political activists, and general troublemakers. Chief among them was Sherip Masahor, a Malay patriot. Based at Sarikei, he is usually credited with instigating the Murder of Fox and Steele at Kanowit in 1859 (Kaboy 1965: Pringle 1965). Upstream from Kanowit, the Iban immigrants were gradually pushing the Kayan and Kajang further up into the headwaters of the Rejang. That area, too, had to be watched, and river traffic from it into the lower reaches of the valley and to be controlled. The least danger to Sarawak lay to the north, in the lands of Brunei. But when the Brookes acquired the northern tributaries of the Rejang in the Cession of 1861, and when the Iban began to migrate to them about the same time, the fort at Kanowit became a strategic outpost guarding the river in all directions, enforcing a Pax Britannica on the Rejang.

There is no evidence of any permanently-settled trading community in the middle Rejang prior to the establishment of Fort Emma. Outside traders did visit the area, however; both Chinese and Malays sailed their ships up the Rejang in times of peace to exchange manufactured and imported goods for the jungle products gathered by the native peoples of the interior. The protection of



the fort allowed the establishment of a permanent bazaar. The temporary shelters and warehouses of the river traders became permanent shophouses. The influx of Chinese merchants, mainly Hokkien, overwhelmed the activities of the coastal Malays, and by the 1880's the nucleus of the present bazaar community was established; some Kanowit residents, both Chinese and Malay, can trace their descent back to these original founders. The fort occupied a low rise north of the nanga - the site now occupied by the District Office. South of it, along the river bank, in a grove of trees, a Malay kampong developed, and below it, on the curving bank where the Kanowit flows into the Rejang, the wooden shops of the Chinese merchants were built. The unique longhouses of the Kanowits on the other side of the Rejang vanished, and the banks of the river were settled by Chinese and native farmers. Ibans from the tributaries brought their goods into the town and returned to their interior longhouses to farm, hunt, and gather wild jungle crops, for it was these tropical products - rottan, gutta percha, camphor, skins and hides, dammar, illipe nuts - that formed the staples of trade in early Kanowit. In the early years of the 20 Century two crops were introduced into the Rejang valley that were to change the economic structure of Kanowit Bazaar - rubber and pepper.

The commercial planting of rubber began in Sarawak in 1905, and the first crop was exported in 1910. The Brooke Government did not favor the establishment of large commercial estates (only four existed in 1968), as it was their policy to "discourage any large-scale capitalist development that might dislocate the lives of the indigenous peoples (Jackson 1968: 89)." The strict land ownership laws, which reserved more than 90% of the land for indigenous peoples (or state ownership) enforced this decision, and the plantation system did not develop in Sarawak as it did in Malaya. Smallholders were encouraged by these laws - Malays and natives on lands held under traditional rights, Chinese on the

Mixed Zone Lands established along the major rivers and roads. The First World War boosted rubber planting among smallholders, with average fields of 100 to 300 acres. In the 1910's and 20's, the Foochow of Sibu began planting rubber, and from there it spread up and down the banks of the Rejang. Alternating periods of boom and depression in the market caused a varied growth pattern for rubber, but by the time of the Second World War it was being cultivated by smallholders of all races. Six large and thirty-eight medium estates occupied only 18,008 of the 239,557 acres of rubber fields in 1941. The remaining 221,549 acres were divided into 97,000 separate smallholdings. 51% of the acreage of these smallholdings was held by indigenous peoples, and their fields averaged less than 1½ acres each; the other 49% belonged to Chinese farmers, in plots averaging 6 acres each (Jackson 1968: 91). Rubber had spread beyond the Chinese of the river banks, into the tributary streams and hills, around the long-houses and rice fields of the Ibans of Kanowit District. Rubber production recovered quickly from the stagnation of the Japanese Occupation, and the Korean War brought a boom in prices. The end of that war, and the increasing availability and competitive position of synthetics, led to a constant decline in rubber prices. In 1964 rubber was surpassed as Sarawak's chief export for the first time in thirty years' the value of rubber exports for the state declined from $122. 44 million in 1960 to only $32.36 million in 1967 (Statistical Handbook of Sarawak, 1967: 65). Timber, the new export leader, brought some new business to Kanowit, but rubber remains one of the town's chief exports.

Production figures for an individual smallholding are so variable that no meaningful averages can be drawn. The age of the rubber trees, their species, past and present care and nurturing of the plants, techniques of tapping, and input of labor all affect production. Perhaps the greatest influence on the output of latex is the desire of the smallholder to produce; fields that have been



carefully maintained, using the latest techniques, fertilizers, and species, still produce well; fields treated as a "sometime" crop, tapped only when the market-price is high, and then forced into the greatest short term yield, do not produce well, It is impossible to determine how much of the rubber that passes through Kanowit Bazaar is the sole source of livelihood for the producer, or the location of those fields. Most of the dealings are as secondary crops; the producers support themselves by growing rice, other cash crops, or by wage labor, tapping their few trees, when it is worth-while, to supplement their income. There are also a number of absentee smallholders who reside in the towns and hire a laborer to tap their trees and prepare the latex for sale.

Rubber can be grown from seedlings, but it is more common to plant clones or the dried stumps of year-old saplings; the new high yield species have always been distributed in this manner. Since a rubber tree must be at least five years old before it can first be tapped, there is a long delay between the initial capital investment and the first profit taking. Government planting schemes have attempted to use the income from the sale of the timber cut from the fields before planting to support the planter during this period, though rice subsidies have often been necessary. For the private smallholder, this economic delay in production can be a serious deterrent to either original planting or to the improvement of old stock by replanting with high yield species.

The frequency of tapping also depends on the age and species of the tree: young, new breeds can be tapped daily; older varieties every second or third day, or even less frequently. Yield also varies greatly. Tapping is done in the early morning, as the sap runs more quickly in the cooler hours. A diagonal cut is made in the bark of the tree, from upper right to lower left, perpendicular to the veins of the tree, which spiral upwards in a clock-wise direction. Only a thin strip of bark is removed - an expert taper removes less than one inch of bark per month - enough to expose the cut ends of the

veins so the sap flows out of the tree and down the diagonal cut into a small cup hung on the tree. Several hours after tapping, the flow stops. The laborer then returns to the trees, pours the latex from the cups into a bucket, and returns with it to his processing shed. There he coagulates the latex with a weak acid, presses the mass into a ribbed sheet with a mangle, and dries the sheet, either in the sun or with smoke. The sheets are collected into bundles and transported to the bazaar. Bundles of one picul are the standard, but some smallholders produce and sell only a few sheets at a time. The price per picul varies with the world market, distance from transport and wholesale merchants, and the quality of the rubber. Average prices for top grade rubber in Kuching in March, 1971, were $48.50 per picul (about 12¢ U.S. per pound). Prices in Kanowit, farther from the market, were several dollars lower, and much of the rubber was not of R.S.S. 1 grade. Prices in Kanowit in 1971 were often as low as $32 per picul.

Pepper is a labor-intensive crop. It requires constant care and nurturing - weeding, pruning, training of vines, fertilizing, and picking of the berries; all must be done by hand. Large outlays of capital expenditures are necessary, the plant is very sensitive and subject to a number of diseases, and the world market price for pepper fluctuates wildly. Pepper planting is a very risky investment, and production is always speculative. Profits, however, can be high if everything goes well.

Pepper, as produced in Sarawak and Kanowit District, is a small holders' crop. The fields are small; the nearly 10,000 pepper holdings in 1962 averaged only three quarters of an acre each (Sarawak Annual Report, 1962: 78). The family is the labor group - only at harvest times from June to August might outside help be employed. The majority of these families are Chinese; there is little pepper production by non-Chinese in the Kanowit area. The crop is not found near the interior longhouses and rice fields as is rubber. While pepper itself may not be the family's sole means of



subsistence, it can never be a "part time" crop. Not all land will support pepper. It requires excellent drainage and will not tolerate excessive soil moisture; thus, hillsides are the most frequent locations for pepper gardens. The plant, if neglected when markets are low, cannot be revived, as rubber can, when prices rise. Pepper planting is a full time occupation and concern.

Pepper has always been a Chinese crop in Sarawak. The original pepper gardens of the First Division in the late 1800's were maintained by Hakka farmers, who still dominate the industry in that area. The Foochow of Sibu experimented with pepper in their early years, but did not produce large amounts of it there. They did, however, carry it down river to Sarikei and Binatang, where it became firmly established. Some Foochow plant pepper in the Kanowit area, but the majority of the producers in the district are Cantonese. They supplement their income by growing fruits and vegetables and raising pigs and chickens; many also have groves of rubber trees. Some crop rotation is practiced on a long-term basis, as older vines are replaced with young plants.

Pepper is a long, thin vine, lacking a rigid stem. It is trained to grow on posts, resulting in a cylindrical cluster, bush-like in appearance. The posts - belian wood is preferred for its resistance to insects and rot - are twelve feet high, and spaced in rows, with plants six to eight feet apart. The ground around the plants is kept free from all growth. The young plant must be trained to grow around these posts, and all plants must be pruned to produce the highest yield. The former fertilizers - burnt earth and the inedible residue of prawns - are now being replaced by commercial fertilizers. Pepper is highly susceptible to two dangers: foot rot (Phytophthora palmivora) attacks and destroys the fragile roots of the vine; the weevil Lophobaris piperis bores into the plants and kills them. Each plant must be tended and cared for to keep it healthy. A garden of three quarters of an acre contains approximately 700 such plants, though aerial photographs of

Kanowit show that the fields in the area are generally smaller than the average; some are small enough to occupy hillside locations within the town itself.

Pepper vines produce their first harvest at thirty months, and continue to produce usable crops for fifteen years. Harvesting is done by hand; ladders are placed near the poles and the clusters of small red berries are carefully removed from the vine. The two common varieties of pepper, black and white, are the result of different techniques of processing these red pepper-berries. Black pepper, most preferred in western Countries, is the easiest to produce. The berries are picked shortly before they are ripe. They are washed in boiling water and dried in the sun until completely desiccated and blackened, yielding the common black-peppercorns, ready for marketing. Black pepper is more tart and pungent than white, as it retains the outer skin of the berry. It sells for less than white pepper, which required more labor. To produce the white variety, the berry is allowed to ripen completely on the vine. The red shell is already loose when the berries are picked, and soaking them in water further aids in husking them. Each berry is rubbed by hand to remove the outer shell, leaving the dull white inner kernel, which is then sun dried. White pepper, more mild and subtle than the black, is preferred in Asian cooking. Its price reflects the additional labor of husking.

No data are available on average yields per acre or on income derived from pepper production in Sarawak or Kanowit. Estimates can be made, however, using published figures for total acreage, yield, and price per picul:

1) Yield. Pepper acreages on 1961, 1963, 1965, and 1967 were 4,900, 5,202, 6,194 and 8,570 acres; pepper production in Sarawak in tons for those same years was 10,953, 11,441, 17,614, and 19,501 tons (Statistical Hand-book of Sarawak, 1967: 24-25). Yields, therefore, were approximately 2.3 tons per acre. 2.3 tons = 5,400 pounds = approximately 40 piculs per acre.



2) Price. Pepper prices on the Kuching market on March 4, 1971, were: White No.1, $150.25/picul; White No. 2, $145.00/picul; Black No. 1, $126.25/picul; Black No. 2, $125.00/picul (Sarawak Tribune, March 5, 1971).

3) Value. One-half acre field, lowest grade black pepper = 20 piculs @ $125.00 = $2,500.00.

One-half acre field, highest grade white pepper = 20 piculs @ $150.25 = $3,005.00.

Three-quarter acre field, lowest grade black pepper = 30 piculs @ $125.00 = $3,750.00.

Three-quarter acre field, highest grade white pepper = 30 piculs @ $150.25 = $4,507.50.

From these figures, making allowance for the smaller fields and lower interior prices, the average annual income from pepper of a Kanowit producer, before overhead and expenses, can be estimated at from $2,000 to $4,000.

Pepper is a product where a little goes a long way. Since it is no longer used as a major means of food preservation, its only market is as a table spice. There is a limited demand, and increased production only reduces the price on the world market. But as long as disease, disaster, political events in the producing countries, and speculation in commodities continue to cause occasional high market values for the crop (memories of the $400 per picul in the mid 1950's still remain), pepper will continue to be one of the chief items of exchange in the bazaar at Kanowit.

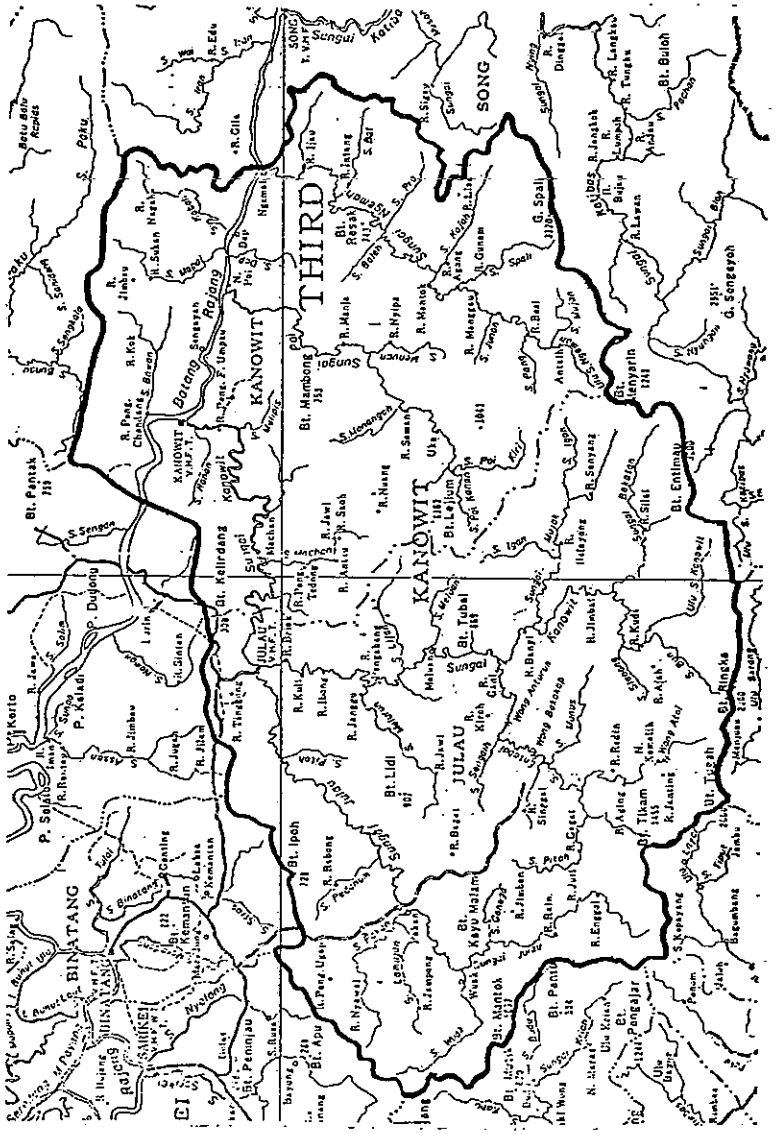
Rubber and pepper are the two main products brought into the markets of Kanowit Bazaar from the rural areas of the district. There they are sold for cash or credit, which is used in turn to purchase imported, manufactured, and processed goods that are taken back to the rural homes. The pepper comes mainly from Chinese farms along the banks of the Rejang River; in addition to daily staples and luxury goods, the pepper producers also buy their posts, fertilizers, and agricultural implements from the merchants

in the bazaar to whom they sell their pepper. Rubber comes from both the Chinese and native farms on the river banks, and from the small groves in the jungle interior where it is an occasional supplement to the subsistence crop of dry hill rice. The arrival of an Iban perau (longboat) containing a rural family and their small bundle of rubber sheets, the sale of which will finance their shopping excursion, is a frequent sight in Kanowit Bazaar. In addition to their staples, the rubber producers must also purchase their supplies of acid, latex cups, tapping knives, mangles, and other tools to support their production.

Jungle products (except for the illipe nuts described in Chapter 1) no longer provide a large or important part of the economic exchange of the bazaar. There are still occasional sales, however, of these goods, some for local use and some for export. There is always a small market in the town for betel nut and its associated products, native-style cigarette wrappers, kapok, and wild fruits and vegetables (durian fruit and green ferns are both very popular), and other items collected or gathered in the jungle. Occasional items, such as snake skins, hides, and jungle herbs, may be sent on to the markets in the cities. There is little commercial production of crafts - only the baskets of the Kanowits are a standard item in local shophouses or export trade. But occasionally an Iban blanket, metal betel box, belt, or parang (knife) will be for sale. Valuable heirloom treasures - Chinese jars, gongs, brass-ware - the pesaka (inherited property) of Iban families, are sometimes sold for cash through a bazaar merchant to raise the money for a dowry, funeral, or other unusual expense; these items find a ready market among collectors in Sibu and Kuching. Fruits and vegetables produced on nearby farms, the meat of pigs, both wild and domestic, fish and prawns all find local market. Small amounts of Iban hill rice enter the market; most goes for private consumption and open sale is infrequent.

Timber brought large amounts of money to a few people in






MAP 7
KANOWIT DISTRICT

SOURCE: LANDS AND SURVEYS DEPARTMENT, SARAWAK 1968

Kanowit District during the boom years in the 1960's, but it was never a general source of income. That is its production and marketing were in the hands of a few large producers, not the average Iban farmer or bazaar shopkeeper. Some merchants made middleman profits by handling timber shipments en route to the ports of Sibu and Tanjong Mani; some Iban received a small share of the royalties that their local leaders had been paid for the sale of timber on their native lands. The direct wages paid to timber company workers had a more immediate effect on local economic standards. Timber, also, was a one-way crop - most of the money from its profits was skimmed off by large dealers in the cities and by the holders of land grants; these profits were not immediately spent in the local bazaar shops for consumer goods as is the income from rubber and pepper. The freeze on new timber-cutting licenses in 1970 has ended most of this activity, as it prohibits the hand-cutting and small-area logging that had been common in Kanowit District.

Kanaowit Bazaar, then, is in a symbiotic relationship with its rural environment. Map 7, Kanowit District, shows the cycle of this exchange: from the rural longhouse (the largest of which are indicated by the prefix R. [rumah, Iban: longhouse] on the map), up the rivers to the bazaar; from the riverside farms along the Rejang into the town; from the town down river by Chinese launch to Sibu; from Sibu, via the bazaar, back to the farms and interior longhouses. The map also shows the new road system, linking Julau and the interior with Sarikei, Bintatang, and Sibu, providing direct access to markets without involving the Kanowit middlemen. Kanowit's economic existence is dependent on its role as middleman in this cycle of economic exchange; this cycle is now being broken by new modes of transportation and patterns of trade, and the bazaar trade of Kanowit is declining.

## THE SHOPHOUSE AND THE TOWKAY



The key link in this cycle of economic exchange is the Chinese shophouse and its proprietor, the "towkay." A towkay is the owner of a shop, a dealer for the buying and selling of goods, an entrepreneur in the exchange trade, a middleman between the producer and the exporter. He is not a "businessman" or "merchant" in the usual connotations of the word, a man sitting behind a desk making decisions that others carry out for him, nor a manager in a white starched collar overseeing his sales help. He is not a salesman with a briefcase, nor a company representative with sample case. All of these exist in Sarawak; they come to Kanowit Bazaar occasionally to conduct their affairs with the local shopkeepers, but they are not "towkays."

A towkay runs his shop himself, with the help of his family: only if he has no suitable relatives with him will he hire outside help. He conducts all aspects of his business, from the most executive to the most laborious. His dress is casual, and designed for work; he is often seen in a white cotton singlet and baggy blue shorts, buttonless with a drawstring, with a patch pocket in the back (called, in local English, "towday shorts".) He is found on the wharf, overseeing the loading of a shipment, in a coffee shop, entertaining a client, at his desk, working on his accounts, at the counter, weighing out a kati of biscuits, on the street, spreading out peppercorns to dry in the sun. He is the father of his family and the head of his shophouse; thus "towkay" has derived from the Hokkien words meaning "leader or head of the family." From Hokkien the term has passed into Iban, Malay, and English.

"Towkay" can be a term of address as well as of reference, though care must be taken to use it properly. If the towkey is a stranger, his identity unknown to the speaker, it is a proper form of address, slightly flattering, as it recognizes the man's role as proprietor rather than clerk. To ask, "May I speak to the towkay," or to say, "Towkay, I want to buy some rice," is quite proper. But if the towkay is known to the speaker, he should be addressed

by name; to use the term "towkay" to a known shopkeeper is considered insulting; he sees it as a mockery of his status, rather than as a compliment. The proprietor of any shop can be called a towkay, but the term is not as frequently used for men dealing in services (coffee shops, barbers, druggists, repair men) as it is for those proprietors dealing in goods. In particular, "towkay" denotes the operator of a "general goods shop."

"General goods shop" is not a term used locally in Sarawak; there is no specific term to denote this particular sort establishment. The English "shop" and Malay "kedai" both include businesses of all varieties, any retail outlet. T'ien's (1953) "grocer" is also misleading, for foodstuffs are only a small part of their trade. The term "General goods shops" will be used here to indicate those commercial establishments that serve in the middleman capacity in the cycle of rural-bazaar-export, import-bazaar-rural exchange.

The fifty-eight shop buildings in Kanowit Bazaar house one hundred and twenty five different business concerns four others operate from mobile street stalls, and several occupy a market shed. Twenty-seven of these - more than any other type - are general goods shops. These twenty-seven shops are the economic backbone of Kanowit Bazaar; the other ninety eight businesses all are secondary. That is, they provide goods and services to those who earn their income from other sources - middleman trade, primary production, wage labor, government service, or other secondary shops. They are distinguished (for the most part) from the general goods shops by their making a profit in only "one direction," by selling retail goods for more than their wholesale price. General goods shops make a "double" profit - they sell retail for more than the wholesale price, and they buy from the primary producer for less than they sell to the exporter. The secondary shops do not generate any income for Kanowit Bazaar as a whole; they exist on money generated from other sources. Map 8 a-e show

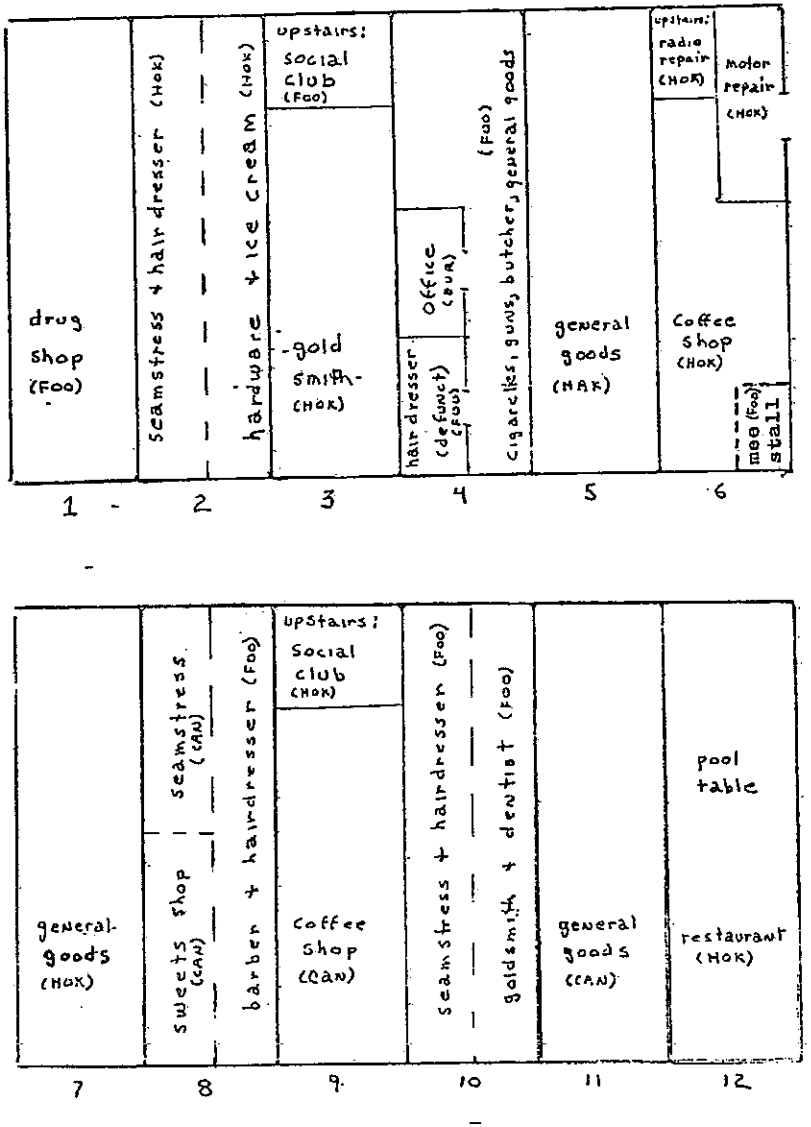


these fifty-eight shophouses, with the twenty-seven general goods shops and the ninety-eight secondary businesses, and their nature, indicated. [It should be noted that these one hundred and twenty-five businesses do not necessarily each have a separate proprietor. It is not unusual for one person, male or female, to have several occupations and operate several different businesses from the same premises. For example, the sale of hardware and the manufacture of ice cream, two endeavors of a family in shop #2. The goldsmith in shop #10 is also the dentist, the photographer in #52 also runs the book shop, and the hairdresser (now defunct) in shop #4 was the wife of the towkay of the general goods shop; this towkay if also a wholesale distributor for cigarettes, a licensed gun dealer, and a butcher. (The degree of separation of these various businesses varies with individual circumstances.) ]

General goods shops have two notable features - they all look very much the same, and they all look chaotic. Their greatest variation is in size; some fill the entire street floor of a shophouse and overflow onto the five-foot way and street in front; others occupy only a corner of a floor, sharing the premises with several other businesses. Their volume of trade is likewise variable. They all stock basically the same items, covering the same basic range of needs. (Appendix I lists a typical inventory for a general goods shop.) Their appearance raises two questions: How can you find any one item in that seemingly hopeless jumble? (Those who live in the shop usually know what they have and where it is.) And, how can they all survive selling the same goods? This is the crux of the whole matter - the key to how shophouse economics operate - and it requires a fuller examination of the rural-bazaar-city economic cycle for its answer.

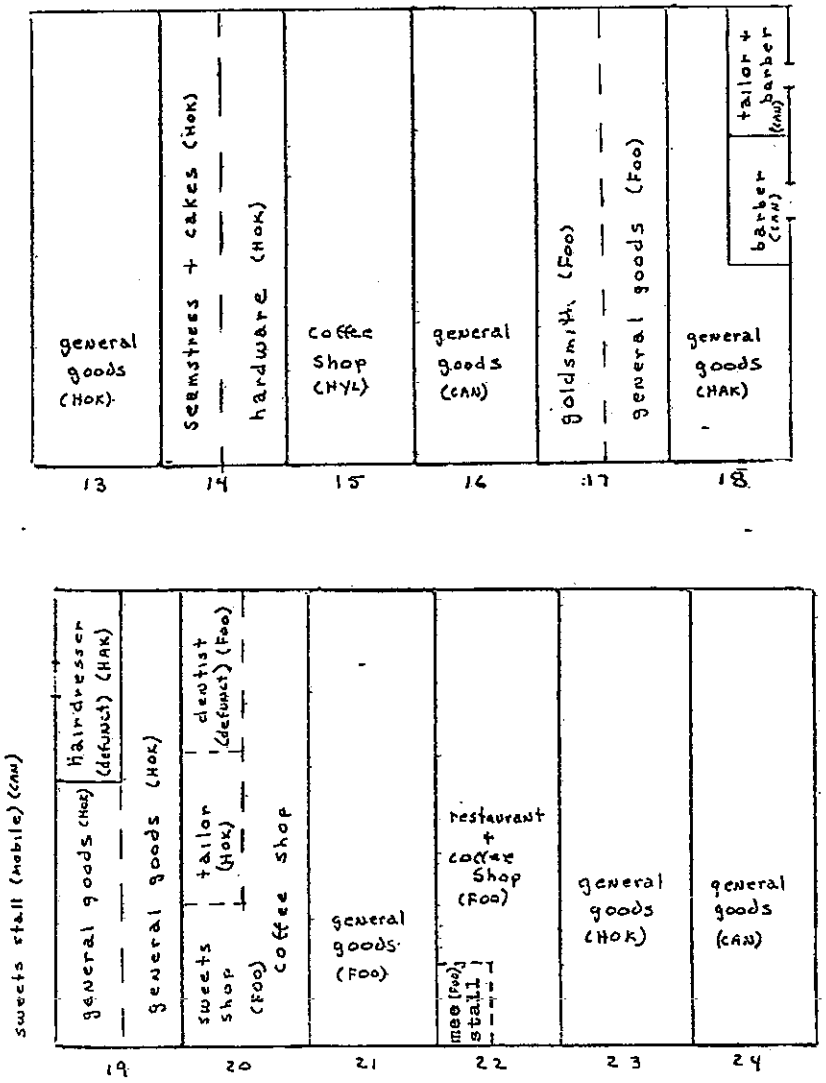
Ideally, the economic cycle of which the towkay is a major link is very simple and uncomplicated: The primary producer, either an Iban farmer from a longhouse in the interior or a Chinese or native smallholder along the Rejang, brings his peppercorns, latex

## Map 8a
### SHOPHOUSES IN KANOWIT BAZAAR
### 1971

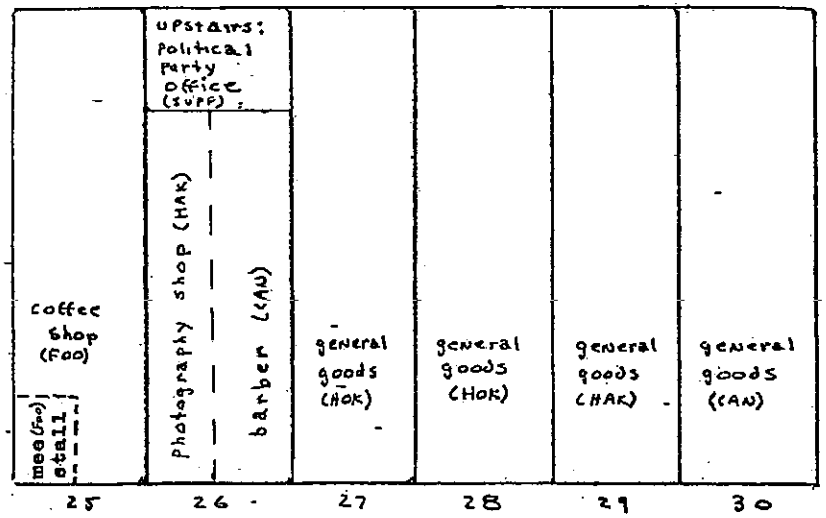


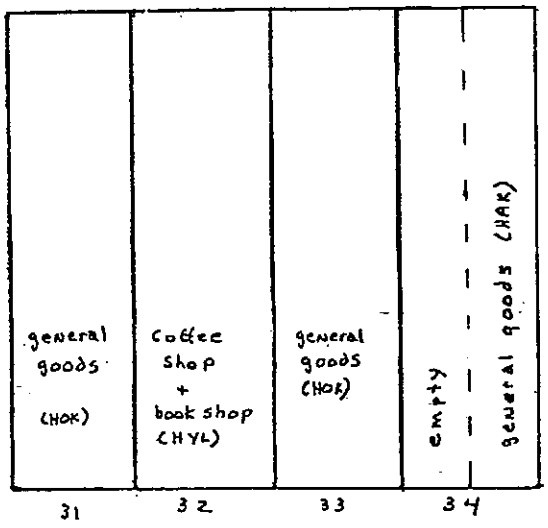



## Map 8b
### SHOPHOUSES IN KANOWIT BAZAAR
### 1971



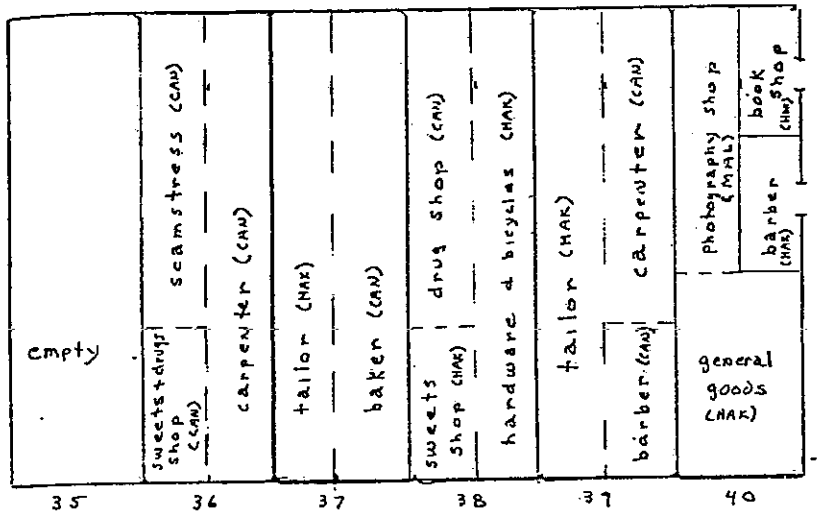
## Map 8c
### SHOPHOUSES IN KANOWIT BAZAAR
### 1971

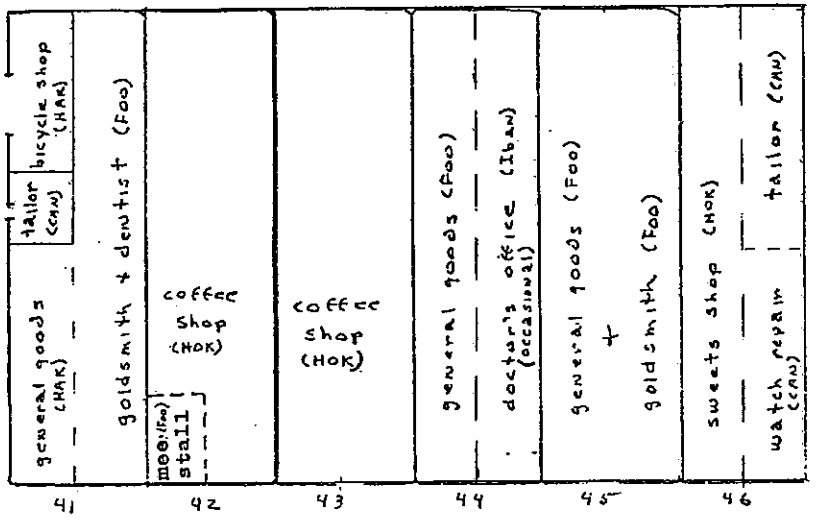


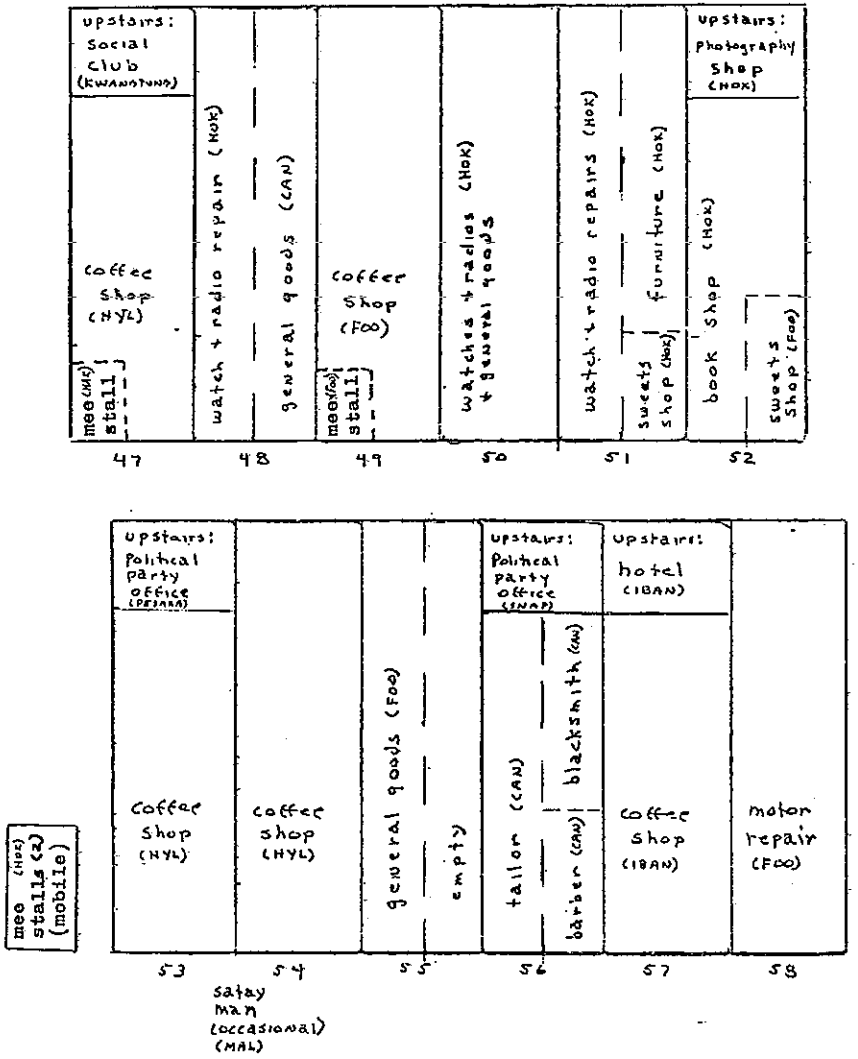



## Map 8d
### SHOPHOUSES IN KANOWIT BAZAAR
### 1971



## Map 8e
### SHOPHOUSES IN KANOWIT BAZAAR
### 1971






sheets, illipe nuts, or jungle produce into the bazaar. He takes these goods to the towkay of a general goods shop, who buys them at the going interior rates, taking into account the cost of transportation he must pay to send the produce to the exporters in Sibu, and his profit and overhead. The primary producer receives payment for his crop, which he uses to buy the manufactured goods, staples, and agricultural implements for sale in the bazaar. He returns to his longhouse or farm with his supplies of tools, sugar, kerosene, fertilizer, biscuits, and cigarettes to produce more primary goods for the market.

The towkay in Kanowit keeps these stores of goods until he has sufficient quantity to make a shipment to a trading port worthwhile. In most cases the goods are sent directly to exporting firms, but in some instances, where the quantities of goods are too small to interest the exporter, they may go to a wholesaler in Sibu who collects these small shipments and combines them into larger amounts for the exporter. The Kanowit towkay receives payments close to the published market prices. There are also cases in which the Kanowit towkay sells his goods to a Sibu towkay, just as the primary producer sold them to him. His payment then is likely to be in stock for his shop; the Sibu towkay then sends these goods to the exporter. The export firms finish the processing and packaging of the primary products begun by the producer and the towkay and ship them in large quantities to world markets. Some, especially pepper, go to commodities markets and exchanges in Singapore, where they may change hands several times before reaching the processor or manufacturer. A number of firms in Singapore (know for its entrepot trade) act as "super towkays." Some of the goods sent to Singapore are processed and manufactured into market items there. Others are sent directly from Sibu to manufacturers in Europe, Australia, America, and Japan.

Importing firm in the coastal cities both locally - and European - owned, bring in these manufactured goods. The larger

firms deal directly with the manufacturer; the smaller ones operate through suppliers in Singapore. These goods are then passed on to the towkays of the Sibu bazaar and/or on to Kanowit for the shophouses there. The Kanowit towkay uses the money earned from the sale of primary products to buy these manufactured goods, which he sells for interior retail prices. The towkay, then, makes a profit on the sale of the primary goods to the export firms, and a profit on the sale of the imported manufactured goods to the rural inhabitants.

This is the ideal; the actual process of exchange is quite a bit more complicated and involved than this.

Everything operates on credit. very little money actually changes hands, especially on the local levels of this economic circle. Being successful in the general goods business in kanowit has little relation to the amount of money, capital or even real property on hand, being successful is having more owed to you than you owe to others. Evens this is too simple an explanation, for it is not really how much is owed to you, but how much you are likely to ever actually get the use of, either directly, through repayment, or indirectly, through the use of these debts as security for more credit, or as leverage, to get other goods or services out of the debtor. In the same way, it is not how much you actually owe, but how much you can no longer avoid repaying in one way or another. Everybody, from the rural longhouse to the Singapore export firm and back again, is tied to everybody else by credits and debts. Mutual indebtedness is the glue that binds the system together.

This explains, for one thing, why there can be twenty-seven shops in kanowit that all sell basically the same goods. The overwhelming majority of their goods trade is not conducted with random customers, not with consumers who pick one shop over another by their free choice, but with a fixed set of clients tied to the towkay by mutual bonds of indebtedness. (This also explains why there is no need to advertise, promote products, conduct



"cheap sales," or even display the merchandise in any appealing, aesthetic way, all of which are done by the larger secondary shops in the cities. Clients are not attracted by the goods, but by the offer of credit.) While in the actual dollars and cents of the account books it appears that it is the rural producers who are tied by debt to the bazaar towkays (the stereotyped "exploitation of the natives by the Chinese"), the indebtedness is in reality mutual. The towkay is as much in debt to the primary producers, in terms of his economic survival, as he is to his Sibu creditors, or the producers are to him, for without their products, their labor, their further trade with him, their very debts themselves, he can not continue to operate. They both need each other to exist, and the towkay may actually have to take a loss on one, or both, ends of his double-profit trade to keep the producer as one of his clients.

In a footnote in his The Chinese of Sarawak (1953: 65), T'ienJu-K'ang makes a classic statement on the importance of this debt structure to Sarawak bazaar trade. It has been quoted elsewhere as well (Leigh1964: 24), but is so excellent a summation of the situation that it deserves repetition here:

> The working of this system, which applies at every economic level, is well understood by the people themselves. One of the Chinese Towkays expressed his view, gained after many years experience, that the secret of doing good business was not to make a high profit out of one's customers, but to get other people's money as capital, since only in this way was it possible to build up a large scale business. There is also a saying which may be translated: "Buy for ten, sell for seven, give back three, keep four." This refers with some exaggeration, to a custom which at first sight appears singularly uneconomical. Having bought an article on credit for $10 a man may sell it to his customer for $7 and then pay $3 of this back to his creditor. He then has $4 in his pocket - an effective way of doing business

without money, and a vivid illustration of the importance of actual cash in a system where so much of the finance structure consists of debts.

A Chinese towkay can operate his business without cash, but he can not survive without credit. To get credit he must have clients and to have clients he must give credit, he must cater to their needs and satisfy, within reason, their desires, which usually means continuing to give them credit. Once a bilek is in debt to one towkay it is difficult for them to do business with another (though the possibility of "back door" deals does exist). If the bilek should ever repay its debt it would be a free agent again, and might take its business elsewhere; thus, it is not in the best interests of the towkay to ever have all his outstanding debts repaid to him, for them he loses his hold over his clients, and his own credit is endangered. The towkay must be careful not to alienate his clients, even if it means a temporary financial loss for him, for without them he is lost. Sometimes these momentary losses are made up by talking liberties with honesty in his transactions. In an age when Iban tappers demand the rubber prices they hear broadcast daily on the radio, and cantonese pepper farmers quote the latest singapore market reports from the newspapers, without considering the towkay's overhead expenses, downgrading rubber quality or the proverbial "finger on the scale" (or its equivalent to an Iban of the bewildering complexities of a Chinese scale, abacus, or account books kept in characters) are sometimes the only ways a towkay can keep solvent. But always the client must be kept; the towkay literally plays host to him in the bazaar, providing food, shelter, cash advances, services, and, of course, credit, to keep him in his debt. When it is added that it is far easier for an Iban to vanish from the longhouse to avoid his debts than for a towkay to disappear from the bazaar of the same reason (though both do happen), it can be stated that the long-held idea that the Chinese exploit the natives is not completely true. Each partner in the



symbiotic relationship of towkay-client exploits the other. A producer without a towkay still has his crop to sell; a towkay without clients has no credit, and thus has nothing.

T'ien (1953: 35) states that "The Chinese rural economy in Sarawak hinges upon a framework of clanship." He reports (p 45) that "...but for clanship the credit system in the rural areas, upon which both depend, would not work at all." He makes it clear (p 22-23) that the concept of "clan" he refers to includes many levels of relationship - the traceable fang[2], the assumed t'ung[2] tsung[1], and the tsu[2], all those people (of whatever Chinese dialect group) who share the same surname. A Chinese farmer or small-holder goes for credit to a towkay of his same "clan," or from the same home neighborhood in China. The factors of immigration encouraged this practice, as the newcomer was frequently sponsored by his relatives, close, distant, or assumed, who were already in Sarawak. These sponsors helped the immigrant to get established in the new country and, among other services, provided him with credit, thereby gaining him as a client.

T'ien's research was conducted among the Hakka farmers of the First Division in 1949, and this situation may have been true for them then, and perhaps is still true there today. While data are insufficient to make any definitive statement on this matter, there is no evidence to suggest that this situation exists in Kanowit Bazaar in the 1960's. The account books of a Chinese towkay are among the most private of his possessions; to say that they are not open to outside inspection is an understatement. Therefore, it is not possible to produce a list of Chinese clients who deal with a given Chinese towkay to prove or disprove the statement concerning their common "clanship."[1] But observations in the bazaar do not indicate that kinship is an important factor in the selection of clients. While relatives do prefer to deal with relatives, no towkay in Kanowit Bazaar could survive dealing only with his kinsmen. Nor do place-of-origin, common dialect group, or the

sharing of the same surname have any large effect on the towkay-client relationship; Cantonese pepper farmers do not deal on with Cantonese towkays, nor do small holders named Lim deal only with towkays named Lim. These bonds of commonality may well have some effect on Chinese-Chinese economic relationships in Kanowit, but until more data are available the extent of their influence remains conjectural. To say that the economy "hinges upon a framework of clan-ship," however, is a gross overstatement.

T'ien's second statement, "but for clanship the credit system in the rural area.....would not work at all," is patently untrue. This credit system between Chinese towkays and Iban clients is the mainstay of Kanowit economy; no towkay can exist without his Iban clients, who provide him with the bulk of his business. Yet no ties of kinship or clanship, fictive or otherwise, bind them to each other. It is credit that gives them a relationship, not relationship that gives them credit. Common clanship is historically coincidental to the structure of Chinese shophouse economics; it is not, as T'ien suggests, an essential aspect of them.

The symbiotic relationship between the Chinese towkay of the bazaar and his Iban clients in the interior is the keystone to economic exchange in Kanowit Bazaar. It is this sort of arrangement that brought the first merchant to Kanowit, that developed the trade around which the town was built, and that generates much of the income that supports the ninety-eight secondary businesses. It is also indicative of Kanowit behavior in being a multi-racial activity. Like the shark and the pilot fish, like nitrogen-fixing bacteria and clover, the Iban producer and the Chinese towkay find their inherent differences to be mutually beneficial. Their need for each other's services overwhelms their differences of race and culture. Necessity is one of the prime motivations for tolerance in Kanowit Bazaar.

The basic unit of Iban social structure and economic activity is the bilek or stem family, a man and his wife one (any one) of



their children, that child's spouse, and their children. All live together in a common bilek, a room or set of rooms, in the longhouse. A sample longhouse about seven miles from Kanowit Bazaar, on the Sungai Majau, a tributary of the Kanowit River, contain ten bilek families. All of these are clients of towkays in Kanowit bazaar. Seven of the families deal exclusively with Towkay A and two families are clients of Towkay B, both leading Kanowit shopkeepers. In the tenth family, the head of the household (who at marriage came to live in his wife's bilek) deals with Towkay B, while his wife's younger brother, a single man living in his natal bilek, deals with Towkay A. The reason for this economic split is that Towkay B will buy rottan and Towkay A will not, and the head of the bilek collects this wild jungle vine and is the client of a man who will purchase it from him. In none of the ten cases does a bilek family maintain a towkay-client relationship with more than one towkay. If the Iban are dissatisfied with their towkay, they will, if financially feasible, switch to another, but since there are only minor differences between towkays and their inventories, and a towkay will acquire any item his client desires, even buying it from another towkay, to please his client, changing towkays is not a frequent occurance. Changes are more likely to occur by the bilek moving away from the district or the towkay going out of business, leaving his clients free to choose another. The acceptance of certain minor products, as above, is one factor affecting the initial choice of a towkay, but more influential are the ties that the bilek and its' neighbour have previously established. A man will usually stay with the towkay of his father; if he moves to his wife's bilek at marriage he will deal with his father-in-law's towkay, as the bilek acts as a single economic entity. Thus, this symbiosis passes from generation to generation, younger Ibans dealing with the sons of the towkays with whom their parents dealt. Towkays frequently give gifts for the weddings and funerals of their Iban clients, and are invited to the bilek for the annual harvest festival;

Ibans often attend the funerals of their towkays, and visit their shops at Chinese New Year. While the partners in the relationship may not become warm personal friends, they both respect each other's role in the alliance.

What is the extent of the credit structure between towkays and their clients and between towkays and their creditors? How much do they all actually owe each other? There is no way to be absolutely certain short of examining a towkays' books, and even those, for a variety of reasons, may not be reliable. T'ien (1953: 43) questioned a number of towkays in the First Division about their outstanding loans to clients. The towkays claimed to have amounts ranging from $2,000 to $6,000 outstanding for their shops, with some as high as $8,000, $10,000, and even $15,000. T'ien admits that an element of boasting is a possibility, but other reports show that these sums are not out of line. Michael Leigh (1964: 25) reports an average of $10,000 per towkay in 1955, and his own investigations revealed one towkay who claims to have $70,000 in unpaid debts owed to him. In 1958, the towkay of a shop in one of the outlying settlements in Kanowit District filed for bankruptcy. His account books, as submitted to the court officers, show his claims for $15,701.64 outstanding (Table 10). All but thirty-five of these loans were to Iban clients. (The debtors, however, admitted to less than ten percent of this sum, and little more than that was ever collected.) The same towkay had claims presented against him in court for $23,266.17 in credit that he had received from various Chinese shops, towkays, and four native creditors (Table 11). Fifty percent of this credit was owed to one individual creditor (in two separate accounts).

It should be noted that these loans outstanding to Iban clients are all for goods received, not for cash loans; most of the debts owed to creditors are also for goods received. Though the amount of debt or credit is always recorded in terms of cash value, it is not, at the lower levels of trade at least, charged with interest.



Cash is a scarce commodity, and interest rates on it are high; goods can be charged on account indefinitely with no interest added by the local towkay. Credit provides working capital; it is not, at the lower levels, a source of income in itself. (For details of the financing of Chinese trade at levels above the local bazaar see T'ien 1953: 35-68).

## SECONDARY BUSINESS

The ninety-eight businesses in Kanowit Bazaar other than general goods shops are indicated on Map 8 a-e, and are, for the most part, self explanatory. They derive their income from selling retail goods and services for a profit. Some may also deal in small amounts of primary products from time to time, but that is not the prime, or even a noticeable, part of their business. Some of these businesses are barely self supporting - the proliferation of sweets stalls (8), and mee stalls (8) for example. Many of the seven tailors and five seamstresses do not have enough orders for a full day's work. The five hairdressers often entertain themselves and their friends by styling each others' hair. Unemployment is very high for all categories of labor; therefore a little employment (selling hard boiled eggs or drinks to the passengers on the express boats, for example) is better than none at all. (Being established in a business allows one to receive goods on credit, and if the goods are not sold at least they can be used to provide the family with some of its necessities on a deferred payment basis.) The overlapping of occupations among these ninety-eight businesses has already been mentioned.

## TABLE 10
### LIST OF DEBTORS OF BANKRUPT CHINESE SHOPKEEPER
**(From Shopkeeper's Own Account Books)**

| DEBTORS | AMOUNT OWED | LARGEST SINGLE DEBT |
|---|---|---|
| Longhouse A, 30 individuals | $ 527.57 | $ 110.60 |
| Longhouse B, 17 individuals | 665.90 | 263.00 |
| Longhouse C, 21 individuals | 370.40 | 78.60 |
| Longhouse D, 15 individuals | 188.85 | 64.00 |
| Longhouse E, 2 individuals | 19.30 | 14.30 |
| Longhouse F, 5 individuals | 896.60 | 850.70 |
| Longhouse G, 11 individuals | 108.60 | 29.00 |
| Longhouse H, 6 individuals | 43.00 | 26.80 |
| Longhouse I, 23 individuals | 581.75 | 56.30 |
| Longhouse J, 24 individuals | 558.50 | 104.50 |
| Longhouse K, 24 individuals | 1211.64 | ? |
| Other natives, 46 individuals | 1535.50 | ? |
| Other natives, 19 individuals | 127.30 | ? |
| Others, 4 individuals | 28.40 | ? |
| Others, ? individuals | 2422.00 | ? |
| Chinese, 35 individuals | 6416.33 | 2466.97 |
| Total Amount of Debts | $15,701.64 | |
| Total amount of debts admitted by debtors | $ 1,163.60 | |
| Total amount actually Collected from debtors | $ 1,663.20 | |



## TABLE 11
### LIST OF CREDITORS OF BANKRUPT CHINESE SHOPKEEPER
**(From Court Records)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Chinese Shop A | $63.96 | Chinese Individual H | $2500.00 |
| Chinese Shop B | 117.53 | Chinese Individual I | 1250.00 |
| Chinese Shop C | 165.60 | Chinese Individual J | 250.00 |
| Chinese Shop D | 333.20 | Chinese Individual K | 118.58 |
| Chinese Shop E | 112.00 | Chinese Individual L | 103.89 |
| Chinese Shop F | 376.90 | Chinese Individual M | 49.20 |
| Chinese Shop G | 43.00 | Chinese Individual N | 239.33 |
| Chinese Shop H | 1641.28 | Chinese Individual O | 30.00 |
| Chinese Shop I | 94.08 | Chinese Individual P | 87.80 |
| Chinese Shop J | 93.00 | Chinese Individual Q | 835.80 |
| Chinese Shop K | 25.00 | Chinese Individual R | 140.00 |
| Chinese Shop L | 953.87 | Chinese Individual S | 2400.00 |
| Chinese Shop M | 48.96 | Chinese Individual T | 250.00 |
| Chinese Shop N | 9658.03 | Chinese Individual U | 97.80 |
| Chinese Individual A | 42.80 | Native Individual A | 20.50 |
| Chinese Individual B | 66.00 | Native Individual B | 250.00 |
| Chinese Individual C | 183.00 | Native Individual C | 17.10 |
| Chinese Individual D | 75.00 | Native Individual D | 100.00 |
| Chinese Individual E | 100.00 | Government Fine | 150.00 |
| Chinese Individual F | 130.00 | | |
| Chinese Individual G | 52.96 | Total | $ 23,266.17 |

Several businesses require further explanation. A mee stall is in the business of selling bowls of noodles of various sorts ("mee" is the Hokkien equivalent of mien[4], wheat flour noodles). They are available boiled, fried, or in soup, and are served with a few strips of meat and some chili sauce for 50 cents a bowl. They are a frequent breakfast or snack dish, enjoyed during a mid-morning break, as a lunch, or as a late afternoon or evening snack. Six of

the stalls rent space in coffee shops, selling to the customers gathered there. Two are mobile, occupying a popular corner morning and evening, selling from their stand and to customers in the nearby shops. Other shops deal in everyday goods and services. Sweets stalls sell candy, dried fruits, and small, cheap toys. The largest and most prosperous one occupies half a shophouses floor; the others are much smaller. Fresh white bread is baked in the town each day, as are some small snack cakes. Some baked goods are also brought in from Sibu and are sold in the coffee shops. Ice cream, in the form of powdered milk-based popsicles, is sold during express boat stops. One establishment, a barber shop, is air conditioned.

There is a market shed at the east end of Main Bazaar Road, administered by the District Council. The fish monger and the three butchers have stalls there each morning, and they are joined by a number of country farmers who come to the bazaar with their fresh fruits and vegetables each day. Others sell these goods from baskets on the streets or door-to-door.

The Capital Theatre, on Cinema Road, features a different film every evening, with occasional Sunday and holiday matinees. English, Malay, and Hindu films are sometimes shown, but Chinese films (subtitled in English and Chinese characters) from Taiwan and Hong Kong predominate. A boy carrying a signboard and ringing a bell walks through the town each afternoon to announce the evening's featured attraction. Chinese sword fighting epics are the unquestionable favorite with audiences of every race and ethnic group in Kanowit.

All but three of the businesses in Kanowit Bazaar are Chinese-owned and operated. The son of the leader of the Malay community is a photographer. (His father at one time dealt in general goods, but is no longer in the business.) Several times a week a Malay man makes and sells satay, barbequed beef on a stick, with a spicy sauce, from a stand on the five-foot way. One coffee shop is Iban



operated, and is considered to be of a more or less temporary nature. Its main attraction is the girls in the "hotel" upstairs; its clientele is drawn exclusively from the soldiers in the temporary camps around the town. Like the army camps themselves, the Iban shop is not considered by the local people to be a permanent feature of their community.

The most numerous of the secondary businesses, second only to the general goods hops, are the fourteen coffeeshops. The coffeeshops are the prime loci of social interaction in Kanowit Bazaar. They are occupied from morning till night with customers engaged in social and business affairs, entertainment, and relaxation. They are the disseminators of news and gossip, the meeting place for friends and strangers, a place to entertain guests or while away leisure time. Towkays come there with their clients, visiting sales agents, and friends to conclude a business arrangement; visitors to the town stop by for refreshments; young men gather to pass their jobless hours; government servants come by during breaks or after working hours to drink, eat, and relax, thus increasing the lines of communication between citizens and their government. It is an unusual adult male who does not visit a coffeeshop sometimes - usually several times - during the day. Many men have a regular shop, their favorite, where they stop each day to meet their friends. The coffeeshops, like all other shophouses in Kanowit, are open to the street during the day, and one can look out on the town's activities and greet passersby.

In Kanowit, unlike some of the more conservative Chinese communities in Borneo, women also visit the coffeeshops, though usually in the company of their husbands, children, or women friends. It is not considered proper conduct for a woman, especially a young woman, to frequent coffeeshops alone, but housewives come to visit their friends, or to join in the occasional game of fantan at one of the rear tables. Young girls come together in groups for a drink or snack after the movie show or before taking one of

the express boats to Sibu. Unlike men, however, women do not have "their own" coffeeshops that they regularly visit each day for news and social contact.

While thirteen of the fourteen coffeeshops are run by Chinese, their clientele is multiracial; there is no specialization or preference by racial or ethnic group. Ibans visit them as frequently as Chinese do, and a rural family in the bazaar for a shopping trip will stop for a cold drink and some cakes. Coffeeshops are one of the most frequent places for interracial contact. Not only are all the shops integrated, but frequently the groups around the separate tables are as well - government employees together at one, school teachers at another, towkays and their clients, students, visitors, all seated together and in conversation without regard for racial and ethnic differences.

Coffeeshops sell hot drinks such as coffee (the beans roasted and ground to the towkay's secret recipe), tea, hot chocolate, cold bottled drinks and fresh fruit drinks, beer (little liquor is consumed in Kanowit coffeeshops), and snacks of peanuts, cakes, and biscuits. During late afternoons, evenings, and weekends, one table in the shop may be occupied by a group of beer drinkers, friends joining and leaving the group as the hours pass. Nearby may be an Iban family in from their longhouse, and next to them some businessmen checking their invoices or discussing an agreement. Someone stops to read the daily newspapers to which each shop subscribes, and others come to wait for the next express boat. Since few homes or shophouses have facilities for social entertaining, the coffeeshop serves as everyone's living room. The fact that fourteen different coffeeshops can stay in business attests to their universal appeal.

It is impossible to say how well the businesses in Kanowit are doing financially, either individually or as a group. Account books are not open to examination; few people have bank accounts, and they, too, would be kept from open inspection. While business and money are frequent topics for discussion, and towkays will



boast about their business successes, no one ever reveals exactly how much he is worth, and most claim near poverty. It is safer to be though of as poor.

Even the usual indicators of economic status- debts, property ownership, inventories, and even consumption and display of wealth - are highly inaccurate sources of economic data. As described above, debts and credits are the key means of financing business affairs, and someone lacking in debts may well be far worse off than someone with many, as it shows that he is not trusted with credit. Inventories in shops are also on credit, and no one knows how much of it is paid for. Property ownership is also misleading, as many mortgages in Kanowit Bazaar are years in arrears, and property may be registered in the names of wife, children, and other relatives for tax and bankruptcy purposes. There are strict social customs concerning the display of wealth, a limited number of acceptable way to show it off publicly Generosity is one of these means - gifts to school building funds, flood relief and other charitable drives, shophouse decoration at public holidays, and the donation of trophy cups for the numerous contests and games at holiday times (the trophies carry typed labels with the names of the donors rather than of the winners). But even these can be misleading, as a man tries to appear to be as generous and civic minded as possible, even if it takes (or appears to take) his last cent to do so. (Last year's winning trophy, with a new label, can be this year's donation.) Some homes are obviously more expensive and equipped with more material goods than others, but they do not necessarily correspond with the wealth of the owner; some prosperous families live in clapboard houses or small rooms above their shops, while school teachers and wage earners may have new, modern homes. Dress is the least accurate means of judging wealth. The richest man may dress daily in towkay shorts and singlet, just as his boat driver does.

Twenty-two of the fifty-eight shophouses are a year or more

in arrears in their local tax assessments. One has not paid for nine years, and several for four or five. Yet the businesses of their owners appear to be doing as well as any others. It is impossible to tell if these payments were not made because the owners truly lack the funds, or because a debt outstanding is one more bit of someone else' money to be used as capital, Foreclosure is always a threat; bankruptcy is not unusual. But many creditors (the Chartered Bank, which holds most of the overdue mortgages in Kanowit, for example) are reluctant to foreclose, for then all hope of ever collecting will be lost.

People in Kanowit "know" that some people in town are "rich" and some are "poor," but it is impossible to determine their individual assets. They only accurate indicators for the town's economic conditions seem to be that so many young people are leaving town to look for work and the rate or population increase is declining. The new road system (Map 7) that links Julau with Sibu without coming to Kanowit, falling rubber and pepper prices, and the increasing number of rural producers who deal directly with Sibu merchants have all hurt the old patterns of trade in Kanowit. No new industries appear to be replacing them.

## EMPLOYMENT

Shopkeeping is not the only occupation in Kanowit Bazaar; business is not the only source of income for the town. There are a variety of jobs in the town that employ skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled labor.

The largest employer is the Government of Sarawak, and government jobs are held in very high regard (because of their security and white collar status) and are much sought after. In addition to the District Office staff, the government employs officers, clerks, and day laborers in various departments. The Department of Agriculture has an office on Main Bazaar Road



where it dispenses aid, advice, and supplies to farmers within the district. Next to it is a government health dispensary with a dresser and several nurses. Sesco (Sarawak Electricity Supply Corporation), the government-owned power company, employs skilled mechanics and technicians as well as day laborers; the same is true of the Posts and Telegraphs Department. The Police Department and its investigative unit, the Special Branch, are headquartered on Cinema Road. The Public Works Department maintains a large staffs to plan, supervise, construct, and maintain local government properties and supplies. All together these government departments employ more than one hundred men and women, on three basic levels; the officer or managerial level, including ranking civil servants and skilled technicians; the clerk and typist class, extension workers, assistants, and trainees; day laborers, semi-skilled or unskilled men who do physical labor - boat drivers, maintenance men, road workers, and the like. In addition to their secure salaries, most of the first group and many of the second also receive low rent government housing.

The Kanowit District Council also employs a number of people, again on all three of these levels. The Office of Education of the KDC operates more than fifty primary schools in the rural areas of the district; all of those teachers are on their payroll (with state financing), though they may live quite far from the town. The Office also has supervisors, officers, and clerks. The Council is also charged with town sanitation and maintenance, and hires many day laborers for trash disposal, sewage collection, grass cutting, and street cleaning.

The three schools in the town area employ several teachers; the English-language primary has eleven teachers and a non-teaching staff of three; Kee Ting Chinese Primary has eight teachers and two aides; Yik Kwong Private Secondary School has about a half dozen people on its payroll. The Government Secondary School across the Rejang River has more than a dozen teachers,

but only a few of them live in the town itself. Its teachers do come to the town frequently, however, to shop in the bazaar. The Roman Catholic Mission and its clinic employ several local people to supplement their staff of priests and nuns. The town also has a group of servants, housekeepers, laundry workers, private tutors, and handymen of all sorts. A few people make their living by farming small plots within the town, by raising pigs and chickens, and fishing. The soldiers in the temporary camps also spend some of their money in the bazaar.

## TABLE 12
### T'IENS TABLE OF DIALECT AND OCCUPATION

| Clock & Watch shops | Tin-smith | Carpen-ters | Fisher-men | Bicycle shops | Tailors | Coffee shop |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C | H | S | H | H | H | H |
| A | A | O | E | E | A | Y |
| N | K | U | N | N | K | L |
| T | K | T | G | G | K | A |
| O | A | H | H | H | A | M |
| N | | | U | U | | |
| E | | M | A | A | | |
| S | | A | | | | |
| E | | N | | | | |
| | | D | | | | |
| | | A | | | | |
| | | R | | | | |
| | | I | | | | |
| | | N | | | | |

from T'ien 1953:57



## TABLE 13
### DIALECT AND OCCUPATION IN KANOWIT BAZAAR, 1971

| Occupation | Total shops | Dialect Group HOK | CAN | FOO | HAK | HYL | MAL | IBAN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| General Goods | 27 | 10 | 5 | 6 | 6 | | | |
| Coffeeshops | 14 | 3 | 1 | 4 | | | | |
| Sweets stalls | 8 | 2 | 3 | 2 | | 5 | | 1 |
| Mee stalls | 8 | 2 | | 5 | 1 | | | |
| Tailors | 7 | 1 | 4 | | 1 | | | |
| Barbers | 7 | | 5 | 1 | 2 | | | |
| Clocks & radios | 5 | 4 | 1 | | 1 | | | |
| Seamstresses | 5 | 2 | 2 | 1 | | | | |
| Hairdressers | 5 | 1 | | 3 | 1 | | | |
| Goldsmiths | 5 | 1 | | 4 | | | | |
| Carpenters | 3 | 1 | 2 | | | | | |
| Butchers | 3 | 2 | | 1 | | | | |
| Hardware | 3 | 2 | | | 1 | | | |
| Photographers | 3 | 1 | | | 1 | | 1 | |
| Bookshops | 3 | 2 | | | | 1 | | |
| Dentists | 3 | | | 3 | | | | |
| Drugstores | 3 | | 2 | 1 | | | | |
| Bicycles | 2 | | | | 2 | | | |
| Restaurants | 2 | 1 | | 1 | | | | |
| Motor repair | 2 | 1 | | 1 | | | | |
| Bakers | 2 | 1 | 1 | | | | | |
| Tinsmiths | 1 | | 1 | | | | | |
| Ice cream | 1 | 1 | | | | | | |
| Fishmongers | 1 | 1 | | | | | | |
| Satay | 1 | | | | | | 1 | |
| Movies | 1 | | | 1 | | | | |
| TOTAL | 125 | 39 | 27 | 34 | 16 | 6 | 2 | 1 |

In his research among the Chinese of the First Division in 1949, T'ien Ju-K'ang studied the relationship between Chinese dialect groups and the occupations in which their members were engaged. He found that several of the dialect groups show strong preferences for certain occupations, and several occupations are almost completely dominated by the members of one specific dialect group. The correlations between dialect group and occupation as he outlines them (1953: 48-49) are striking. Table 12 reproduces T'ien's table, "Dialect and Occupation," a summation of his findings.

In the bazaar at Kuching, T'ien found that 100% of the clock and watch shops were Cantonese owned, and that Cantonese operate more of this shop than any other kind. 100% of the tinsmiths, and 78.3% of the tailors in Kuching were Hakka, 90% of the fishermen and 84% of the bicycle shops were Henghua, and all fifteen carpenters were from the Southern Mandarin group ((absent in Kanowit). The Hylam (of Hainan Island)dominated the coffeeshop trade, with 78.8% of the shops. Other endeavors were more evenly distributed, with single dominations not exceeding 70%.

Using his Kuching figures as his basis (and ignoring his date from Sibu, which differ) he devised the categories of Table 12. These stereotypes have entered both the published literature (Ginsburg 1955: 276f, Outram 1959; 122f, Leigh 1964: 30-31, Jackson 1968: 55) and the public mind, and have been accepted without question as representing the general pattern for all of Sarawak. They do not hold for Kanowit Bazaar.

Only one Cantonese in Kanowit Bazaar operates a clock, watch, or radio shop, either for sales or repairs; the other four are Hokkien. The one and only tinsmith and blacksmith is a Cantonese, not Hakka. There are no South Mandarins in Kanowit Bazaar at all; two of the three carpenters are Cantonese. What is more revealing is that one carpenter has three apprentices and they are



all Cantonese. The only male Henghua in Kanowit is a wharf laborers, the only fishmonger is Hokkien, while the few fishermen in the town are Malays. The two shops for the sale, rental, and repair of bicycles are owned by Hakka. Only two of the seven tailors are Hakka; again the Cantonese dominate that trade in Kanowit Bazaar. Only in the coffeeshops does T'ien's stereotype group actually outnumber the other dialects, but the five Hylam shopkeepers in this business are still in the minority, as there are four Foochow, three Hokkien, a Cantonese, and an Iban in that occupation. The Hokkien and Teochoiew, who reportedly dominate the general goods (grocer) shops, do not, though there are more Hokkien general-goods shops than any other dialect; there are no Teochiew in business in Kanowit at all. (See Table 13 for details of these figures.)

Are there any dialectic preferences in occupation? Why do T'ien's assumptions, based on empirical data, not hold for Kanaowit? The origin of these preferences, T'ien explains, stems from the nature of immigration sponsorship, the role of the family in business, and the influence of "clanship." That is, on historical, rather than racial or ethnic, factors. The first two are relevant factors for Kanowit; (the lack of a role of "clanship" in Kanowit business has already been discussed). Asked why he went into the coffeeshop business, one Hylam man responded that when he arrived, penniless, from China, he was hired by a Hylam man to work in his coffeeshop, and thus learned the trade. That was undoubtedly the origin, in the first (immigrant) generation, of many occupational specializations. Often a son follows into his father's business (as one of this man's sons has done), but other sons of the more recent generations, with the education and opportunities their parents did not have, have gone into other occupations. When the family can not provide a sufficient work force from its own members, and outside help must be employed, it is no longer, in Kanowit, determined by dialect group or region-of-origin. There

are no new immigrants, no distant cousins, no neighbors from China, who need to be supported on arrival. The Cantonese carpenter chose Cantonese helpers, but they are not of the same family, or even the same surname group, as the towkay. Factors of availability propinquity, skill, and education seem to outweigh dialect and origin when help outside of the family is employed. Of course, relatives are always favored.

The greatest differences in occupation seem to be by race rather than dialect group. The overwhelming majority of employed Malays in Kanowit Bazaar are in government jobs. As much as the quota system allows, Chinese dominate skilled labor and government jobs requiring a high education. Eight of the eleven teachers at the English-language primary school are Chinese, including the headmaster; there are no Malays. Chinese also outnumber the other races among the teachers at Yik Kwong Private Secondary and the Government Secondary Schools. The Chairman of the Kanowit District Council is Iban; the Executive Secretary, who runs the day to day operations, is Chinese.

There are, then, occupational specializations among both the population as a whole and among the Chinese dialect groups. These are based on historical events, father-son inheritance, ability to raise capital, and, increasingly important, educational opportunity rather than on "clanship," inherent ability or lack of it, or any special "knack." The data gathered by T'ien in the First Division in 1949 reflect the historical settlement patterns particular to that area at that time. They did not correlate with his Sibu data. For Sibu's history of settlement was different. It is a mistake for anyone to assume that they are applicable to other places with other histories, in other times with other variables.

## PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

The three sets of maps that conclude this chapter show the patterns of land ownership in Kanowit Bazaar and the surrounding region.



All of the fifty-eight shophouses (Map 9) are Chinese-owned, in keeping with the Chinese dominance of commercial activities. They are, for the most part, locally-owned as well. Nearly half of the buildings are occupied by their owners (or part owners) in residence. Another ten buildings are owned by residents of the town, though no one person owns more than three shophouses. Only seven are known to have absentee landlords who reside outside of Kanowit Bazaar, although the names of thirteen other owners do not appear in the census lists for Kanowit Bazaar in 1970, and they, too, may be absentee landlords. (The practice of registering property under the names of relatives, or of using the variety of alternative aliases possible when Chinese names are rendered in English script, makes the collection of data on property ownership chaotic.)

The assessed value for Kanowit District Council tax purposes of these shophouses ranges from $1500 for a shop in the interior of a block at the west end of the bazaar (further from the wharfs and jetties) to $2650 for a corner building (with side as well as front entrances) at the east end of the road. Actual market prices, if a buyer can be found, are about ten times assessed value. Rents likewise a, with corner locations near the main thoroughfares to the jetties the highest; they are favored by coffeeshops. Rent for an entire building ranges from $100 to $175 per month, depending on location. It is possible to rent only a portion of a building, either from the owner-in-residence or from the tenant who has rented the entire building. In some cases the rent collected from several sublettors nearly equals the rent paid by the tenant to the owner, allowing the tenant who has rented the whole building to live very cheaply.

The four parts of Map 10 show property ownership in the areas immediately around Kanowit Bazaar. Again, difficulties in

tracing the residence and even the identity of the owners accounts for the large number of unidentifiable plots. The largest land owner in the Kanowit area is the Roman Catholic Mission, given large grants by the Brooke Raj in the 1800's, when they began their mission in Kanowit. The second largest owner is the Sarawak Government. Privately-owned plots are distributed among nearly one hundred different owners. Their races and (coded) identities are indicated on Map 11, Parts I-IV. Chinese owners predominate (this is Mixed Zone Land) but no large land owners stand out. There are no "land barons" in the Kanowit area. The land problem there is a shortage of Mixed Zone Land for Chinese occupation, not the domination of the land by a few large holders.



## CODES FOR MAPS 9-11

Ownership Indicated by Initials;

RC = Roman Catholic Church
SG = Sarawak Government
KDC = Kanowit District Council
MT = Moslem Charitable Trust
MC = Methodist Church
SE = Sesco Electric Company
CC = Chinese Cemetery
KT = Kee Ting Chinese Primary
FA = Foochow Association
IC = Iban Cemetery

Residence of owner:

= Owner resident on property
= Owner resident in Kanowit Bazaar
sibu = Residence of owner as indicated
= Residence of owner not known
? = Owner not known

Codes for Race of Owner (Map 11):

C1 = Chinese individual No. 1
M1 = Malay individuals No. 1
I1 = Iban individual No. 1
C2* = Chinese individuals No. 2 owns more than one plot
C3+ = Owned by a Chinese company, number of individuals unknown
C4+*= Chinese company owns more than one plot

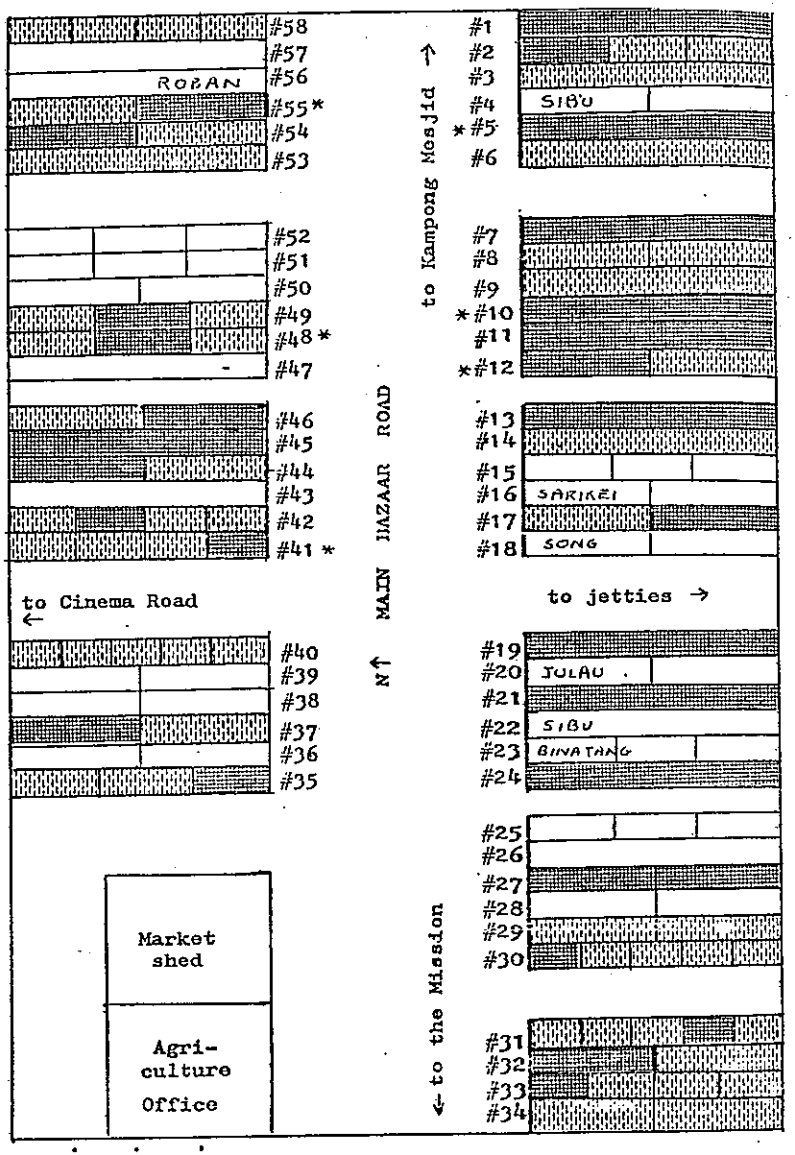
Map Symbols:

.... = Kanowit Town Line
—— = Property Lines
—— = roads

## MAP 9

### RESIDENCE OF SHOPHOUSE OWNERS, 1971

(all owners are chinese)






### COORDINATION OF PARTS, MAPS 10 AND 11

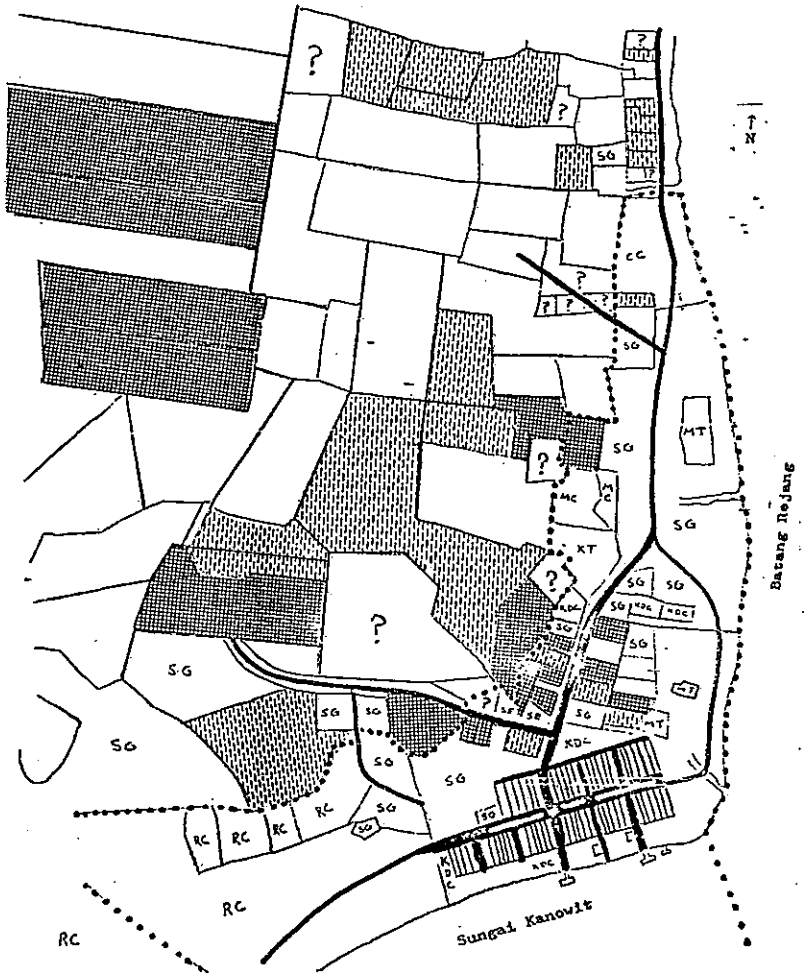
N

| | |
|---|---|
| Part II | Part I |
| Part III | Part IV |

## MAP 10 I

### RESIDENT OF LANDOWNERS NEAR KANOWIT BAZAAR, 1971

Part 1

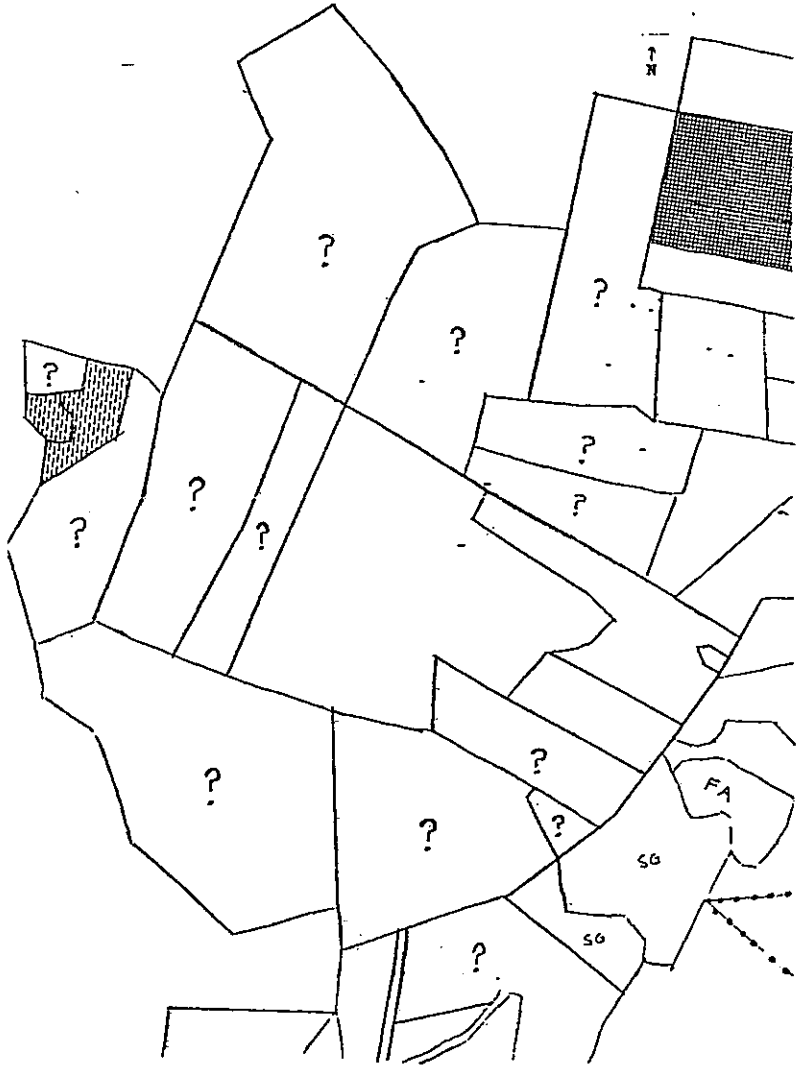





## MAP 10 II

### RESIDENT OF LANDOWNERS NEAR KANOWIT BAZAAR, 1971

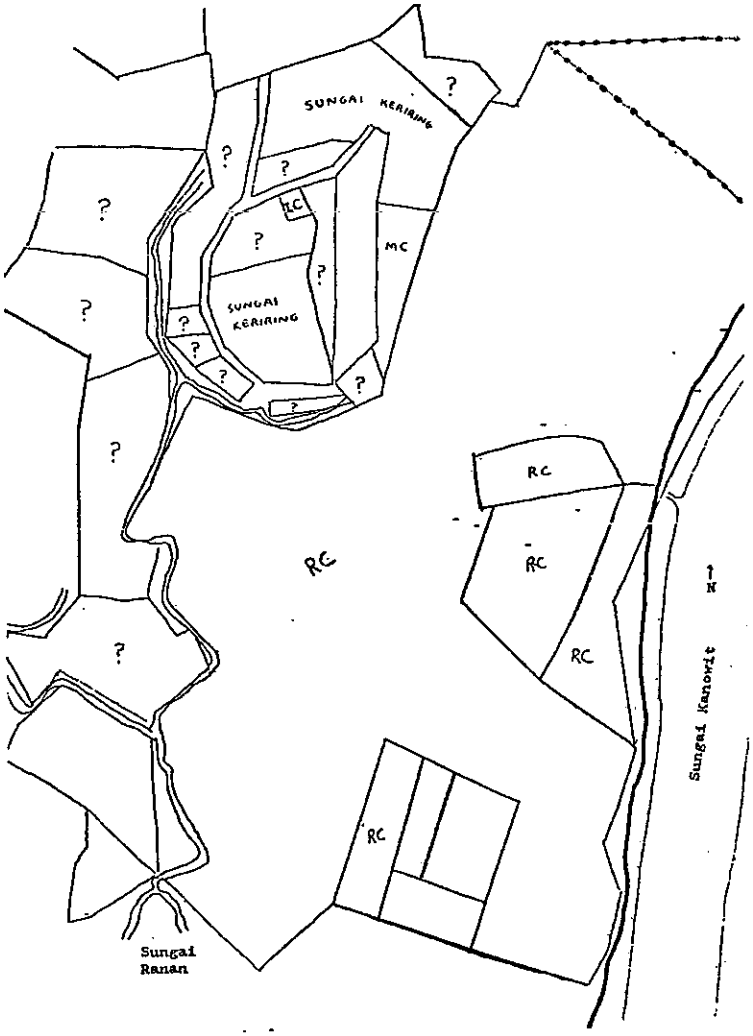
Part II



## MAP 10 III

### RESIDENT OF LANDOWNERS NEAR KANOWIT BAZAAR, 1971

Part III

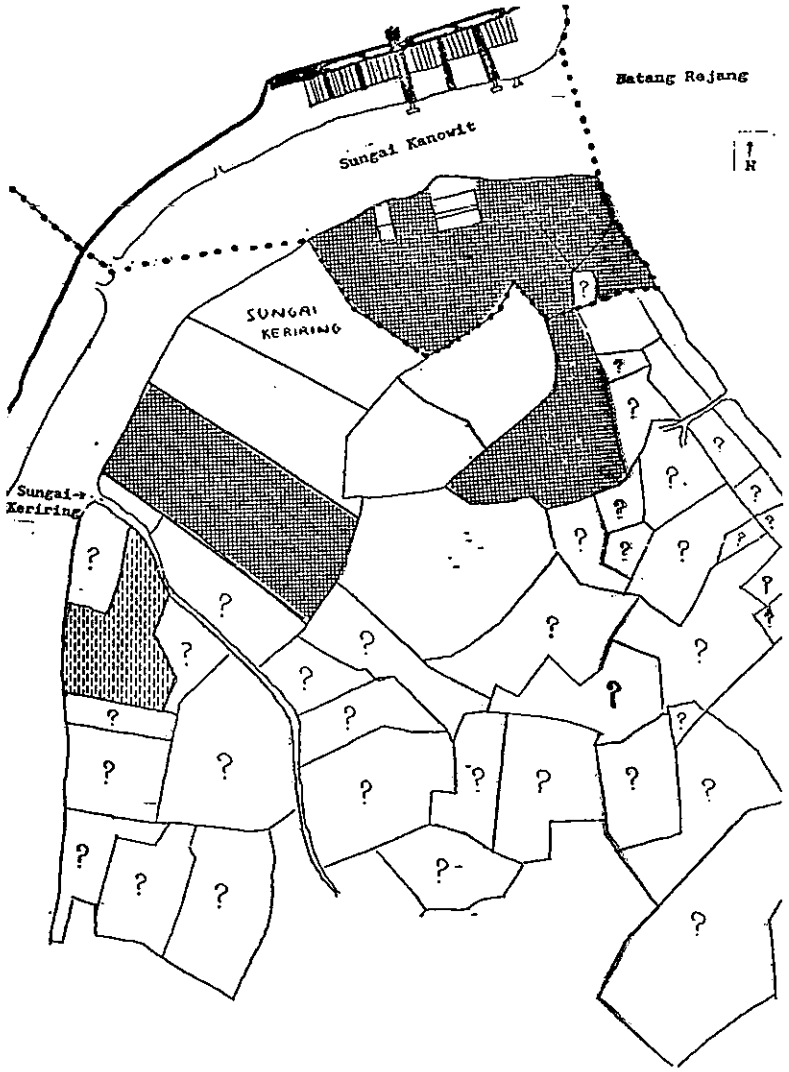





## MAP 10 IV

### RESIDENT OF LANDOWNERS NEAR KANOWIT BAZAAR, 1971

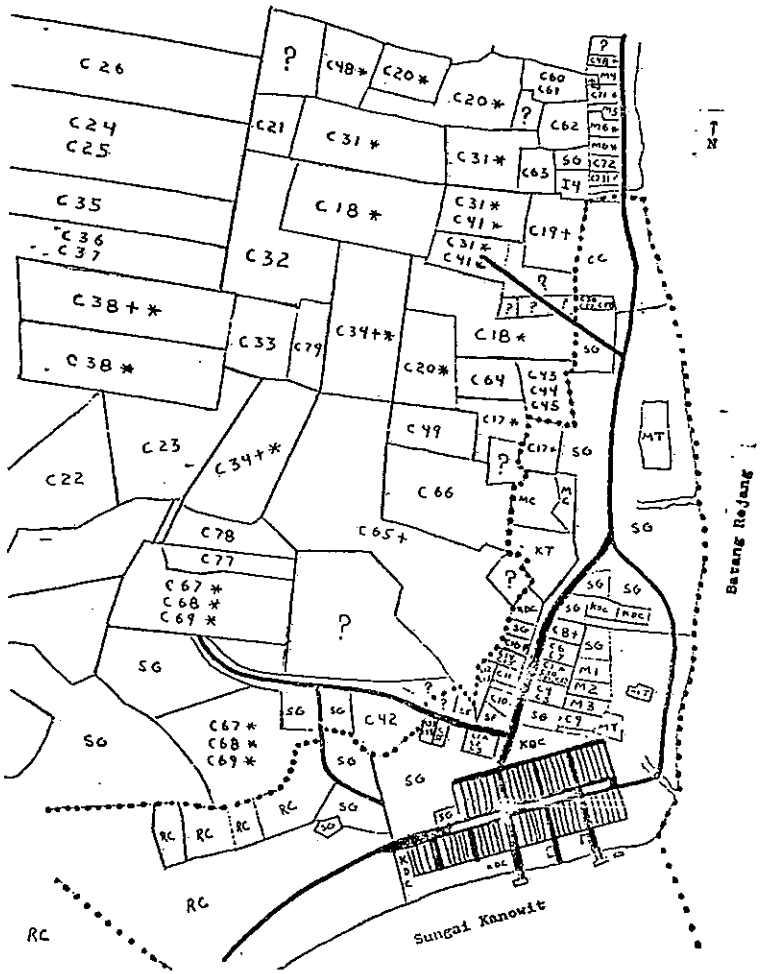
Part IV



# MAP 11 I

## ETHNIC IDENTIFICATIONS OF LAND OWNERS NEAR KANOWIT BAZAAR, 1971

Part I

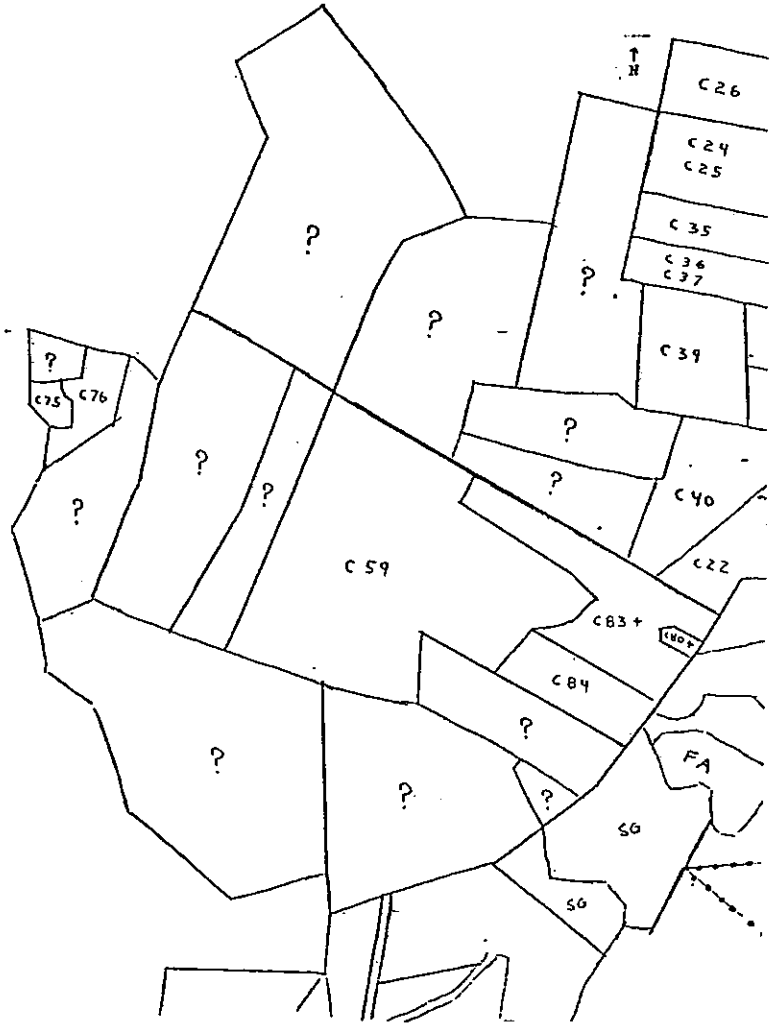





# MAP 11 II

## ETHNIC IDENTIFICATIONS OF LAND OWNERS NEAR KANOWIT BAZAAR, 1971

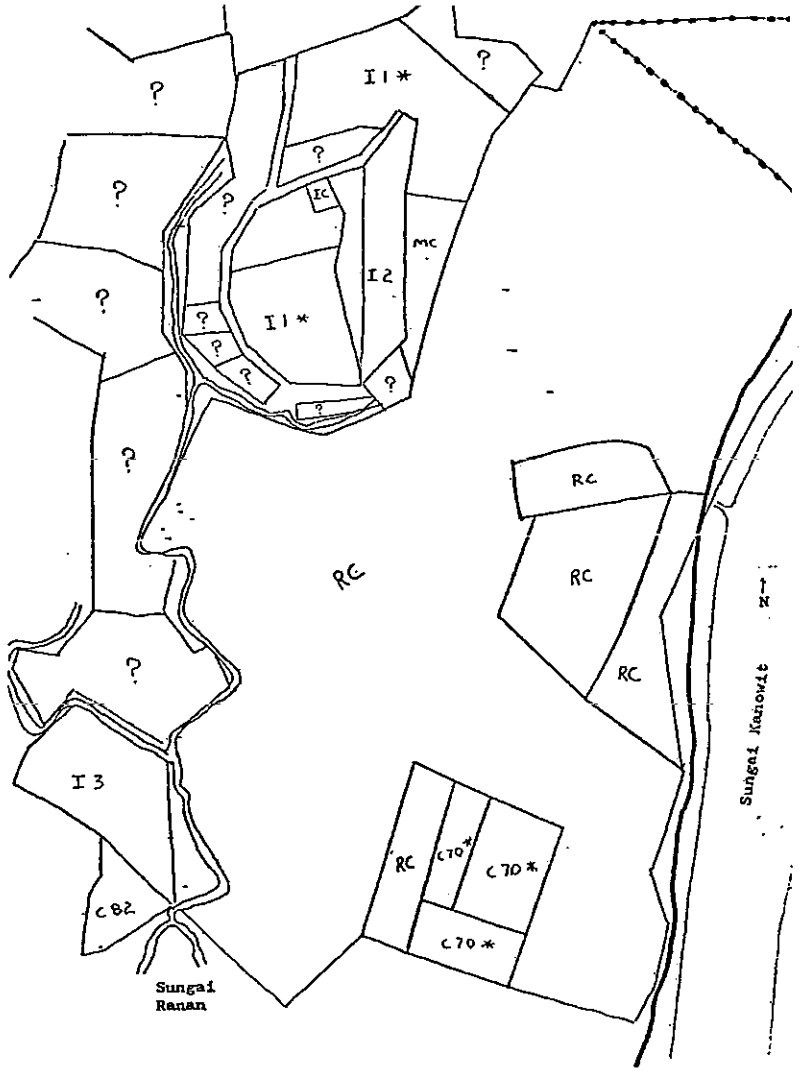
Part II



## MAP 11 III

### ETHNIC IDENTIFICATIONS OF LAND OWNERS NEAR KANOWIT BAZAAR, 1971

Part III

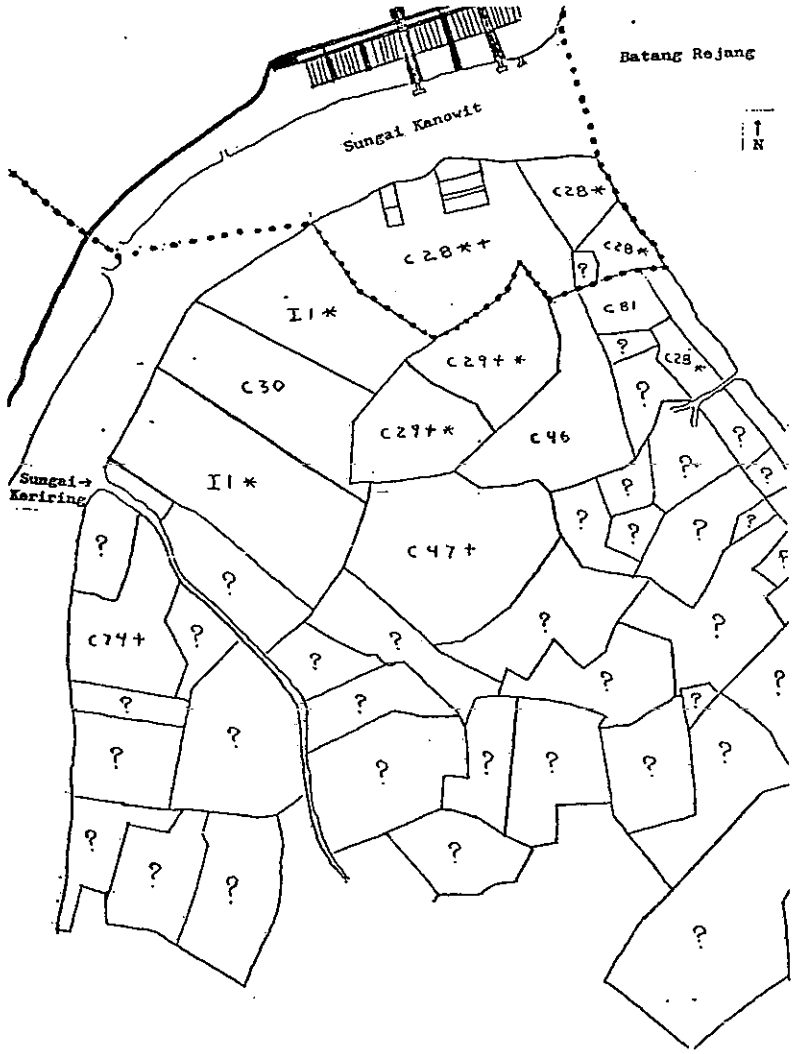





## MAP 11 IV

### ETHNIC IDENTIFICATIONS OF LAND OWNERS NEAR KANOWIT BAZAAR, 1971

Part IV



# CHAPTER 4: THE TOWN

Several bazaars have occupied the nanga of the Kanowit River. Fort Emma was constructed in 1851 on a small rise a fifth of a mile north of the point where the Kanowit meets the Rejang. There was no other settlement there at the time; the longhouses of the Kanowits occupied the opposite bank of the Rejang. The protection offered by the fort encouraged permanent settlers to Kanowit. The Chinese and Malay traders who had plied the Rejang in their launches, bartering imported goods for the jungle products gathered by the longhouse residents, first made temporary stops at the new fort. They established godowns - storage warehouses - there, and used Kanowit as a focal point for their river trade. The leaders of the Malay community, favored by the Brooke government, were able to receive grants of traditional land for themselves and their followers. The Chinese bought land, when possible, or occupied land leased from the government or from other owners. When new Mixed Zone lands were opened, the Chinese outnumbered the other applicants for it. The Malay village developed immediately south of the fort. Below it, in the bend of the confluence of the rivers, the wooden shophouses of the bazaar were built, in a curving line from the bank of the Rejang, through the nanga, to and along the north bank of the Kanowit River. Inland from the shophouses, private homes and garden houses were built, a padang (open parade field) was cleared, jetties and pathways were developed, and social services were established for the inhabitants. Fort Emma had become Kanowit Bazaar.

In April, 1883, the Roman Catholic Mission established its headquarters for the Rejang basin at Kanowit. The Catholic Church and its chief missionary, Father Edmund Dunn of St. Joseph's College, Mill Hill, England, had arrived in Sarawak in 1881. They first established a temporary mission station in the Rejang delta,



and later at Kapit, before deciding on Kanowit as a permanent central location for their mission activities. The Sarawak Government favored and encouraged this choice, awarding large grants of land to the mission at Kanowit. The Roman Catholics at that time worked almost exclusively among the Iban, and the government hoped they would prove to be a stabilizing element among the twenty thousand natives of the Kanowit River and its tributaries.

The missionaries immediately built a small mission house of bamboo and attap leaves, and began a school for Iban children. On August 15, 1884, five boys received their First Communion at St. Francis Xavier School, Kanowit. This school, now open to all races, continues to provide education to the children of Kanowit District today.

In 1885 Father Dunn began his plans to build a church at Kanowit, and St. Francis Xavier Church, was consecrated on October 23, 1887. It was an imposing, yet beautiful, building. The walls were of belian, the black, hard ironwood of the jungle, the dense material used for longhouse foundations, verandas, jetties, and pepper posts, which when wet with rain shines black, like smooth, polished ebony. The ceilings were high and the windows large, for an airy interior. From the corners of the facade rose twin English Gothic spires, ascending above the peak of the roof, lifting the heavy weight of the local wood out of its jungle surroundings, symbolic of its aspirations, as the whole construction - a European church built of native wood by Chinese carpenters - is symbolic of the cultural blending of Kanowit Bazaar.

The church stood as a local landmark for eighty years, the subject of photographs and paintings. During the Second World War it gained an additional attraction for visitors; a 50mm cannon shell, fired by the Australian Air Force, struck a belian post of the church, entered it, turned within the wood, and exited from the same direction it had entered. This proven durability of the

ironwood was not sufficient, however. With time and erosion the structure deteriorated beyond repair. It was demolished in 1967 and replaced by a modern building.

The first nuns arrived at the mission in 1887 also, and by 1895 the Convent at Kanowit was an established institution. It has trained women, provided nursing skills, and taught the children throughout the years. As the mission grew, it added agricultural lands, new farming techniques, and instruction. The mission farms made the church activities self supporting. Outstations were developed in the surrounding river valleys, and the Mill Hill Society Catholic priests became frequent and welcome visitors to the interior longhouses.

Though an English Catholic seminary and mission society, St. Joseph's College at Mill Hill has always attracted large numbers of Dutch seminarians, and the standard image of a Mill H ill father in Sarawak is a friendly, casual, competent, avuncular figure, equally at home conducting a school committee meeting or enjoying beer and conversation in a coffee shop, respected equally be men of all races and religions. Such men have devoted their lives to Sarawak, and it is home to them. Their knowledge of Iban language and culture are matched by their respect for it. Many stay through the Japanese Occupation, and were interned in prison camps; many stay now to retire, die, and be buried in their now-familiar surroundings.

The Roman Catholic Mission has brought some remarkable men to Kanowit. One of these is Father Gerardus Bruggeman, Mill Hill father at Kanowit for more than thirty years. Another was a private American doctor, Lynn Fenimore Cooper, great-grandson of the author James Fenimore Cooper. Dr. Cooper retired from his successful New England practice at middle age, and spent his remaining years serving as an unpaid medical doctor at mission stations in Africa and Asia. Though not a Catholic himself, he preferred to work at their mission posts, as he felt they were well



organized. He first visited Kanowit and met Father Bruggeman during a survey tour in 1956. He chose Kanowit as his new post, and returned to the town in 1958, bringing with him as his gift all the supplies he needed to begin his clinic. He worked without pay, frequently contributing his own funds to support the medical and educational facilities in times of financial crises. He became ill, but continued to work in Kanowit. He died in June, 1960, and is buried at the mission station in Kanowit. His trust fund still supports the operation of a clinic hospital boat.

The mission compound lies to the west of Main Bazaar Road (see frontispiece map). The path enters through a row of hedge, passes the St. Francis Xavier Primary School on the left, and curves around the Old Fathers' House, a large Victorian wooden structure now used to house mission staff. Its large open veranda provides classroom space for the children of Primary I, and their sing-song chanting of their lessons carries through the compound. As the path parallels the Kanowit River, it passes a row of staff quarters, the church bell tower, jetties, and the new Fathers' House, a modern building of cement blocks and glass. Beyond it, on a low rise to the north, is the convent and its boarding house, large, airy wooden structures that house the nuns and female boarding students.

The new Roman Catholic Church, built in 1967 to replace the old ironwood building, straddles the Kanowit Town Line. It is a modern structure of concrete blocks with a tile roof. To the west of the church is the mission hospital. By mutual understanding, the Roman Catholic hospital devotes most of its work to maternity care and children's health, while the Government Dispensary and its dresser concentrate on the other types of cases. Neither clinic has a full time doctor in residence, and serious illnesses and injuries must be taken to Sibu for treatment. For this purpose, the Roman Catholic Mission operates a small boat, an open Iban perau (longboat) with a sunshade. The clinic boat is

available to take emergency cases to the Sibu hospital at times when the express boats are not operating. It can also serve as an ambulance to reach the farms and longhouses along the nearby rivers and tributaries. While many Chinese residents of Kanowit Bazaar prefer to consult private doctors in Sibu when they need medical care, the mission hospital is open to all people; it is not exclusively for Roman Catholics or for Ibans. It staff and patients are multiracial, and during clinic hours it is a focal point for interracial activity in Kanowit Bazaar.

West of the hospital, the path follows the Kanowit River upstream toward the mouth of the Sungai Ranan. A path branches off to the north, to the new Chinese Cemetery located, as they prefer, on a hillside, overlooking the river. The buildings of Sakara Private Secondary School, now, abandoned, stand along the path, as do private farms and gardens. A few miles from the bazaar is Nanga Ranan School, one of the English-language primary schools operated by the Kanowit District Council. The path then turns inland, along the Ranan River, to the gardens and longhouses of the ulu (Malay: upstream, interior).

East of the mission compound is Main Bazaar Road and its fifty-eight shophouses, the economic and commercial center of the town. The original bazaar was slightly farther to the east, in the bend of the river, and the shophouses were built of wooden planks with roofs of attap leaves. During World War II all of Sarawak was occupied by the Japanese Army, and their soldiers came frequently to Kanowit Bazaar. In the closing days of the war, a liberation movement was begun. The European powers did not attach Sarawak from the coast, where Japanese power was strongest, but from the interior, where it was weakest. Allied agents had been dropped by parachute into the interior regions in the headwaters of the Rejang and Baram Rivers. There, far from the seat of Japanese power, they organized the local native peoples into a guerrilla force, using the loyalty of the natives to the Raj,



and their natural skill at jungle warfare and survival, to counteract the superiority of Japanese weapons and supplies. As the war drew closer to the Japanese home islands, and the Japanese Army in Sarawak became a more isolated, and weaker, outpost, the native forces struck, moving down the river valleys, driving the Japanese before them, liberating the country from the interior. These native bands of Ibans, Kayans, Kenyahs, and Kelabits were neither well disciplined nor fully controlled by the Allied agents. For the first time the British encouraged the natives to go to war; there was an "open season" on the hunting of Japanese heads, and for the first time since the Brooke Raj the old men could again openly display their prowess, young men could demonstrate their bravery, and new heads were brought in to hang on the longhouse verandas.

Carried away by the excitement of war, the natives used this opportunity to settle old scores and revive old disputes that had been suspended by the Pax Britannica. Japanese were not the only victims of the guerrilla forces; many peaceful Chinese residents also lost their lives and properties to the marauding bands.

Even though it housed no hostile forces, Kanowit Bazaar was looted and burned to the ground by some of these irregular warriors during their progress down the Rejang River. When peace came with the Japanese surrender a few days later, the bazaar lay in ruins. Temporary sheds were built to replace the shophouses, and the bazaar was gradually rebuilt, again constructed of wood and attap.

The economy of Kanowit boomed during the early years of the Korean War. Rubber was in great demand and prices were high. Pepper, too, found a good market. In 1951, the shophouses and warehouses of Kanowit Bazaar were overflowing with piles of rubber sheets, waiting shipment to Sibu and the coast. On November 8, 1951, a fire began in a bakery shop in the bazaar. Its flames rapidly spread through the flammable leaf and wood structures, igniting the piles of rubber, and the whole bazaar burned

to the ground once again. Business had been good and credit was plentiful; a new bazaar was designed that would be permanent, beautiful, and more resistant to fire - fifty-eight concrete shophouses, in two rows along the Kanowit River, with fire breaks between the blocks of shops. Construction began in 1952 and was completed in 1953. Before the shophouses were ever occupied the bottom had dropped out of the rubber market; there was no money to pay for the elegant new buildings, and many of the mortgages held by the Chartered Bank in Sibu (as only 3½ interests) have been long overdue in their repayment. Most small bazaars in Sarawak in the 1970's are still constructed of wood, tin, and attap. The study concrete shophouses of Kanowit Bazaar are its last legacy of the boom times of the past.

Main Bazaar Road, one thousand feet long, parallels the Kanowit River, two hundred feet inland from its banks. As its western end, a hedge marks the beginning of the Roman Catholic Mission; its eastern end lies a few feet from the banks of the Rejang. It is a wide street - sixty-six feet wide. Sealed with macadam, it is the only paved road in Kanowit Bazaar. It is bisected by a wide intersection, leading south to the main public wharf on the Kanowit River and north to Cinema Road.

Thirty-four shophouses face Main Bazaar Road form the south; behind them lies a one hundred foot stretch of riverbank on which are located two gasoline stations, a public lavatory, several storage sheds, beached longboats, and innumerable piles of firewood. Paths between the shophouse blocks lead to the wharfs and jetties. Twenty-four shops face the road from the north, and behind them lies the residential areas of the town. Each shophouse is 110 feet long and 20 feet wide. They are two stories highs, with a small storage attic under the peaked roof. The shophouses are arranged in blocks of six, side by side, with twenty-and forty-foot firebreaks between them. The westernmost block contains only four shops, and the additional forty-foot area is occupied by an



Iban Rest House, the Penghulus' Court House, and a Maternity Clinic, all provided by the Kanowit District Council. While there are six blocks of shops on the southern side of the street, there are only four blocks on the northern. The remaining land on the western end of the road is the site of a large wooden building, one half occupied by the Department of Agriculture and the other half by an open market shed. Next to it is the Government Dispensary. Behind these buildings rises a steep hill, topped by the storage tank and pumping station for the local water supply and the 250 foot radio tower of the Posts and Telegraphs Department.

Although each shophouse measures 110 feet by 20 feet, and each is enclosed and separated from its neighbors by concrete walls, the buildings are not solid rectangles. Part of the rear portion of each shophouse is open to the sky, and some rear utility areas are only one story high, yielding an open courtyard surrounded by a wall, bordered by small rooms, open windows, and balconies (See Figures 2 and 3). While the upstairs (American "second floor") of the buildings are a full 110 feet long, the ground floor rooms total only 100 feet in length; thus each shop is fronted by a ten foot walkway, roofed by the overhanging of the second story. This covered arcade, called the "five-foot way" regardless of its actual width, is a standard feature of Chinese bazaars in South East Asia. It provides a sidewalk, shaded from the sun and rain, an extra work or display area, a place to park bicycles, a front porch for lounging and socializing, and a play area for children. Each shop has a folding or removable front wall of planks, fully opened during the day, and from the five-foot way one can look into each shop as he passes. At night, the boards are replaced, and access is through a small wooden door. Each business day in Kanowit Bazaar begins and ends with a cacophony of sliding and slapping planks as the front walls are opened and closed.

From the eastern end of Main Bazaar Road, a path leads north, along the bank of the Rejang, through the eldest of the two

Malay kampongs, kampong Mesjid. A mesjid is a mosque, but the Malay community of Kanowit is too small to support the complete facilities of a full mosque. Instead there is a surau, a prayer house, located on a plot of land in the kampong belonging to the Malay Charitable Trust. A new surau was constructed in 1971. It is a fine plank building with a wide veranda housing the large drum used in prayer services. Unlike a mosque, a surau has no dome or minaret; the call to prayer is made from the veranda, and the meetings themselves are held in the prayer room that occupies the main portion of the surau.

Malay homes in the kampong are raised four or more feet off the ground on posts, with access by stairs or a ladder to the veranda or front door. There is a great variety of construction types and materials: some houses are made entirely of bamboo and attap; others are elaborate structures of unpainted wood, with tin roofs and glass windows (See Figure 8); all are light and airy, with large doors, windows, verandas, and high peaked roofs. They are not situated in neat, even rows, but are scattered at random, some close to the path, others far back from it. A distinguishing feature of Malay kampongs in Sarawak is their natural setting: trees and undergrowth are removed only when necessary to clear a plot of land for a house site. Fruit trees are planted around the buildings, and the natural colors of the construction materials blend with the surrounding vegetation; the houses are a part of the natural environment, not a replacement for it. A Malay kampong has the feeling of a grove or garden. Kampong Mesjid is small - it has only thirteen homes - but it more resembles the jungle than it does the formal streets, shophouses, and private Chinese houses that lie only a few feet away from it.

The path through Kampong Mesjid leads to the Kubu, the fort, the District office, and then turns to pass the Kanowit District Council building and join Cinema Road. Cinema Road begins at Main Bazaar Road and heads north. A few yards behind the



shophouses there is an intersection: a narrow path goes off to the west, leading to several privates homes, some government quarters, and then on to the gardens and farms in the jungle. Along this path (usually called "Sesco Road") lies the Public Works Department (PWD), with its workrooms, offices, storage sheds, and quarters for employees. An access path leads to the radio tower on the hill. Another trail takes one to a small clearing in the jungle used for cockfights, held on special weekends and holidays; the clearing lies just beyond the official town line, as cockfighting is not permitted within the town limits.

At the intersection of Sesco Road and Cinema Road there are several public facilities. The offices and power plant of the Sarawak Electricity Supply Corporation (Sesco) give the path its name. The large 75 kilowatt gasoline-powered generator at the power plant is usually sufficient for the town's electrical needs, which average 62 to 70 kilowatts output each hour, but there are also two 50 kilowatt engines for reserve or emergency use. The minimum monthly charge of $3.00 allows electricity to be used for lighting by nearly all of the town's residents, and the additional costs of operating fans, radios, and even refrigerators are not excessive.

Two of the most popular centers for interracial activities are located at this same intersection, the Capital Theatre, previously described, and the Kanowit District Council basketball court. Basketball is popular with all races in Kanowit, and the court is usually occupied all day and evening by practicing players and "pick up" games. Floodlights allow the court to be used after dark, and it is rarely empty. Groups of friends, both male and female, organize their own teams, as do schools, clubs, and the employees of offices. Many of the teams are uniracial as a result of their organizing groups, but race is not a factor in team selection, and multiracial team membership is not considered to be unusual. Local tournaments are held frequently, with playoff games at night

attracting great local interest. Trophies are awarded to the winners. Games with visiting teams from other towns, and competitions in Divisional or State playoffs, attract large crowds to the basketball court.

Nearby on Cinema Road is the Chinese Pauper House, supported by local charity. It provides a simple temporary home for indigent visitors, and a place for the poor to stay while in the bazaar. It is also occasionally used for wakes and funerals by residents of all races. During 1970-71 the Chinese Pauper House was usually uninhabited and used only for storage.

The private homes along Cinema Road have a range of quality and style. One elegant home lies beside a small stream, and the house is called Hsi[1] Hu[2] (West Lake); it resembles the family dwellings seen in old pictures of villages in China. There are also more modest quarters, such as one row house that contains five individual units. One old Victorial-style two-story wooden house is known to be the gathering place for the handful of old men who smoke opium, as there are not nearly enough who use it to support a formal opium den in the town. In another house one can frequently find a card game or mah jong in progress. Most of the homes are Chinese owned and inhabited.

A quarter of a mile north of the theatre and basketball court, Cinema Road is joined by the path from Kampong Mesjid and the District Office. A number of public service facilities and areas of racial interaction are located near this intersection. On the west side of Cinema Road is the Kanowit District Council Community Hall, an unattractive but highly functional structure covered with sheets of tin roofing. The Community Hall is a one-story building, but its peaked roof is extremely high. The hall is divided into two sections. In the rear is a large rectangular room with a concrete floor. The size of the room and the height of the roof permit a full regulation-size badminton court with enough room remaining for chairs and benches for spectators. Like basket ball, badminton is



popular with both men and women, and all races play it. Tournaments are organized and trophies awarded for singles and doubles competition. It is especially popular during the raining season, as it is played indoors. With the nets removed, the badminton court becomes a meeting hall or dance floor, available to any public group that needs an enclosed hall. The louvers in the high roof and the long rows of windows allow air to circulate when the room is full. The windows also allow large numbers of uninvited spectators to peer in at the party guests, a drawback in social entertaining, as many Kanowit residents are still self-conscious about mixed dancing or performing in public. For a good party, such as New Year's Eve or National Day, social organizers among the civil servants prefer the chambers of the District Council, on the upper floor of the Council Offices: "How can we have fun at a party when everyone is watching us?" they say.

The front room of the Community Hall is a small library and reading room. Sarawak and Malaysian newspapers arrive every day, and readers drop in during the late afternoon and evening to read the papers or borrow books. The library has about 300 books, the majority of them in English, and they are well used; 114 books were borrowed in May, 1970, and 98 in June of that year. The racial distribution of book borrowers closely parallels their percentages in the town population on as a whole; of the 98 books withdrawn in June, 1970, 75 went to Chinese readers, 17 to Malays, 3 to Ibans, 2 to Europeans, with one unknown. Racial distribution in the town is 72.7% Chinese, 18.1% Malays, and 6.5% Ibans. School students and government civil servants borrow most of the books. A large variety of topics are available, both fiction and non-fiction, but Westerns (The Bandit of Big Bend), mysteries (Born to be Murdered), and children's books are the most in demand. Dr. Seuss is very popular; in both sample months the most frequently borrowed book was his I Wish I Had Duck Feet, and the sight of a little Chinese girl with her blue primary school

uniform and paper umbrella walking home with The Cat in The Hat under her arm is not out of the ordinary in Kanowit Bazaar.

The Kanowit Community Hall is representative of many aspects of the life and people of Kanowit; racial tolerance and interaction, friendly competition, western-oriented culture and education, and a greater degree of sophistication than a Westerner is led to expect from his readings in the popular literature describing Borneo.

Across the road from the Community Hall is the office of the Posts and Telegraphs Department. Mail is delivered to the Post Office every week day, and an automated telephone exchange is linked by radio to Sibu, connecting Kanowit with the world outside. Only a few shops have telephones, but all government offices and some of the government quarters have them, and there is a coin-operated phone booth outside of the Post Office for public use.

Behind the Post Office is the Kanowit District Council building, housing its offices, its Education Department, which administers fifty primary schools throughout the District, and the meeting chambers of the District Council, a body of twelve Ibans and two Chinese chosen in popular elections to represent their neighbors in the District. North of the Council building is the padang, site of a third popular sport, football (soccer). Nearby were the Police Station and the barracks for its staff. A Malay cemetery lies near the banks of the Rejang.

Opposite the padang is Kee Ting Chinese Primary School, providing six years of Mandarin-medium education to 294 children. Even this most "ethnocentric" of institutions is not 100% uniracial; there are three Malays and an Iban enrolled there as full-time students. Like the Roman Catholic St. Francis Xavier School, Kee Ting is a private school, but it receives some government financial aid to supplement its income from tuition fees. It is governed by a committee of respected Chinese towkays, and administered by a headmaster with a staff of eight teachers. Next to the Kee Ting



School is the Methodist Church Mission, consisting of a church building, a kindergarten, and buildings for the staff. The Methodist Church is more active in Sibu and Kapit than in Kanowit, and it draws upon Foochow Chinese and Ibans from Methodist areas for its main support. Its activities are not as visible in Kanowit Bazaar as are those of the Roman Catholic Church.

Cinema Road leads north from the padang past a series of government quarters for civil servants, the most modern, well-equipped, and western of all Kanowit housing. A path takes one a short way into the jungle to Yik Kwong Private Secondary School, a private institution owned by two local Chinese businessmen. Yik Kwong is unaided by the government, and supports itself entirely by its tuition fees. It is English-medium, open to all races, and its small student body is composed mainly of those who do not meet the entrance requirements of the Government Secondary School across the river.

Cinema Road next passes the older Chinese Cemetery, a low hill to the west of the riverbank. On its crest is a pavilion containing an altar and several incense burners, and the graves are scattered along the slopes of the hill. The cemetery is now full, and all new burials are at the new cemetery west of the town. The land for the cemeteries was given to the Chinese community by the Sarawak Government.

A footbridge takes Cinema Road across a small stream and into Kampong Baharu ("new kampong;) sometimes called Kampong Hilar), an overflow of the original kampong further to the south, which it resembles in style. A second bridge carries the path toward the home of the District Officer, an imposing residence high up on a hill overlooking the Rejang River and the town. Beyond it are farms, pepper gardens, and the jungle.

## HOUSING

Figures 2-8 (following) indicates the variety of housing types and qualities available in Kanowit Bazaar. There are four basic types of dwelling structures in the town area - shophouses, private Chinese homes, government quarters, and kampong housing. The shophouses are uniform in their basic structure, but were sold to the original owners with unfinished interiors, and each resident was able to subdivide his building to suit his own purposes. Government quarters are the most consistently high quality housing, and many follow the standard floorplan for Grade III Civil Servants' Housing used throughout Sarawak. Over the years, however, a number of atypical quarters have been erected, some for employees below Grade III, some for Grade II servants, and some for special purposes or functions, such as for Peace Corps Volunteers or bachelors. The greatest variation in government housing is in the size of the dwelling. For private Chinese homes and kampong housing, the style and construction reflect the amount of money the owners are willing or able to invest, and the variations run the full scale from the finest to the most rustic; no two private homes are exactly the same.

Figure 2 and 3 show the typical arrangements for the ground floors of two types of shophouses, a general goods shop and a coffeeshop. Corner shops have removable plank walls on the side as well as in the front of the shop, and the ground floor bedroom may also open onto the street, and be rented as a separate shop for some small business. In all the shophouses, the bath consists of an open concrete water tank, filled from a tap, from which water is dipped with a ladle for a "bucket bath," The toilets of fifty-seven of the buildings are of the bucket type. The bucket is removable from the outside of the building, and is emptied each evening by a man hired for the purpose by the District Council. One shop has a flush toilet. All the shops have running water at several taps or basins, and all have electric lighting and outlets.

The upper floors of the fifty-eight shophouses display highly



individual floorplans; two samples are given in Figures 4 and 5. Occasionally the entire floor is divided into bedrooms for use by the family itself, but it is more common to partition off some areas for rental as apartments or furnished rooms. This is especially true for the rear section, which is naturally separated from the front rooms and has its own water supply. Corner shops have a balcony along the outside of the upper story, permitting direct and easy access to all the rooms on that floor; they are therefore frequently used as rooming houses, with most of the area sublet to other tenants, who share common cooking and bathing facilities at the rear of the floor, and the common toilet in the courtyard below. Rents average $20-25 a month per room, or $40-50 a month for an apartment area, depending on the size and the furnishings provided.

The private Chinese homes vary considerably in size and quality. Figure 6 diagrams two samples. The materials used in construction, age of the building, facilities available, and the location all influence the quality of the dwelling. The Census of Housing conducted as a part of the National Census in August, 1970, states these details for 31 private homes along Cinema Road and Sesco Road in Kanowit Bazaar; Of the 31, 26 were constructed of wooden planks, 3 were of attap, 1 of concrete, and 1 of other materials. 17 roofs were classified as being attap, but since the census takers tended to confuse attap with wooden shingles, this figure is too high; shingles predominate in this group. 13 other homes had tin roofs, and 1 was of other materials. 19 of the 31 homes were judged to be in sound condition, 11 were considered to be deteriorating, and 1 was classified as delapidated. The ages of the homes were classified as follows: 0-4 years, 11; 5-9 years, 4; 10-29 year, 14; 30+ years, 1; unknown, 1. 20 of these houses had running water inside the structure; 11 did not. 18 were wired for electricity, while 13 used kerosene lamps or pressure lanterns, for illumination. 6 homes have no toilets at all; the remaining 25

are divided between flush toilets (8), buckets (12), and pit latrines (5). The cost of a private home is so variable that no estimates can be given; none were available for rent in 1970-71.

The best quality of housing in Kanowit Bazaar is found in the government quarters (Figure 7), as they were built for civil servants and are maintained by the Public Works Department. All have inside plumbing, flush toilets, showers, and electricity. Most also have ceiling fans, screened windows, and government furnishings. The government cuts the lawns and maintains the paths and walkways at a charge of $3.00 per month. Rents are based on the salary of the government employee.

Like the private Chinese homes, kampong housing is highly individualistic. Figure 8 shows two sample floor-plans. The census of the 13 homes in Kampong Mesjid indicates that all 13 have plank walls, and all but one have attap (or shingle) roofs; 1 has a tin roof. The fact that 12 were considered to be deteriorating and 1 delapidated may indicate an unconscious ethnic bias in value judgement by the young Chinese census taker, as most are in very stable condition. 2 were said to be 5-9 years old; 3 were 10-29 years old; and 4 were over 30 years in age; 4 were of unknown vintage. Only four have piped water inside the house, and none of the 13 has toilets; for both purposes the river is used. 8 homes have electric lighting, while 5 use other means.

There is no racial discrimination in the sale or rental of housing in Kanowit Bazaar. Nor are there any distinctive preferences other than those mentioned previously concerning kampong styles. While certain racial groups tend to dominate in certain housing types (Chinese in shophouses and Malays in kampongs), there are primarily determined by economic factors, and there are at least a few residents in each type of housing or section of town who are from other than the dominant racial group. 824 people live in the fifty-eight shophouses; all but 16 of them are Chinese of various dialects. 335 people live on Cinema Road



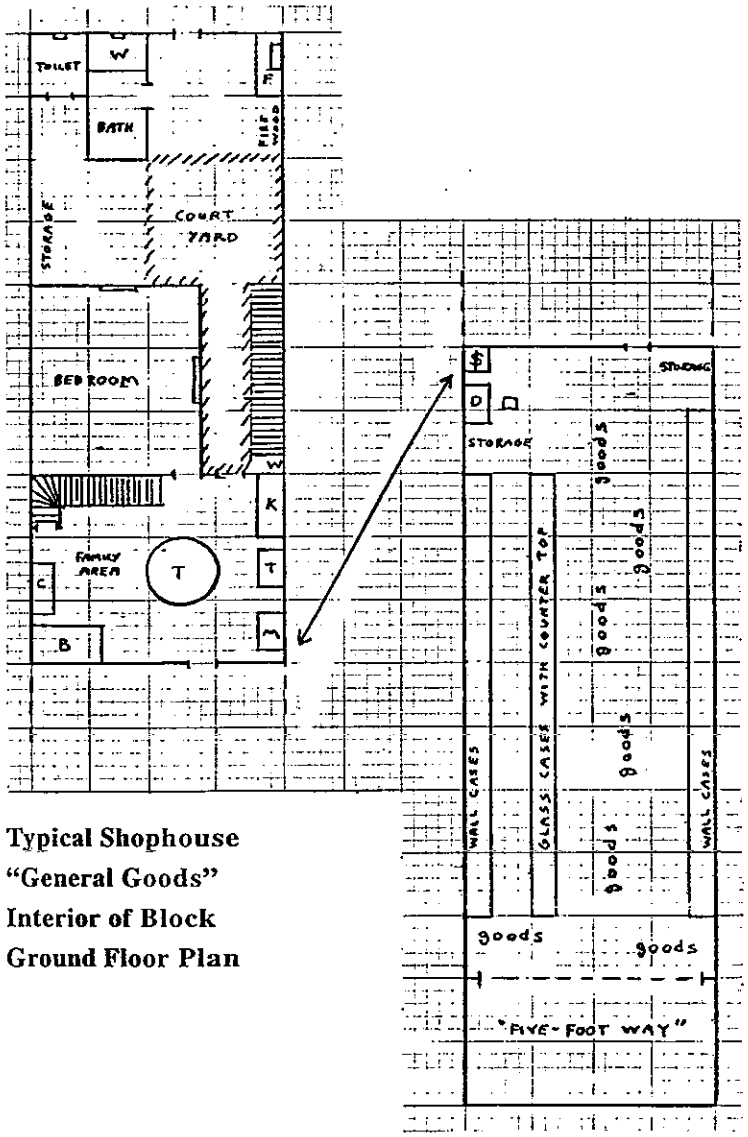
and its vicinity; 17 are non-Chinese. 272 people live in the two kampongs, of whom 10 are Chinese and 5 are Iban. The 225 residents of the government quarters represent all of the racial groups in Kanowit and all of the Chinese dialect groups except Henghua and Teochiew. The government civil servants are the most actively multiracial social group in Kanowit Bazaar; their housing patterns both reflect and contribute to this cultural integration.

## CODES FOR FIGURES 2-8

= window
= doorway
= removable plant wall
= area within lines is open to the sky
w = water tap or shower
w = water basin & tap
w = open cement water tank
wc = flush toilet
f = fireplace
t = table
c = clothing cupboard
b = bed
k = kitchen or cooking area
m = meatsafe (food storage cupboard)
d = desk
$ = safe
r = refrigerator
= stairs

Scale for all figures: 1 inch = 10 feet

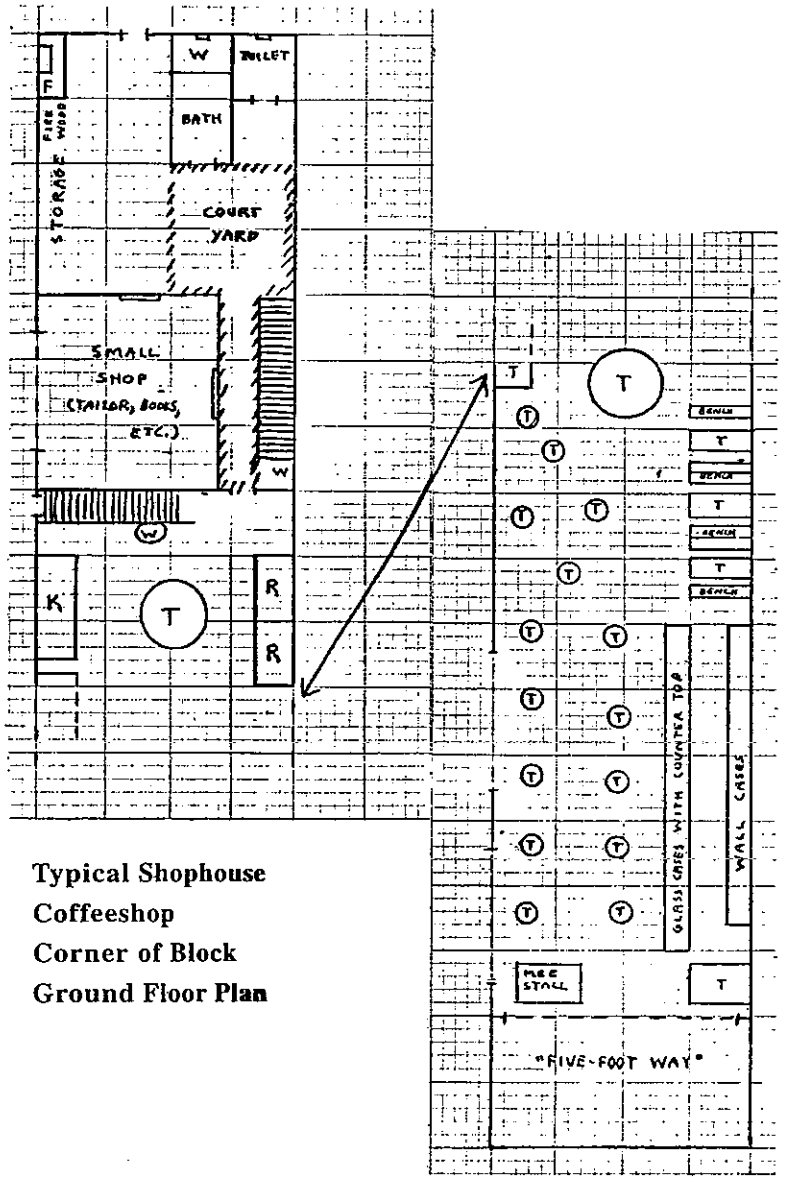
## FIGURE 2




**Typical Shophouse**
**"General Goods"**
**Interior of Block**
**Ground Floor Plan**

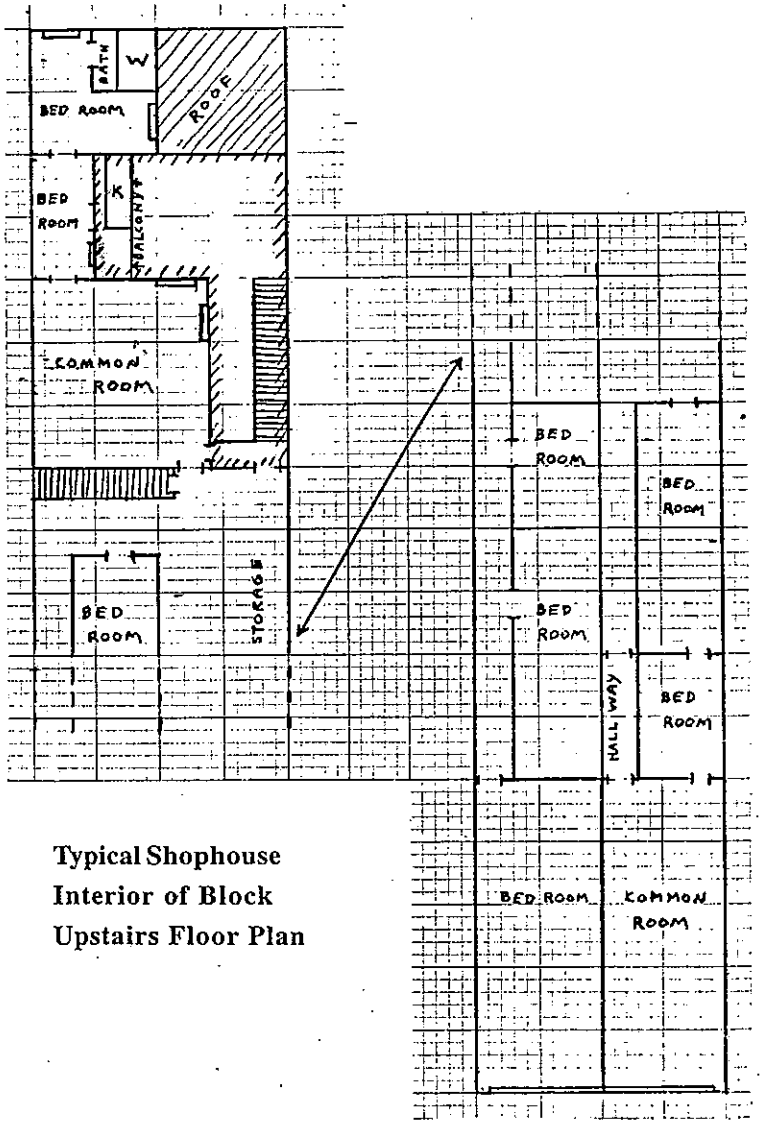


## FIGURE 3




**Typical Shophouse**
**Coffeeshop**
**Corner of Block**
**Ground Floor Plan**

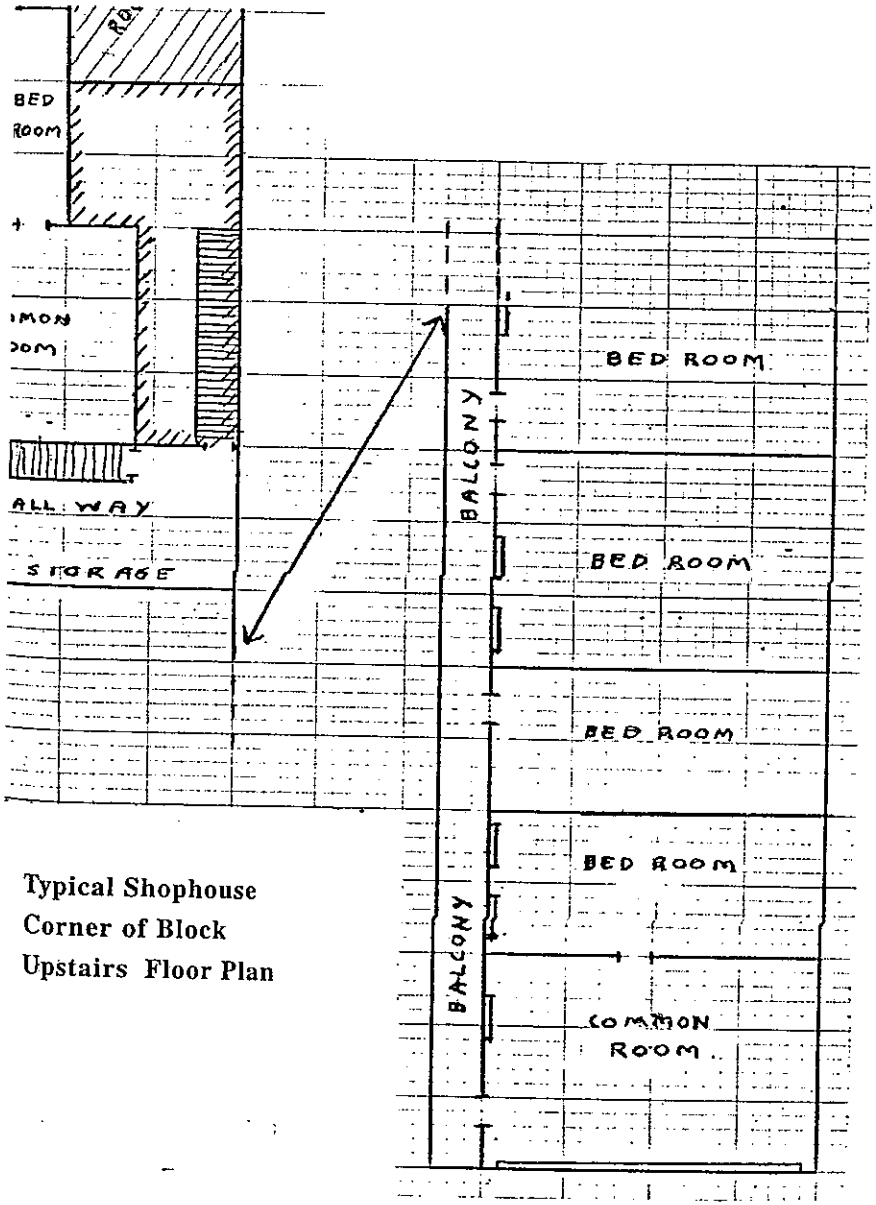
## FIGURE 4




Typical Shophouse
Interior of Block
Upstairs Floor Plan



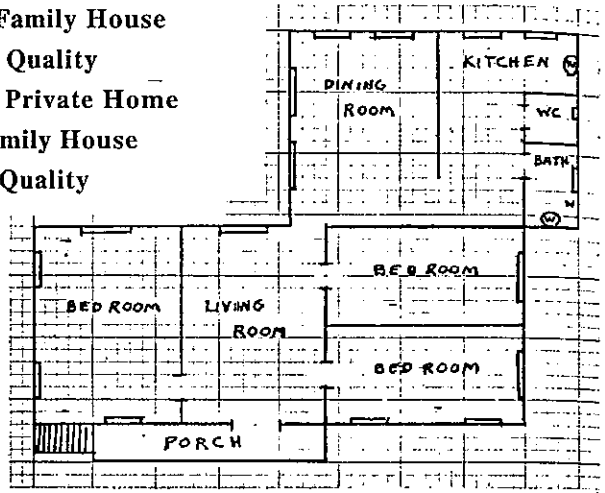
## FIGURE 5

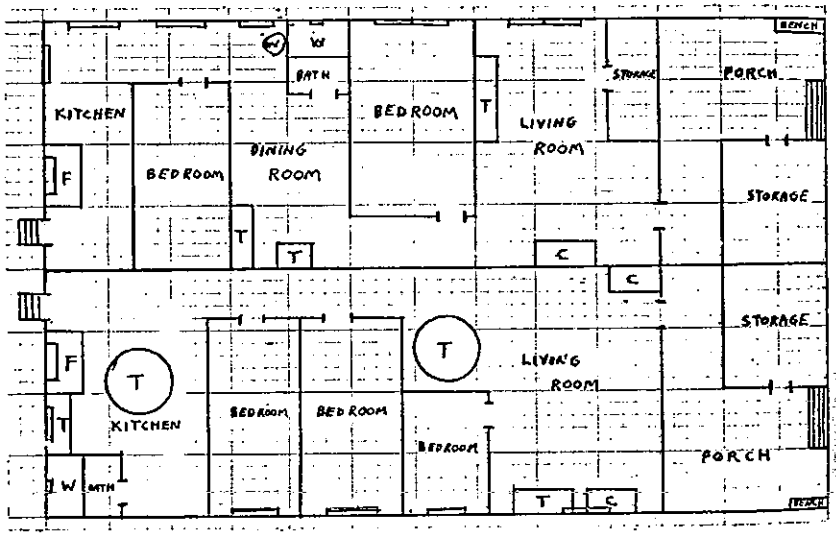



Typical Shophouse
Corner of Block
Upstairs Floor Plan

## FIGURE 6

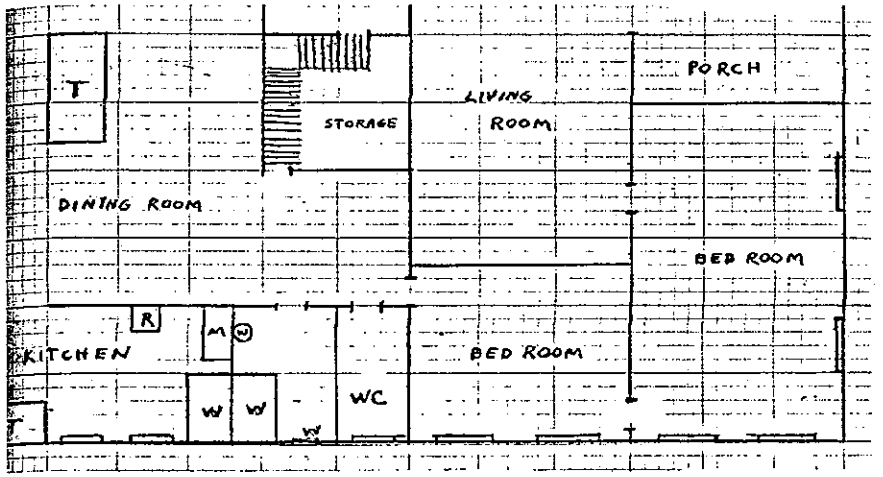
Above: Typical Private Home
Single Family House
Higher Quality
Below: Typical Private Home
Two Family House
Lower Quality

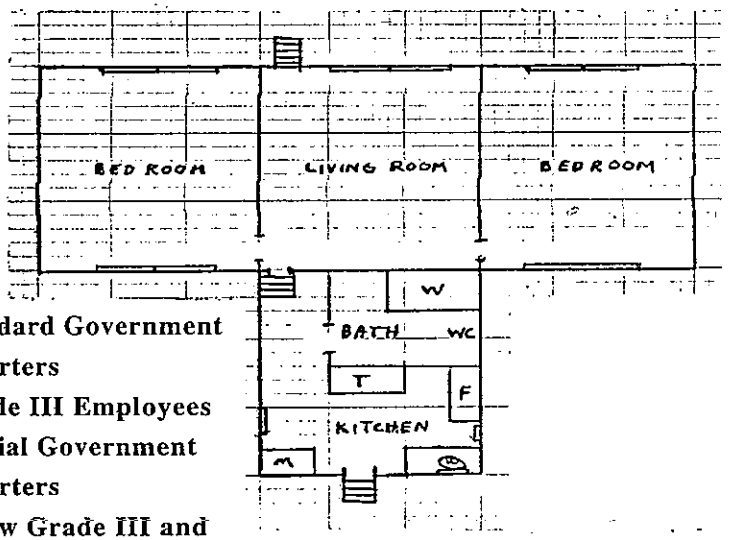




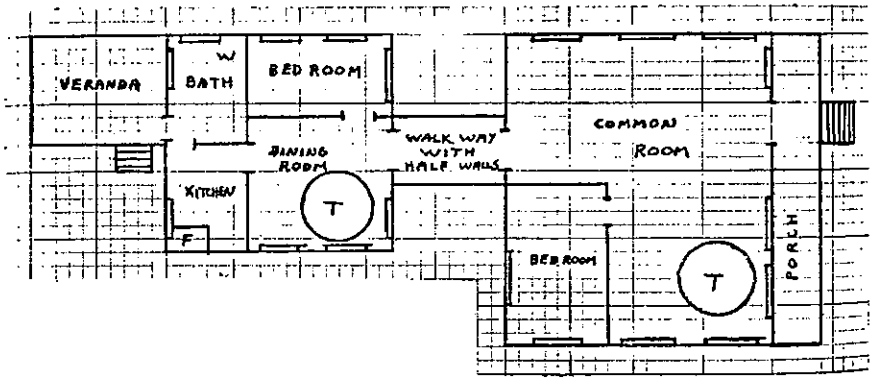

## FIGURE 7



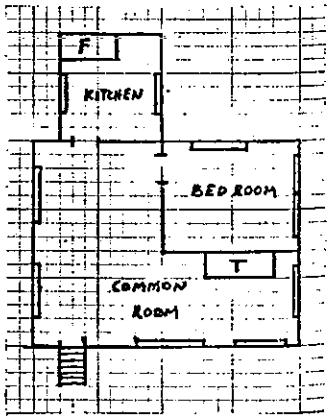




Above: Standard Government
Quarters
Grade III Employees
Below: Special Government
Quarters
Below Grade III and
Temporary Employees

## FIGURE 8




**Typical Kampong Home**
**Wooden Construction**
**Higher Quality**




**Typical Kampong Home**
**Bamboo and Leaf Construction**
**Lower Quality**



# CHAPTER 5: SOME MULTIRACIAL AND UNIRACIAL ACTIVITIES

As mentioned in the previous chapters, there are some activities, pursuits, and institutions in Kanowit Bazaar that are primarily, often exclusively, of a multiracial nature. Often centered around a specific location (Maps 12 a & b), these community-wide endeavors bring together members of the various ethnic groups in Kanowit and instill in them common goals achieved through common patterns of behavior. As the benefits to the individual that can result from the attainment of these goals - jobs, financial opportunities, prestige, political power, higher standards of living - become more obvious to the people, their desire to achieve these goals increases; as desire increases, so does the willingness to follow the common patterns of behavior necessary to reach the desired goals. These common patterns of behavior differ from the local cultures' traditional concepts of goal-achievement in man cases. These patterns are frequently of Western (usually British) origin, but have been so widely modified through years of experience to suit the Sarawak social environment, and so well intermeshed with local cultural patterns, that they are no longer mere colonial copies of European culture. Material benefits are an incentive to culture change in Kanowit (as elsewhere), and the attainment of these goals is giving birth to a new multiracial culture.

Several of the foci of interracial activities have already been described, and an outline of the proceedings of a typical meeting of the Kanowit District Council, where four Chinese combine with twenty Ibans to direct local projects, is given in Appendix II. In this chapter one additional focal point for interracial contact, and the prime contributor to the development of a multiethnic environment, the schools, will be discussed. While many

opportunities for multiracial activity have been developed in Kanowit Bazaar, many uniracial activities and institutions still remain. Several of these will be presented here.

## SCHOOLS

There are three categories of schools in Sarawak; Government Schools, owned and operated by the State and/or local governments and financed with public funds; Aided Private Schools, privately owned and operated, usually by a local committee or charitable institution, but receiving subsidies of financial support from government revenues; Unaided Private Schools, receiving no financial support from the government. All

### MAPS 12a-& 12b

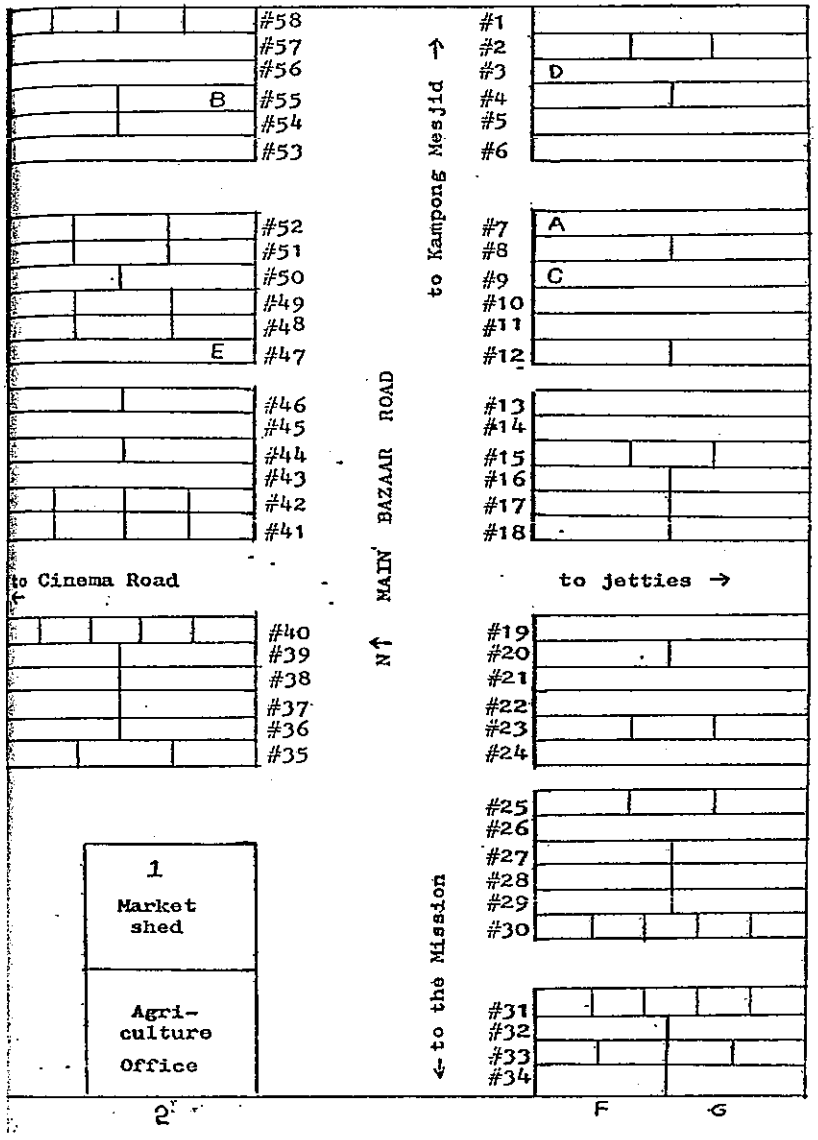
### LOCATIONS OF MULTIRACIAL AND UNIRACIAL ACTIVITIES

| MULTIRACIAL ACTIVITIES | | UNIRACIAL ACTIVITIES | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Market shed | A. | Kapitan Hokkien |
| 2. | Government Dispensary | B. | Kapitan Foochow |
| 3. | St Francis Xavier Primary | C. | Hokkien Association |
| 4. | Roman Catholic Church | D. | Foochow Association |
| 5. | Roman Catholic Hospital | E. | Kwangtung Association |
| 6. | Cockfighting field | F. | Iban Rest House/Penghulu's Court |
| 7. | Capital Theatre | G. | KDC Maternity Clinic |
| 8. | Basketball court | H. | Chinese Pauper Hosue |
| 9. | Community Hall | I. | Malay surau |
| 10. | Post Office | J. | Kee Ting Primary School |
| 11. | Kanowit District Council | K. | Malay cemetery |
| 12. | Fort Emma (District Office) | L. | Chinese cemetery |
| 13. | Padang | | |
| 14. | Methodist Church | | |
| 15. | Yik Kwong Secondary School | | |
| 16. | Government Secondary School (across Rejang River) | | |



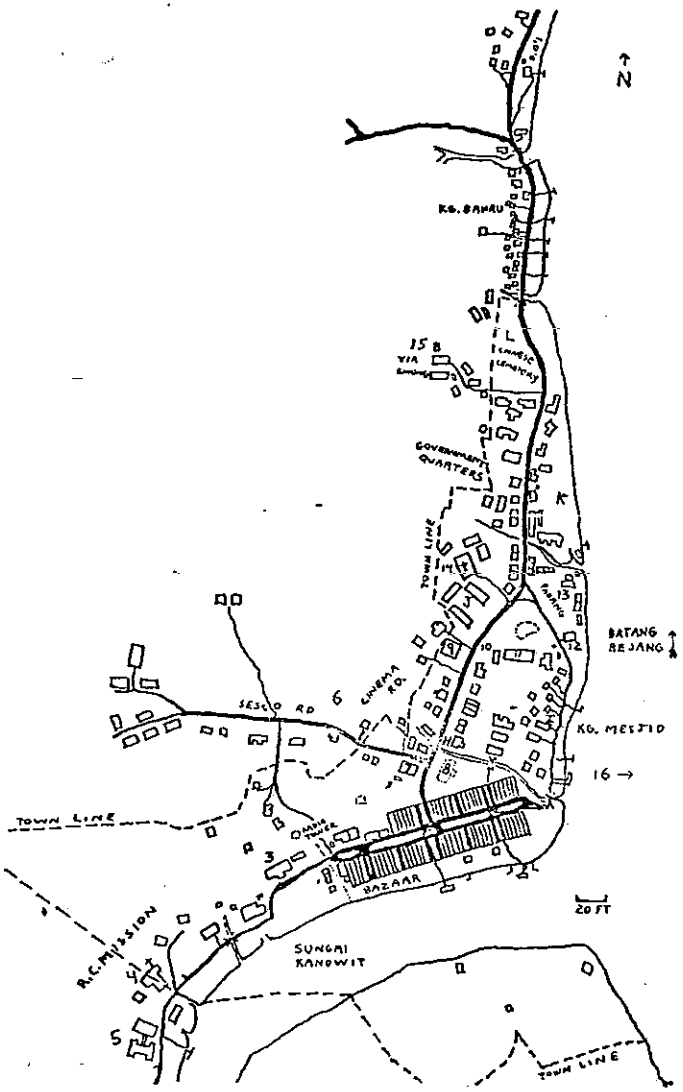
### MAP 12 a

### LOCATIONS OF MULTIRACIAL AND UNIRACIAL ACTIVITIES



## MAP 12 b

### LOCATIONS OF MULTIRACIAL AND UNIRACIAL ACTIVITIES






three of these types are found among the schools of Kanowit Bazaar.

The Aided and Unaided Private Schools are also subdivided into a number of varying types, depending on their sponsoring institutions. Most likely to receive official government approval and financing are those schools sponsored by churches and Christian missions and those operated by committees of concerned (usually Chinese) citizens. Often these schools were established in their communities many years ago, before public education became widespread in Sarawak. At that time in the past they were either provided as social services by a foreign charitable organization, or were the result of the banding together of a group of parents who wished to assure the education of their children. In the case of mission-sponsored schools (such as St. Francis Xavier Primary in Kanowit), the governing board of directors was chosen by the church officials. A Church Board of Education would oversee all of the schools run by that mission throughout the state, and the clergymen at the local mission handled the specific problems of administration. In some cases today, a clergyman assumes responsibility for the daily operations of the school, but more frequently a layman is hired as the principal or headmaster, though the members of the clergy - ministers, nuns, priests as well as imported lay missionaries - may retain active teaching positions. With increasing frequency, as at St. Francis Xavier Primary today, the headmaster is a Sarawakian. St. Francis Xavier, in fact, has no Europeans or expatriates, even priests or nun, among its eleven teachers. St. Francis', like most mission-sponsored schools, is an English-medium school.

The Chinese people of Sarawak have always recognized the need for educating their children and the role that education plays in economic and social advancement. A local school was always among the first institutions to be established in any of their immigrant communities (Leigh 1964: 40). The local Chinese

residents - parents and local leaders - would organize a committee and choose its members. The committee, raising money from contributions, family assessments, and tuition fees, would construct a building, hire the teachers, and operate the school. In the past many of these teachers were imported from China; while this practice is no longer necessary in Sarawak, many of these Chinese expatriates remain on teaching staffs, and have become Malaysian citizens. The instruction in these schools was always in a Chinese language, usually Mandarin, as it is not only the traditional language of the educated in China, but also gives no initial advantages to any segment of a mixed-dialect student body. Frequently these School Committees became extremely powerful local governing bodies. By combining their power with that of other Chinese institutions through the interlocking of boards of directors, a few men could use their authority over student selection and course content to dictate local conformity, structure and behavior. The School Committee was, in these cases, a prime instrument for achieving local domination. This is not the case with the Chinese School Committee in Kanowit, which operates the Kee Ting Primary School. The members of its directorate do not hold key positions in other Chinese organizations, and the power of refusal of education is never used to threaten any Chinese resident.

Unaided Private Schools may be operated by local charities or committees, or may, like the Yik Kwong Private Secondary School in Kanowit, be the private property of one or more individuals, who run them either as a community services or as a business investment. They may be among the schools receiving no government support for several reasons; some are not of sufficient quality to meet government standards; others are to small, or draw upon too specialized a group of students; many choose to retain the freedom of setting their own syllabus, course content, timetables, educational methods and philosophies, and standards for teacher selection even though this denies them government



financing. Chinese schools form the largest number of this latter group. Yik Kwong in Kanowit is especially oriented toward helping students to pass the rigid government examinations (which the students take as private candidates), and enrolls mainly students who do not qualify for the Government Secondary Schools, or who have already failed the examinations once before. Because of their limited support, lower quality and low percentage of successful examination candidates, Unaided Schools have a declining popularity in Kanowit District.

The best-known and most highly-respected Government School in the area is the Government Secondary School at Kanowit, located on the banks of the Rejang directly across from the bazaar. It is the only major secondary school in the area between Sibu and Kapit, and the only one in the entire Rejang basin upstream from Sibu to offer a full five years of secondary education. Therefore, it draws students from the whole eastern half of the 3rd Division, and more than half of its students come from outside of Kanowit District. Consequently, the vast majority of the student body- 435 of the 585 in January, 1971 - are boarders. Of the additional 150, almost all reside in Kanowit Bazaar, and commute to the school each day in a launch chartered by their parents for the purpose.

Only in the three major cities of Kuching, Sibu, and Miri is education above the secondary level available, and therefore the government attempts to assure the highest quality possible for its secondary schools. The headmaster and the majority of the faculty have university degrees, some of them from outside of Malaysia, Peace Corps and Commonwealth volunteers teach both technical and academic subjects, and the admission standards are high. Few students in Sarawak have the opportunity to go beyond a secondary school education (and only a small percentage are able to obtain that); therefore, the secondary school students become the educated class in the state, and will provide the majority of its future leadership in both the private and public sectors.

To qualify for government aid, the educational syllabus of the school must meet with the approval of the state Education Office. Therefore, the students in all of the primary schools in Kanowit District receive very much the same education, the major difference being in the medium of instruction - English at St. Francis Xavier and Mandarin at Kee Ting. The standard government-approved syllabus is given in Table 14. A degree of flexibility allowed the primary schools in 1970-71 to use several of the hours set aside for National Language (Malay), for teaching other languages, Mandarin in the Chinese schools and Iban in the rural primaries, or as additional time for English classes. During Primary 6, all students sit for the Common Entrance Examination, administered in both English and Chinese. The results of this test determine which students will qualify for a secondary education. St. Francis Xavier, with more than 50% passing, has a very high reputation in this regard.

The courses of study for secondary school students (Table 15) are also oriented toward the passing of government exams. The Sarawak Junior examination, given at the end of Form III, is administered from Kuching, and determines High Secondary admissions. The Form V exams are (at present) the Senior Cambridge Overseas School Certificate, set and corrected in England, based on an English Public School education, and standard in all but details throughout the Commonwealth. They are extremely difficult, especially since they draw upon materials that are not part of the cultural heritage of the residents of Kanowit Bazaar (Queen Elizabeth I's Address to Her Troops at Tilbury, for example), and require knowledge and facility not only of modern English (Faulkner, Conrad, and D.H. Lawrence) but of older forms as well (Chaucer, Shakespeare). While the secondary school attempts to provide a well-rounded liberal arts education, both students and teachers are continually reminded of these examinations and their influence on the educational and professional careers of both.



## TABLE 14

### STANDARD SYLLABUS

### FOR GOVERNMENT-SUPPORTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS

List of Subjects and Times in 30 Minute Periods per Week

| SUBJECT | PR. 1 | PR. 2 | PR. 3 | PR. 4 | PR. 5 | PR. 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| English | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 |
| National Language* | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| or another language) | | | | | | |
| Arithmetic | 5 | 91/2 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| Art/Handwork | | | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| History | | | | 2 | 5 | 5 |
| Geography | | | 2 | 2 | | |
| Nature/Science | 10 | 71/2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Story | | | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Health Education | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Singing | | | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Physical Education | 5 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Optional | | | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| | 40 | 40 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 |

* Schools in which another Asian language (e.g. Iban or Chinese) is taught may use up to three optional periods in Primary 3,4,5, and 6 to make a total of eight periods for the study of two languages. From three to five of these period should be used for the National Language; the remainder may be used for a continued study of the other language.

Source: Education Department Policies, January, 1968.

## TABLE 15

### SECONDARY SCHOOL SUBJECTS FOR GOVERNMENT-SUPPORTED SCHOOLS

FORMS I, II, & III

| | |
|---|---|
| English | Husbandry |
| Maths | Woodwork/Needlework |
| Science | Malay/Chinese/Iban |
| History | Library Science |
| Geography | Civics |
| Physical Education | |

FORMS IV & V

| | |
|---|---|
| English | Additional Maths |
| English Literature | Biology |
| History | Health Science |
| Geography | Art |
| Science | Civics |
| Math | Malay |

Of the four schools in Kanowit Bazaar, Kee Ting Chinese Primary is the only one that is not fully multiracial, and even there, despite its use of Mandarin as medium of instruction, one Iban and three Malays are enrolled. St. Francis Xavier, like all Roman Catholic mission activities, was originally oriented toward the Iban, but since the Second World War an increasing number of Chinese have been enrolled. In 1971, its student body of 405 included 170 Chinese (41.98%), 140 Ibans (34.81%), 67 Malays (16.54%), 24 "Rejangs" (other local tribes) (5.68%) and 4 Sikh Indians (.99%). There is no Malay medium primary school in Kanowit at this time, and Malay parents overwhelmingly choose an English education



over a Chinese one for their children.

There are several factors that contribute toward making the Government Secondary School at Kanowit one of the leading agents for introducing culture change and developing a new multiethnic culture:

1) The racial composition of the student body. There were 585 students enrolled at the Secondary School in January, 1971. A sample of six of the fourteen homeroom sections (257 of the 585 students) yields a racial distribution of 57% Chinese, 34% Iban, 5% Malay/Melanau, and 4% others. This sample is slightly out of proportion to the total group for two reasons: a) one of the sections included in the sample is the Transition Class, graduates of Chinese-medium primary schools undertaking a year's intensive study of English to prepare them to continue their secondary education in that medium; b) one of the other section (of the six in the sample) is largely composed of former Transition Class students. For these reasons, the percentage of Chinese vis a vis the other races in the distribution above is a few points too high. The Headmaster of the school estimates that about 50% of the students are Chinese. The percentage of Malays/Melanaus in the total student population may be a few points higher than the 5% of the sample, but the imbalance in the Chinese-Malay ratio remains vast. Cultural and economic differences are the main cause of this imbalance; and this problem, and the social conditions in the society as a whole that it reflects, are one of the prime concerns of the state and federal governments since 1969. In spite of this disparity, no one racial group dominates the student body. This is especially true when the 150 day students, overwhelmingly Chinese, are subtracted from the school population at the end of the teaching day; the 435 boarding students are, with the imbalance of Malays excepted, very near the racial profile for Sarawak as a whole.

2) The Boarding School principle. It is the policy of the Sarawak Government that its secondary schools, whenever

possible, are located away from population centers. The Kanowit School, opened in 1958, occupies the site of a previous government agricultural school, and its location was thus determined, but the policy can be seen elsewhere in the state as well, and is a continuation of the practices of the British colonial era. As a result, these schools are oriented toward the boarding students; the day students are considered to be something extra. No one seems to be able to state any official reasons for this policy, but its effects are quite evident: a) it creates an isolated world for the students, parallel to, but different from, the environment of their homes, undistracted by the "real world." (As many quip, "It keeps the students away from the bright light of the bazaar.") b) The environment of this separate world can be more easily controlled; learning can become a twenty-four-hour-a-day process. c) It places the students in intimate contact with their teachers, most of whom also live on the school grounds. This contact is of mutual benefit to both parties, as it improves student-teacher relationship, allows the teacher to know and understand their students, and observe their daily progress. It also exposes the students to people, both as individuals and as representatives of differing ethnic/cultural backgrounds, whom they would not otherwise have been able to know and learn about; this is especially true of the Peace Corps/ Commonwealth volunteers and the expatriates and contract teachers from both eastern and western countries. d) The students can more readily be required to use their English at all times. e) The students of various races, living intimately with each other, sharing dormitory rooms, eating meals together, working and playing in constant contact with members of other ethnic groups, grow to understand each other's native cultures, know each other as individuals, and, ultimately, become less aware of race as an identifying factor.

3) The use of English. By using as a medium of instruction a language equally foreign to all, no one race has an initial learning



advantage. English also gives the students a "window" through with to see the world outside of Sarawak. It puts them in contact with ideas and concepts, philosophies, and ways of behavior, not normally encountered in their local communities. The interrelationships between categories of speech and categories of thought, between language and culture, are well documented; English broadens the world view of the students, and instills in them goals and values that a) are different from those of their home cultures and b) all begin to have in common, regardless of their race. Even the Senior Cambridge Examinations, which seem at first sight to be an appalling cultural imposition on the students, can be seen to give direct and pragmatic benefits to the multiracial student body. They are a unifier; everyone has gone through the same ordeal, and this shared experience brings the diverse elements of the group closer together. They are in multicultural rite de passage.

By living together in the multiracial community of the Secondary School compound, the students become prepared, and accustomed, to living together in a multiracial Sarawak.

Not all institutions and activities in Kanowit Bazaar are multiracial; there are still many cases in which race, dialect, or region of origin are the organizing principles around which group memberships are formed. The Iban Rest House, where Ibans visiting the bazaar can stay overnight, and the Penghulu's Court, where government-appointed Iban headmen hear cases involving native custom law (adat), is two such places. The surau (prayer house) of the Moslem Malays is another. Though they all try to broaden their bases of support by involving members from the community at large, the three political parties that maintained offices in Kanowit Bazaar in 1970-71 are fundamentally uniracial organizations: Sarawak United Peoples Party (SUPP) is the Chinese opposition party, Sarawak National Party (SNAP) is the Iban opposition, and Party Pesaka anak Sarawak (Pesaka) is the

Iban party belonging to the ruling (in coalition with SUPP) Alliance. (The racial aspects of political party structure have been well described by Michael Leigh in his The Development of Political Organization and Leadership in Sarawak, East Malaysia [1971].) Two additional uniracial endeavors, the dialect group associations of the Chinese and the Kapitan-ship, leadership of an ethnic group, are worthy of further mention.

There are three Chinese associations in Kanowit. Two of them, the Hokkien's and the Foochow's, use the dialect group as their major criterian for membership (though they are not 100% exclusive); the third club is based on region of origin - Kwangtung Province and the areas near it. The Cantonese are the largest Kwangtung group in Kanowit (the Hokkien and Foochow both came from Fukien Province), but the Hakka, Hylam, and Teochiew were their neighbors in China. Since these latter groups do not have sufficient numbers in Kanowit to sponsor their own organizations, they combine with the Cantonese, whom they frequently imitate in customs as well, to form a regional association. In the past, in the early days of Chinese immigration, dialect/regional associations played a major role in sponsoring and supporting newly-arrived immigrants (T'ien 1953 describes these patterns in detail.) Today the association are primarily social clubs; the Hokkien association, in fact, does snot even include the word "Hokkien" in its name - it is the Yok Hua Sport Club, and it includes two Foochow among its membership. As in the gentlemen's clubs of Europe, the towkays of Kanowit make use of the social contacts their associations provide to make business arrangements and share economic news. As with the service and fraternal organizations in the United States, the Chinese associations aid at funerals, contribute to charity, and arrange help for members in need. But the social and recreational functions of the associations predominate. Each has a clubhouse, a large room on the upstairs floor of a shophouse, where members can "get away" from their



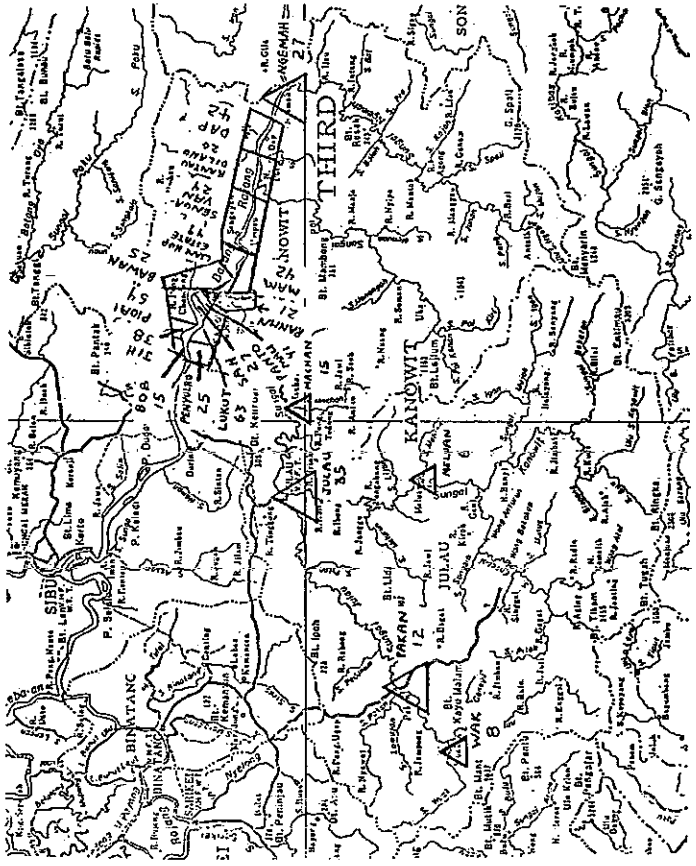
routines and wives and read the newspapers, talk to friends, and above all else, play mah jong. The Chinese associations of Kanowit are not the powerful and important institutions they were in the past, and still are in some other Chinese communities. While they are organized along traditional lines, they are only a shadow of what they once were.

The office of the Kapitan China was instituted by the Brooke Government in the early days of their Raj, and was widely used as an instrument for the control of Overseas Chinese communities not only in Sarawak and other British areas, but in Indonesia by the Dutch (Willmott 1960: 147-168) and, prior to the 20th Century, by the Kings of Thailand (Skinner 1957: 134-143). In its simplest form, the government appointed a Chinese, usually a businessman and a recognized leader in his own community, to serve as a headman for his people, to handle their affairs, and represent the government to them. The Kapitan was, in Sarawak, empowered to settle intra-Chinese disputes that did not affect the government, administer custom law, and perform marriages and other minor official functions. As the Chinese population spread in size and area, a Kapitan was appointed for each community, or for each dialect group, or both.

Kanowit in 1971 had two Kapitans, one for the Hokkien and one for the Foochow. A Kapitan for the Cantonese resides in the garden area along the banks of the Rejang outside of the town, where his dialect is most numerous. The Chinese settlements of the District are divided into wards (Map 13), and each has its own appointed sub-headman to handle Chinese affairs.

The Kapitans (and sub-headmen in the rural areas) are appointed to their positions by the government, and have no official standing in the civil service or rights accruing to their office. It has been traditional, however, to hold an election of Chinese family heads to choose a popular candidate who the people recommend to the government to be appointed as their leader. Much confusion

MAP 13
CHINESE COMMUNITIES IN KANOWIT DISTRICT
with numbers of Chinese Households in 1966




Base map source: Lands and Surveys Department, 1968



has arisen from this; Kapitans will state they were elected to their positions, but the elections are purely for the purposes of recommendation the government needn't abide by them. Only in cases of possible subversion, which arises from time to time in the area, might the popularly-elected choice of the family heads be questioned. The elections are by secret ballot, one to each family head or his proxy. The Kapitan (or sub-headman) must be over twenty-five years old, a resident of the ward he represents, and one who is not away from home for long periods at a time.

The Kapitan-ship can be a very powerful position, especially when it is combined with the leadership of a dialect association, chamber of commerce, or School Committee in an interlocking directorship of Chinese traditional power. This has occurred in some Chinese communities in Borneo; credit is approved by a chamber of commerce of businessmen's association, admission to the schools by a School Committee, official government papers such as passports and birth records by the Kapitan, job opportunities by a dialect association, and all of these groups are led and controlled by the same small group of men whom no one dares to challenge. This does not occur in Kanowit. The centers of traditional Chinese power no longer exist; they are too diffuse, partly because of the power of the state government, mainly by the widening of the economic bases on which they were founded. In a day when Kanowit is losing its young people for economic reasons, the threat of expulsion from the economic community is no longer a threat; in a day when multiracial living is becoming more common place, the threat of expulsion from the cultural community is no longer a threat. Unlike the Tua Kampong, the leader of the Malay community, the Kapitan has no religious influence over his people either. Though the Kapitan in Kanowit today is a position of great prestige, the development of multiracialism has negated much of its power.

# CHAPTER 6: RELIGION

One of the basic and fundamental elements of any cultural heritage is its religious beliefs; one of the basic and fundamental requirements for any successful multi-ethnic community is its tolerance for the religious differences of its members. Kanowit Bazaar, in the early 1970's, is a successful multi-ethnic community, and one of the most successful areas of mutual cultural tolerance is its religious life.

Religion, concerned with what man believes, it always a highly personal matter; in Kanowit Bazaar it is also a highly individualistic one. The citizens of Kanowit may all have their own personal ideas and opinions on the subjects of economics, race, politics, morals, values, and idealogy, but they do not force them upon others; they may all have their own personal ideas and opinions on religion, philosophy, and belief systems, but they are neither dogmatic nor evangelistic. This is especially true among the Chinese of Kanowit. China, over the millennia, has been exposed to a multitude of religious concepts, and like so many other innovations, those she has not rejected she has absorbed and moulded to conform to her fundamental cultural patterns. Chinese religion has always been more eclectic, more open to modification, and less rigidly dogmatic than the major religions of the West. Her successful religions have survived on the strength of their philosophies, not on the power of their bureaucracies. As C.K. Yang has stated in his Religion in Chinese Society (1967: 25):

> A relevant point here is the highly eclectic nature of Chinese religion. In popular religious life it was the moral and magical functions of the cults, and not the delineation of the boundary of religious faiths, that dominated the people's consciousness. Even priests in some country temples were unable to reveal the identity of the religion to which they belonged. Centuries of mixing gods from different faiths into a common pantheon had produced a functionally oriented religious identity to a secondary place.



Likewise, the Chinese, at least as seen through their literature and philosophy, do not view the universe as a spiritual bureaucracy, initially created, then organized and operated, by a Supreme Being, but as "a harmoniously functioning organism consisting of an orderly hierarchy of interrelated parts and forces, which, though unequal in their status, are all equally essential for the total process" (Bodde, 1953: 67). One of these parts is the individual; he interrelates with his universe through a hierarchy, and that hierarchy is the family. The individual exists as a member of his family; the family exists as an aggregate of individuals. The individual and the family, in "traditional China," are but two separate aspects of the same social entity. This entity is not limited to the present, to the living; it has roots in the past, in the members of the family without whom the present individual, or the present collective aggregate, would not exist, in the ancestors. Whatever the trimmings of rite or philosophy that history has added to Chinese religious belief, this harmony of individual/family/universe, individual/family/ancestors, has remained at the core of Chinese thought.

The Chinese of Kanowit Bazaar in the 1970's are "modern;" they are "educated," "sophisticated," and "Westernized." They are by no means representatives of "traditional Chinese culture," and are certainly not living embodiments of Chinese spiritual philosophy. But the desire for harmony remains. Like all Chinese no one in Kanowit "worships" his ancestors; most recognize the traditional rites and rituals in their honor as simply that - symbolic jestures - jestures of the harmony, the interrelationships of the organism, the linking of the individual with his universe. Perhaps this desire for harmony is a reason why the Chinese of Kanowit are so tolerant of differing religious beliefs among the various races

of the community, and tolerant, too, of the wide variation of belief within the family itself; as long as the harmony of the total is not endangered, the true ideology of the particular is of no special consequence.

There is a wide range of religious belief in Kanowit bazaar, then, not only between members of different ethnic and cultural groups, but among members of the same group; not only within the group, but within the dialect, within the region, within the family itself. Some of the religions of Kanowit are organized, but none are established - none, not even Islam among the Malays, totally dominates the beliefs and activities of its adherents. As long as he does not threaten the harmony of the whole - the whole community, body of believers, or family - the individual is free to believe whatever he likes, even to believe nothing in particular at all. In the case of the Chinese, this makes the very personal religion even more individualistic, and group religious activities are alliances of independent believers all of whom receive their own form of personal satisfaction from the group efforts. The Chinese of Kanowit, like the country priests in the quotation from Yang, are also not very well informed about the details of their own traditional practices, even though they may know them well enough to perform them. While many individuals are able to go through the motions properly, only a few are able to explain what they are really doing and why. It is therefore possible that within any particular group of Chinese worshipers, no two individual participants will actually have the same set of beliefs. Any publicly performed Chinese religious ritual or ceremony in Kanowit Bazaar will have far more curious spectators than devout and informed practicioners, and the majority of them have only an elementary knowledge of what is going on.[1]

In contrast to communities in which there is unified and organized institutional religion, there appears to be very little



"religious activity" in Kanowit Bazaar. This is highly misleading, as the independence and individualism in religion in Kanowit give only casual attention to the forms, and place all importance on the feelings. This chapter will discuss some of these forms, these cultural artifacts, and how they operate on a phenomenological level in a multi-cultural atmosphere; it will describe some of the rituals and ceremonies, the behavior and the actions, what is known about them and what people say about them. It does not attempt to determine what people actually believe or feel.

## THE RELIGIONS OF KANOWIT

The Government of the Federation of Malaysia, recognizing the difficulties of building a just and democratic multi-ethnic society, has summarized the basic aims and attitudes it desires for the nation in a five-point Statement of National Principles, the Rukunegara. The first of these Principles concerns religions:

### Belief in God (Keperchayaan kapada Tuhan)

> Islam is the official religion of the Federation. Other religions and beliefs may be practiced in peace and harmony and there shall be no discrimination against any citizen on the ground of religion.

In Kanowit, this Principle is carried out in spirit as well as in Law. Western missionaries have been permitted, and usually encouraged, to work in Sarawak since the earliest days of the Brooke Raj. While they are free to convert the residents to their faith, they have never used their powers of land, education, or social services to force or require any large-scale conversions. The majority of the native peoples in Sarawak retain their traditional animistic folk religions, and they, too, are permitted to do so without interference. The Sarawak Museum, staffed entirely by local civil servants since Malaysia, recognizes that these native

beliefs are an important element in local culture. The Museum does not sponsor animistic ceremonies as "museum pieces" or consider them to be quaint cultural displays. It does make an attempt to record and publicize these ceremonies as an important aspect of local culture. Religion and mythology are frequent topics for articles in the Sarawak Museum Journal, and observers are sent to record the more elaborate ceremonies; after their completion some of the paraphernalia may be donated to the Museum for its ethnographic collections. The Chinese, too, are free to worship as they choose, and to build temples for their ceremonies as they desire. Kanowit does not have any Chinese temples, but many communities of Chinese in Sarawak have built them, and the large city temples of Kuching and Sibu are elaborate and active in their religious rites. Permits are routinely granted to the temples and religious associations for parades, public ceremonies, and open-air religious and cultural activities.

Islam is the official national religion of Malaysia, supported by government agencies and tax revenues. When Malaysia was created in 1963, some non-Moslems in the Borneo states were apprehensive about the establishment of an official religion, in spite of the constitutional guarantees of freedom of religion. They were afraid that the political and financial power of the State would be used to encourage, bribe, or even coerce mass conversions. Mass conversions, hundreds at a time, have occurred in the neighboring state of Sabah, and many high government officials, prominent citizens, and businessmen there have become Moslems. Some non-citizen Chinese residents have converted to insure the continuance of their Residents Visas and to aid in their applications for citizenship. Public criticisms of the religious policies of the Sabah States Government, and allegations of religious persecution, have appeared in the local press (Sarawak Tribune, December 18, 1970; December 19, 1970; January 7, 1971; Borneo Bulletin, January 30, 1971) and in international publications circulating in Malaysia



(Far Eastern Economic Review, November 7, 1970; January 2, 1971; February 27, 1971).

This has not been the case in Sarawak or in Kanowit Bazaar. There have been no attempts to pressure anyone to convert to Islam, and the local residents do not feel that their religious freedom is impaired at the present. Unlike many Chinese in Sabah, the Chinese in Kanowit neither feel threatened by their disinterest in conversion to Islam nor attracted to it by any possible rewards or favors. While the Sarawak Government does operate under a quota system, the basis of these quotas is ethnic group membership, not religious affiliation, and the quota system is in keeping with both the policies of the former Brooke Government and the provisions for Special Rights for Malays and natives provided in Article 153 of the Federal Constitution.

An accurate census of religion in Sarawak or Kanowit Bazaar is very difficult to obtain, and any results are of highly questionable reliability. The intensely personal nature and individualism of religion are one cause for this vagueness; the necessity to create categories of religious belief, and offer them to informants in a multiple-choice format, as the censuses are conducted, further complicates the issue. The strong associations of religion with ethnic groups create a third difficulty. In devising the national census it was decided to limit the number of choices to three - Christian, Moslem, and Other Religion; Christianity and Islam are the two religions in Sarawak most likely to have adherents from more than one ethnic or cultural group. If the respondent did not profess membership in either of these two world religions, he was classified as Other Religion, assumed to be the traditional and historic religion of his cultural heritage - "Chinese religion" for the Chinese and animistic folk religion for the natives. Using these categories, the 1960 Census of Sarawak found that the people of Sarawak were 15.8% Christian, 23.4% Moslems, and 60.8% Other Religions. As Table 16 demonstrates, about half of the Christians

are Chinese, the other half being members of various native groups. 23.4% of the population of Moslem. Malays, 17.4% of the Sarawak population, form the largest body of Moslems, and those Malays not stating otherwise were classified as such; of the 129,300 Malays in 1960, only 452 identified themselves as being non-Moslem. Of the remaining 6% (the difference between the 24.4% Moslems and the 17.4% Malays, the majority are Melanaus, the coastal people so often assimilated into Malay culture.)

In his report on the 1960 Census, Jones (1962: 96) has summarized the data on religion as follows:

> A fairly clear picture of the religious composition of the population is then presented. The Muslims are the people of the coastal areas; they comprise nearly one-quarter of the population and it seems that their numbers are growing only in accordance with natural increase. The Christians are to be found in the neighborhood of the Christian missions which are widely scattered throughout the country; their number is about one-seventh of the population and is growing rapidly. Nearly half of the Christians are Chinese and rather more than half are indigenous peoples. About three-quarters of the Chinese adhere to the Chinese religion; and the remainder of the country's population hold the pagan beliefs of the indigenous peoples. The proportion of pagans in the indigenous population is declining and will probably continue to decline under the positive influence of Christianity and the less positive but still effective influence of Islam. It remains perhaps to add that all the peoples of whatever creed live side by side in amity and with no trace of religious intolerance.

There is no similar census of religion for Kanowit Bazaar from the 1970 Census. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Personal Data Forms were replaced in Kanowit District by an abbreviated form, and the religious affiliation of the informant was not asked. By combining the patterns of the 1960 Census with data from



**TABLE 16**
**SARAWAK POPULATION BY RELIGION, 1960**

| ETHNIC GROUP | POPULATION | MOSLEM | CHRISTIAN | OTHER |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| European | 1,631 | 76 | 1,514 | 41 |
| Malay | 129,300 | 128,848 | 26 | 426 |
| Melanau | 44,661 | 31,770 | 2,050 | 10,841 |
| Iban | 237,741 | 415 | 26,608 | 210,718 |
| Land Dayak | 57,619 | 59 | 15,536 | 42,024 |
| Other Indigenous | 37,931 | 7,869 | 17,872 | 12,190 |
| Chinese | 229,154 | 499 | 53,669 | 174,986 |
| Others | 6,492 | 4,587 | 480 | 1,425 |
| TOTAL | 744,529 | 174,123 | 117,755 | 452,651 |
| | | 23.4% | 15.8% | 60.8% |

Source: Census of 1960

informants in the bazaar, however, it is possible to make the following estimates of religious affiliation in Kanowit Bazaar in 1970-71:

Christians: about 360 people, about 21% of the town population. The Fathers of the Roman Catholic Mission estimate that there are about 200 Chinese Catholics living in the bazaar. It can be assumed that most of the 64 people living in the mission compound, and a few of the Ibans in the Government Quarters, are Catholic. In addition, there are some Methodists, especially among the Foochow Chinese, and a few other Christian Chinese of various denominations.

Moslems: about 325 people, about 19% of the population. The 321 Malays are all classified as Moslems, the others being Melanaus, Land Dayaks, and a few Ibans living in the Kampongs.

Other Religions: about 1,035 people, about 60% of the total population. They are mainly Chinese, but also include Ibans who are not Christian, the members of other native groups in the bazaar,

and the handful of Sikh Indians.

## Christians

The social services of the Roman Catholic Mission in Kanowit were discussed in Chapter 4. While it is through its social services that the Roman Catholic Mission and its staff are most familiar to, and have the greatest contact with, the people of Kanowit Bazaar as a whole, these services are (or were orginally intended to be) secondary to the religious activities of the church.

The Roman Catholic Mission at Kanowit has three priests and four nuns. Two of the priests are Dutch Fathers of the English Mill Hill Society; both speak fluent Iban, one so expertly that he is a recognized authority on the language. The third priest is a Foochow Chinese, originally from Sibu. He also speaks fluent Iban, and while he preaches in Chinese, his work is not limited to his own ethnic group. The four nuns, all European, also speak Iban, and use it, and English, to communicate with their parishioners and the patients at the clinic.

The Church conducts Mass three times every Sunday morning. The first service is in English and the second in Mandarin Chinese. The last Mass, at 9:30 am, is conducted in Iban; that is, the hymns, prayers, and sermon are in the Iban language. The Sisters have organized a children's choir from among the boarding students at the primary school, and the Church owns a small piano-organ to accompany the choir and the singing of hymns. A Vesper service is held each evening, and there are additional Masses on holy days. Special services are conducted at Christmas and Easter, and marriages, baptisms, and funerals are performed as requested throughout the year. The Church maintains a Christian cemetery on its property, and a few of the European staff members of past years are buried within the compound itself.

The Roman Catholic Church concentrates its evangelistic work among the Ibans, and the priests make frequent visits to the



longhouses in the area, where they are aided by trained catechists resident in the longhouse. The attitude of the Catholic priests in Kanowit is casual, and they are as popular, and as respected, among non-Christians as they are among their own parishioners, and are consulted for advice and aid by members of all ethnic groups. The Church, likewise, does snot attempt to obliterate native culture, even when it is in partial conflict with Christian theology. Rather, the Catholic Church fits itself into the patterns of Iban culture, and uses their medium for its message. One example is the Iban custom of holding a special gawai (festival) a year or more after the death of an adult family member. At that time a manang (ritual specialist) conducts rites and collects offerings for the spirit of the deceased. The family holds an all-night wake for the departed spirit, than places the offerings on his grave, which is cleaned and maintained. In modern times, a cement cover is frequently added to the grave at this time. In Catholic areas, where a priest is available, the ceremony is conducted as Iban tradition dictates, except that the Catholic priest takes the place of the manang, and a cross is placed over the grave.

The Catholic priests in Kanowit are aware that to many of their followers, Christianity is a thin and not-yet-too-secure veneer to their traditional heritage. They realize that old ideas do not die quickly, and their response is "yes, but the children..."

The Christian Church of Kanowit, the Roman Catholic Mission and the less-active Methodist Church, are the most multiracial religious bodies in the town at the present time.

## Moslems

The Moslems of Sarawak are members of the Shafi'a school of the Sunni sect of Islam. The Sunni sect is the larger of the two sects of Islam, and is considered to be more orthodox than the Shia branch; their differences lie in their attitudes toward the successors of the Prophet. The Shafi's school is one of the four schools of the Sunni sect, and it encompasses, and is limited to,

the South East Asian Moslems of Malaysia, Indonesia, and the southern Philippines. Like all Moslems, they profess to the Five Pillars of Islam as contained in the Koran: the Profession of Faith that there is one god, and Mohamad is his prophet, the Five Daily Prayers at dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset, and sunset, and nightfall, the Month of Fasting during Ramadzan, the Pilgrimage to Mecca, and the Obligation to Give Alms to the poor. The Moslem traditions of male (and frequently female) circumcision are followed in Sarawak; many Sarawak Moslems are more lax about the prohibitions on eating pork and drinking alcohol.

Since "Moslem" and "Malay" are virtually synonymous in Sarawak, any converts to the faith also adopting the concomitant culture, there are aspects of Moslem behavior and custom in Sarawak that have their origins in Malay historical and cultural traditions, predating the arrival of Islam in the 15th Century, rather than in the philosophy of the religion itself. The concepts of a "vital force" (semangat), the role of the bomah (shaman), and the belief in hantus, spirits or ghosts, are all survivals of the Malays' animistic past; Hindu influences are seen in Malay language, art, and ritual, especially in the traditional marriage ceremony called bersanding. Male and female circumcision, while in accord with Moslem custom, are also indigenous to the Malay people (LeBar, Hickey, and Musgrave 1964: 261).

Details of Malay/Moslem culture, beliefs, rituals, and religious activities can be found elsewhere in the literature (Wilkinson 1920, Zainal Abdin 1949, Winstedt 1950 and 1951); a brief but concise summary appears in N. J. Ryan's The Cultural Background of the peoples of Malaya (1962: 28-73). There is no need to repeat these details here, for the Moslems of Kanowit Bazaar are neither sophisticated about nor intensely devout in following all the rituals and ceremonies of their faith, and the few members of the Malay community who are aware of the details go unnoticed by the town as a whole.



There are only three festivals in the annual Moslem cycle that come to the attention of all Kanowit residents, two of them only in a perfunctory way. Hari Raya Haji, the 10th day of the last month of the Islamic lunar year, is held in celebration of the Pilgrimage. Returning pilgrims are honored, and can begin using the title Haji at that time. The Prophet's Birthday, the 12th day of the third month, is celebrated in the surau by special prayers and services. These two occasions are known to the non-Moslem community only because they are recognized as public holidays by the Sarawak Government. Few non-Malay are fully aware of the Fasting Month during Ramadzan (called in Malaysia Bulan Puasa) either, but all the people of the bazaar know, and look forward to, the holiday that ends the Fast, Hari Raya Puasa. It is the major Moslem holiday of the year, and it will be discussed in a later section describing those religious festivals in Kanowit Bazaar that involve the community as a multiracial whole.

**Iban Religion**

Iban religion has also been described in the literature, and accounts of it may be found in Roth 1896, Gomes 1930, Richards 1963, and in innumerable articles in the Sarawak Museum Journal. It recognizes a pantheon of several hundred anthropomorphic gods and goddesses who intervene in human affairs. Rituals held on behalf of an individual or bilek family propitiate these gods through offerings, and request their aid in practical problems. Rituals fall into four major categories, those dealing with the cultivation of rice, those concerned with health and longevity, those concerning the acquisition of wealth, and those associated with warfare, headhunting, and prestige. None of these rituals are ever performed in Kanowit Bazaar; they are longhouse events, and few residents of the town have ever witnessed them (though they are, for the most part, open to attendance by any interested party). The Iban, too, have one major holiday which everyone in the town is aware of, Gawai Dayak. Gawai Dayak, the 1st day of June, is not truly a

religious festival, although it incorporates many religious aspects. It is a harvest festival, combining offerings of thanksgiving to the gods with secular celebrations of a good harvest. In former times, each longhouse held a gawai of thanksgiving at the termination of its harvest, and the religious aspects were a major element in the festivities. In recent years, however, the Sarawak Government has set aside two days at the beginning of June for all natives in all parts of Sarawak to celebrate the harvest, and their "Dayak-ness, " together, and it has taken on a more secular attitude than the earlier celebrations. Each major ethnic group in Sarawak has its "big holiday," and Gawai Dayak was created by the government from an amalgam of traditional local festivals to represent the culture of the native peoples; it will be discussed in more detail in a later section.

**Chinese Religion**

Chinese religion, wherever it is practiced, has three major foci of orientation - the organized theologies of Buddhism, Taoism, and the non-religious moral philosophy of Confucianism, the folk religion of supernatural powers, gods, and spirits, and the cult of family ancestors. These three foci are not mutually exclusive; in fact, they are rarely practiced independently of each other. Whichever of the three is dominant in any specific ritual, belief, or function, the other two are integral subsystems supporting it. These three aspects of belief operate, as all Chinese relationships should, in harmony with each other. In the temple, at permanent or temporary shrines, in the home, at the graveyard, all three orientations mutually reinforce the fundamental relationship of the individual to his universe.

The organized theologies, Buddhism and Taoism, are never the dominant sector of religious activity in Kanowit Bazaar. No purely Buddhist rituals or Taoist ceremonies are ever performed. There is no priesthood or clergy of either sect, no organization or association of believers, and no one in the bazaar has ever received



formal or professional training in these religions. No one has ever spent the period of meditation and study as a monk that is so common in Buddhist areas of South East Asia. Buddha is included in the pantheon of folk gods, but is never elevated to a supreme position; the sutras, the legends, and the myths are all assumed as part of Chinese literature and custom, not as religious dogma. The same is true of the principles of the Tao - they are known, and subscribed to, as elements of traditional Chinese culture, not as a religious concept. Only the very few members of the Chinese community of Kanowit who are deeply concerned with religious affairs, or are widely read in general, are even aware of the full associations between the folk practices and the orthodox theology; the majority of Chinese can not even name the spirits, let alone expound on the religious concepts they symbolize.

Much the same is true of the Confucian philosophy; its ideals and precepts are known to the Chinese or Kanowit as elements in their Chinese heritage, and not through scholarship. Few members of the community have ever read the traditional books of Confucian scholarship, the Classics; most can not even name them all. A large percentage of the Sarawak-born residents - the vast majority of the young - have received an English-language education; they have studied Confucius as a historical figure in their social studies classes, not as the foundation of their system of knowledge. And what they have learned about his ideas they have learned in English. Confucian concepts are only as strong in Kanowit Bazaar as Chinese culture itself is.

Folk religion is the primary focus of orientation of public religious activity among the Chinese of Kanowit, superceeding even the ancestor cult. "Folk religion" is a Western name for this amalgam of beliefs; there is no term for these activities in the Chinese languages, as recorded Chinese history and literature were written by the scholarly Mandarin class, educated in the Confucian tradition, who did not wish to dignify these beliefs by admitting

their existence in print. As Kristopher Schipper (M.S.) has described it,

> But the term is interesting because it reflects, perhaps unwittingly, the disdain of the Chinese literati (who outlook has been so often shared by our Sinologues) for all religious practices, in particular those of their own people. For the Confucian schoolmaster (as for the Protestant missionary and the 19th century scholar), this religious system was in general nothing more than a shameful and disgusting set of superstitions, practiced by the ignorant masses, the vulgus, with the exception of the peasants of Chu-fu (Birth place of Confucius) who liked nothing better, if we want to believe the school-masters, than reciting the classics.
>
> The result of this attitude of the literati (shared, but for other reasons, by the imperial administration) has been a complete blackout in Chinese literature of facts pertaining to the religious activities of its people. In Histories and Gazetters, the sparse data on religions are listed under the head of "feng-su," customs, thus practically denying their religious content. Wherever the religious tendency is too apparent, the records speak of lewd cults, "yin-ssu"...or simply apply the teaching of Confucius "tsu pu yu": the Master did not speak about (matter pertaining to religious beliefs), and pass on.

Basic to the structure of folk religion is the belief in a direct and reciprocal relationship between this world and the "other world," and between man and the various gods and spirits generally. Gods, ancestors, and other spirits share a mutual dependence with human beings, bestowing aid in return for worship and honor. The "other world" is a shadowy, but real, counterpart of life here on earth, and is the home of both the departed ancestors of the family and the members of the diverse pantheon of deities - dragons, ghosts, demons, animal spirits, gods and goddesses, deified culture heroes - a jumble of spiritual beings. Folk religion focuses attention on the soul, the bridge between this world and the other, and the charms, rituals, and ceremonies to communicate with it. Some of



the rites concern specific requests, asking a resident of the other world to intervene on one's behalf in the events of this world; others are conducted with the desire to maintain a good relationship, a harmony, with the other world, so that it will neither bring harm to the individual or allow demon spirits to do so. Since the ancestors as well as the deified spirits are residents of the other world, one can ask the ancestors to help the individual by interceding with the gods on behalf of the living descendants, and one can also ask the gods go give comfort and care to the deceased ancestors living among them. As in so much of Chinese religious thought, the harmony of the various parts of the organism is the fundamental concern. Many Chinese in Kanowit Bazaar today do not literally believe that the spirits are capable of affecting everyday life (though there was some who do); it is always wise, however, to keep the relationship harmonious.

"Ancestor worship," maintaining close and warm relationships with the souls of the departed members of the family, is not nearly so dominant in Kanowit Chinese religion as it once was in traditional Chinese culture. In his study of the sociological aspects of Chinese religion, C.K. Yang (1967: 46) discusses the role of the ancestor cult in family integration:

> In the routine existence of the individual, his social contacts were not very broad, but rather limited to a small circle. Meanwhile, as the members multiplied over several generations, the kinship group grew fairly large, contact between the members became infrequent, and the strength of relationship between them was reduced in reverse proportion to the size of the group. On the other hand, there were occasions that demanded effective relationship among the members in the larger kinship group. In the traditional Chinese social order, where the individual relied heavily upon the size of the family and clan for social and economic assistance, such occasions were frequent. One way to keep the larger group alive in the consciousness of the individual, even in his socially restricted routine existence, was by constantly

> reminding him of the common origin of the group and the resultant biological relatedness of all the descendants of the same ancestors, and by keeping alive the social obligations imposed by such relatedness.

The traditional social order does not exist in Kanowit Bazaar in the 1970's; the individual is not required to rely entirely upon the size of the family and the clan for social and economic assistance, and the family is frequently too small to help anyone other than its nuclear members. The clan, as known in traditional South China, has not survived the migration to Kanowit Bazaar, and there are no practical economic inducements to remember it. The nuclear family is still of dominant importance to the Chinese individual in Kanowit, and his ties to it are strong; veneration of deceased members of this nuclear group are retained in Kanowit today. The larger group, whose existence was once so important to the individual, is largely ignored. Ancestor worship is still an integral part of Chinese religious activity in Kanowit Bazaar, but when it passes beyond the limits of known nuclear or extended family members, it is regarded, as are Buddhism, Taoism, and the Confucian ideals, as an aspect of Chinese cultural heritage, rather than as a vital religious belief.

Indicative of this fact is the distribution of house-hold shrines (maps 14a & b). In traditional South China, and in Taiwan today, virtually every household, nuclear, joint, or extended has a household shrine in honor of the ancestors of the group placed in a prominent position in the home. Only twenty-eight of the 186 Chinese house-holds in Kanowit Bazaar have such shrines. Not one of these shrines even approaches the degree of dominance, elaboration, or centrality accorded to these objects in other Chinese areas, and a visitor from rural Taiwan would have difficulty recognizing the rude shelf with its plaster Buddha and faded photographs as the parallel of his elaborate home altar.



## The Chinese Festivals

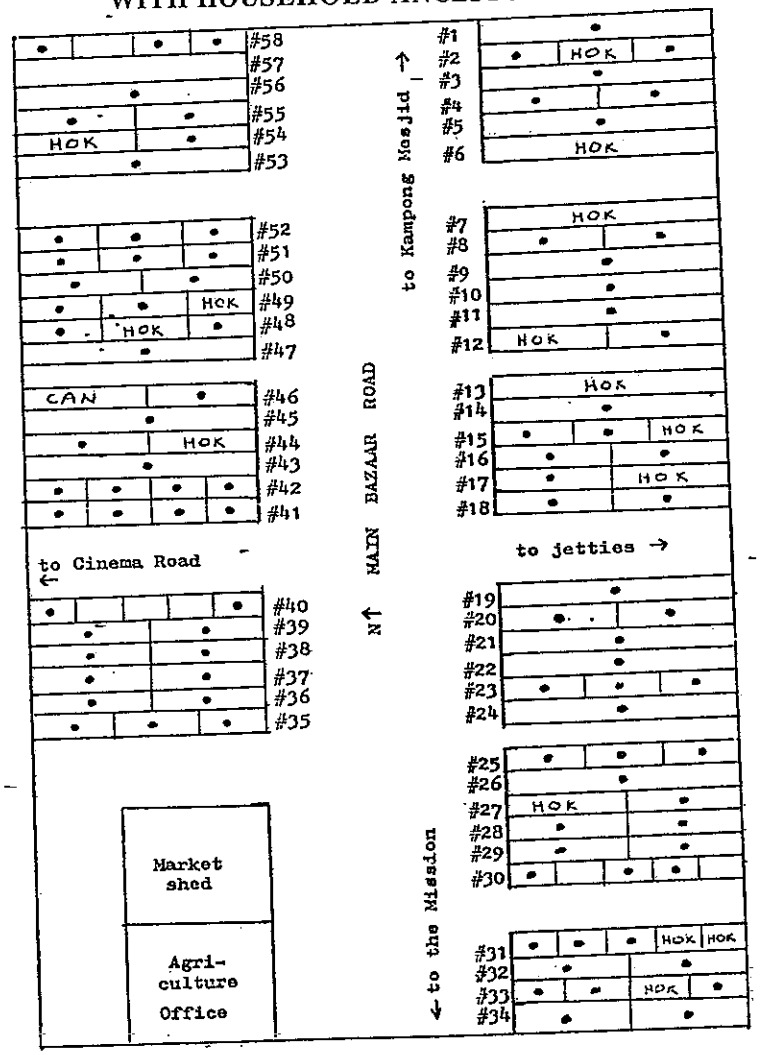
It is in a truncated manner, therefore, that the cycle of traditional Chinese festivals is celebrated in Kanowit Bazaar - folk religion dominates both the cult of the ancestors and the three "literate" religions, the traditions of a cultural heritage dominate the theological concepts of religious belief, and only a small portion of the Chinese population has sufficient knowledge about, or interest in, religious activities to celebrate any but the most major festival days. It is the secular aspects of Chinese festivals that receive the widest support; the religious aspects have a limited following.

Kanowit does not have any community temples, clan or family temples, ancestral halls, roadside or street-corner shrines, sacred locations, full-time religious associations, clubs, or societies, or any public Chinese religious meeting halls. There is only one structure outside of the private households that serves a religious function for the Chinese, the pavilion at the Chinese cemetery, and that is used only during funerals and Ch'ing[1] Ming[2], the annual grave-cleaning ceremony during the Festival of the Dead. Chinese folk religion in Kanowit Bazaar is, therefore, a domestic affair. Maurice Freedman has stated (1970: 176-177) that Chinese rituals for the ancestors that are centered upon a temple of ancestral hall are usually an activity involving men while women are more prominent in domestic rites:

> The ancestral hall is not merely the site of agnation; it is the locus of the political life of the agnatic community, and in that life women can have no public place. The contrast with domestic worship is sharp: that sphere belongs above all to women; the ancestors are capable of some immediate intervention in the lives of their descendants; it is a realm of personal relationships between living and dead. In the halls the ancestors are raised by men to a plane from which notions of punitive behavior are excluded, whence only pride and generalized benignity flow.
>
> The very same systematic difference is to be seen between

## MAP 14 a

### LOCATION AND DIALECT GROUP OF CHINESE FAMILIES WITH HOUSEHOLD ANCESTOR SHRINES



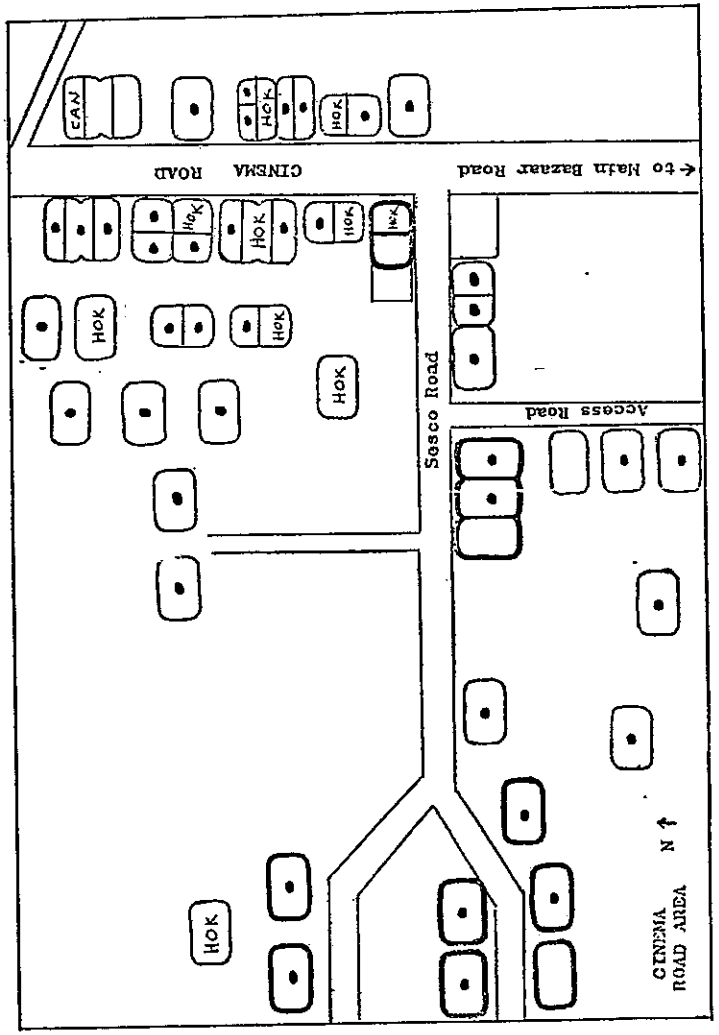

SHOPHOUSE AREA

(Chinese families without shrines are marked with a black dot)



## MAP 14 b

### LOCATION AND DIALECT GROUP OF CHINESE FAMILIES WITH HOUSEHOLD ANCESTOR SHRINES




CINEMA ROAD AREA

(Chinese families without shrines are marked with a black dot)

> the rites Performed at the graves of recent forebears and those at structurally significant tombs and remoter ancestors. When family parties go out to the graves (ideally sited in the hills) to care for and make offerings at them - which they do at least at Ch'ing Ming - they enter into the same kind of relationship with individual forebears as we find in domestic worship. The women are prominent; personal appeals to the dead may be made; the delicacies offered are likely to be adjusted to the tastes of the departed.

Chen Chung-min (1967: 192) has noted the same sexual role behavior in rural Taiwan, and it is equally true for Kanowit Bazaar. The festivals described below, begin located in and directed toward the domestic unit, and appealing in a personal way to immediate-forebears, are planned, organized, and executed by the women of the household. The men participate in the rituals, but the women have made all of the preparations. This is also true of the activities conducted at the family grave sites during the Ch'ing[1] Ming[2] Festival. The ceremonies performed at the cemetery pavilion, the only parallel to an ancestral hall, however, are more formal, more honorific, and directed toward generalized ancestors rather than to recently deceased and well-remembered nuclear family members; they are planned, prepared, and executed solely by men.

Chinese New Year, the 1st day of the 1st month of the Chinese calendar, is the most outstanding of the Chinese festivals in Kanowit. It is the only one of the cycle of festivals in which all Chinese - all dialect groups, all ages, all occupations and social levels, all backgrounds and education - celebrate. It is one of the "four big holidays" in Sarawak, and since it is the only Chinese festival that directly involves the non-Chinese of the town, it will be discussed together with New Year, Hari Raya Puasa, and Gawai Dayak below.

Nine days after the New Year is Pai[4] T'ien[1] Kung[1], the Birthday of the King of Heaven. It is a night festival; the



ceremonies of prayer and offering should begin at midnight, the beginning of the 9th day. In Kanowit, it is the Hokkien residents who are the chief observers of Pai[4] T'ien[1] Kung[1] (and all of the Chinese festivals), though only a small percentage of the Hokkien families in the town - generally the same ones who also have household shrines - participate in this, or any of the festivals.

Preparations begin no later than the 8th day of the month with the preparation of the food for offerings and the collection of the necessary paraphernalia. In the evening of the 8th day, after the shops have closed for the day (about 9 pm), the participating families begin to erect their household altars. In old China, and in those parts of Malaysia (Penang, Singapore) where Chinese religious behavior is more traditional, special altars are used for Pai[4] T'ien[1] Kung[1] (Wong 1967: 50f). They are carefully stored away during the year. When they are erected for the festival, outdoors under the sky, great care is taken to see that they are not soiled, and the legs are raised off the ground on wooden stools to prevent their defilement by touching the earth. In Kanowit there are no special altars; normal household tables are used instead, and are hung with cloth - special embroidered altar cloths, if the family owns them, otherwise with any clean and colorful print. They are placed in the doorway of the home or shophouse, extending into the main room of the household. Only one of the fifteen Pai[4] T'ien[1] Kung[1] , altars in Kanowit Bazaar in1971 was raised off the ground - on 7 Up crates. The most common of the altar cloths, bought in Sibu, portrays the Eight Immortals of Buddhist legend across the top and a large, fuzzy animal in the center, identified by some as a lion, by others as a griffin, or perhaps some other creature. On either side of the altar a stalk of sugar cane is fastened to the legs of the table, with the fronds bowed together to form an arch. Yellow crepe paper streamers hang from the stalks of cane.

The altar is filled with offerings of food - roasted pigs,

chickens, and ducks, sweet cakes, fruit, bottles of wine or beer, candy, eggs, rice cakes. Many of the plates of food are decorated with Chinese characters ("good luck," "double happiness") cut from red paper. Incense sticks are placed both in a censer at the front of the altar and in the food itself. By late evening the preparations have been completed, and everyone has had an opportunity to walk through the town to view the various altars on display. At midnight the family members gather behind the altar for the brief ritual. Each member lights an incense stick, kowtows to the censer (the focal point of any Chinese ceremony) and places his incense in the burner. Adults instruct their children in this rite. As inmost Chinese rituals, the burning of the incense is the basic symbol of communication with the spirit world. The Pai4 T'ien1 Kung1 ceremony concludes by having the oldest member of the family, male or female, take the two stalks of sugar cane from the altar and carry them into the street. There a small bonfire of paper spirit money has been lighted. The elder holds the stalks over the fire until the yellow paper tassles have been burned (Wong suggests (p 51) that this is symbolic of offering gold to heaven, as well as representing longevity, inherent in the evergreen sugar cane). The fronds are then broken from the stalk and added to the fire. The canes themselves are saved and eaten later as a sweat. After the ceremony is completed, the spirits having eaten their spiritual fill, the food offerings are added to the family larder.

The Ch'ing$^{1}$ Ming$^{2}$ (Pure, Bright) Festival is celebrated throughout China, and is second only to Chinese New Year in its participation by the Chinese residents of Kanowit Bazaar. Its date is determined on the Western solar calendar, April 5th; this is very close to the traditional custom of holding Ch'ing$^{1}$ Ming$^{2}$ 106 days after the Winter Solstice, but Kanowit residents state that it is "usually held sometimes near Easter." It is the only one of the Chinese festivals in Kanowit Bazaar in which there is a distinct separation of the dialect groups. April 5th is the date for the



Hokkien Ch'ing$^{1}$ Ming$^{2}$, called by them Cheng$^{1}$ Beng$^{2}$ ; the peoples of Kwangtung Province, the Cantonese and those who follow their rituals, perform their rites the day before the Hokkien, and the Foochow the day after. The Ch'ing$^{1}$ Ming$^{2}$ rituals of the three ethnic groups are virtually identical (with one exception); the Hokkien rites, which are more extensive and involve the largest number of residents, will be described here as the standard. But despite these similarities, and even complete duplications of effort, the Chinese of Kanowit retain the separate identities of their distinctive dialect or regional origins. In no other public behavior (except spoken language) are these dialectic differences so obviously display. Perhaps it is because Ch'ing$^{1}$ Ming$^{2}$ honors the ancestors that the differences of origin are highlighted.

There are two levels of participation in the Ch'ing$^{1}$ Ming$^{2}$ activities, the individual family and the Ch'ing$^{1}$ Ming$^{2}$ Society. A few days before the Ch'ing$^{1}$ Ming$^{2}$ the Chinese cemeteries are burned over to clear off all of the weeds and grass that have grown there during the past year. At this time also the Society begins its preparations. The Societies are ad-hoc groups - their membership is opened to any member of the dialect group who makes a financial contribution to support the festival, and the Society is active only for the few days proceeding Ch'ing$^{1}$ Ming$^{2}$ . On the evening of Ch'ing$^{1}$ Ming$^{2}$ , after a banquet of the members of the Society, the group is dissolved until the following year. The Ch'ing$^{1}$ Ming$^{2}$ Society has a chairman who is chosen by lot during the banquet, to serve the following year. He is aided by four assistants, and is responsible for collecting the financial contributions, purchasing the food and paraphernalia, organizing the activities of the Society, and leading the rituals. The few ceremonial items that are used every year - drums, cymbols, carrying trays and litters, owned by the Society, are stored in the clubhouse of the Hokkien Association, though the only connection between the two groups is a considerable over-lapping of their memberships.

On the morning of Ch'ing[1] Ming[2] the members of the Ch'ing[1] Ming[2] Society gather on a corner of Main Bazaar Road. They bring out their drums and cymbols and assign members to play them during the ceremonies. Trays, baskets, and large boxes suspended from carrying poles are brought forth; they are filled with offerings of food, incense, paper spirit money, and, in previous times, opium. (Today, cigarettes and betel nut are substituted for the gift of opium, which is now illegal.) Whole pigs and a goat, cleaned and dressed, are fitted to wooden litters that will be carried by two men. When all is assembled, the parade to the cemetery begins. First come young men carrying red cloth banners inscribed with appropriate slogans and prayers, followed by the litters bearing the offerings of the goat and pigs. The large wooden boxes and the trays filled with fruit and cakes are next in the procession. Two boys carry a pole from which a large drum is suspended, while a third beats out a marching rhythm. The cymbols and smaller drums bring up the rear.

The procession marches to the pavilion at the cemetery. There a low stone platform serves as an altar, and the food offerings are laid out upon it. The group gathers around the altar, burning incense and kowtowing to the gods. The pavilion contains two engraved stone tablets, one dedicated to the "Good Brother God, " and the other to T'u[3] Ti[4] Kung[1] , an earth god who also represents wealth; the inscriptions on these markers are repainted with red paint (even though the other Ch'ing[1] Ming[2] Societies have already done so on the previous days). A prayer, especially composed for use during Ch'ing[1] Ming[2], and written in fine calligraphy on red paper, is read and then burned. When the ceremony is completed, the procession reassembles and walks to the new Chinese cemetery outside of the town, where the ritual is repeated. The food offerings and paraphernalia are then returned to the Hokkien Association clubhouse. There the latter are stored away for the coming year and the food is given to the cook to be used for the evening



banquet. Any man who has contributed more than five dollars to the Ch'ing[1] Ming[2] Society is invited to attend the banquet; any elderly men who are judged to be too poor to contribute money are asked to come as guests. After the dinner is over, all those who are interested in helping with the next year's celebration write their names on a slip of paper, and a drawing is held to select the chairman and four assistants for the following year.

In 1971, the Hokkien Cheng Beng Society had about one hundred members, many of whom lived in the gardens outside of the town, about twenty of whom actually participated in the ceremonies at the cemetery pavilion. The membership was, and always is, limited to males. The total expenditures of the Society were over $1,200; $70 were spent for the goat, $120 for the two pigs, $50 for cakes, $100 for spirit money, incense, etc., and $20 for fruit. There were twelve tables set for dinner (over one hundred guests), and the cook was paid $600 to cover his expenses and buy additional food for the banquet. Only $1,000 was collected by the Society, and the cost overruns, which are common, were met by the chairman and his four assistants.

Concurrent with, but completely independent from, the ceremonies of the Ch'ing[1] Ming[2] Society are the personal activities of individual families at the graves of their relatives. The grave site is cleared of weeds and dirt, and paper spirit money is pinned to the ground over the grave; additional spirit money is burned, as is incense. The inscriptions on the tombstones are repainted, if necessary, and food offerings are placed on the graves. The degree of religious involvement, as opposed to simple grave maintenance, is variable with each family; Christian families participate in Ch'ing[1] Ming[2] in ways not visibly different from their non-Christian neighbors.

The three largest dialect groups in Kanowit Bazaar, the Hokkien, the Cantonese, and the Foochow, each hold their own separate, though virtually identical, Ch'ing[1] Ming[2] celebrations.

There are not enough Hakka or Hylam Chinese in the town, however, to organize their own Societies. Therefore, they join the Cantonese in their Ch'ing[1] Ming[2] society, just as they join in their clubhouse organization, making it a grouping of peoples of Kwangtung and neighboring provinces, rather than a strictly dialectic grouping. Indeed, many of the Hakka and Hylam people in Kanowit adopt Cantonese rituals and customs in general. One of these customs that is found only among the Cantonese in Kanowit is associated with Ch'ing[1] Ming[2] . On the third Ch'ing[1] Ming[2] after the death and burial of a Cantonese (or follower of Cantonese custom), the members of his family reopen his grave. The bones, usually all that remains of the body, are carefully removed and cleaned, one by one, then spread out on a mat in the sun to dry. When all the bones have been cleaned, they are placed in a large ceramic jar, which is then reburied near the original grave site. The abandoned coffin is left to rot away. This practice of secondary burial is unique to the Cantonese among the Chinese of Kanowit, but it is not limited to the non-Christians. The custom is also practiced in the Cantonese areas of China and Hong Kong (Though there the jar is not always reburied) and was brought to Sarawak by the original immigrant families. It is interesting to note that secondary burial in jars - Chinese jars - is a traditional custom of several indigenous tribes of northern Borneo. While the Cantonese and the native peoples have different origins for their customs, and the similarities are coincidental, the parallel is fascinating nonetheless.

The 5th Moon Festival (Tuan[1] Wu[3] Chieh[2] ), often called the Dragon Boat Festival, is recognized and celebrated by only a few families in Kanowit. None of the public festivities associated with the occasion - hanging greens over the doorways of the home to drive off the evil spirits, constructing temporary altars for a noon ritual, or bathing the children with a basin of special water (all described for Penang in Wong 1967: 120-127) - are followed in



Kanowit Bazaar. The date is marked chiefly by the preparation of a special food associated with the occasion, the tsung[4] tzu[3], triangular rice cakes filled with chestnuts, bean paste, or pork, and steamed in banana leaf wrappers. The traditional variety prepared with lye, which is then dried and ground into powder for medicine, is not made in Kanowit. The festival is a minor one in Kanowit, and only those non-Chinese who are visitors to a Chinese home, and are offered sometsung[4] tzu[3] to eat would be aware of the celebration.

The 7th month of the Chinese calendar is traditionally devoted to the spirit world, especially to those spirits (the "Hungry Ghosts") who have no living descendants to honor them throughout the year. Wong (1967: 136) stated that these celebrations are second only to Chinese New Year in importance and observation in West Malaysia, and the most important day of the month, the 15th, is celebrated elsewhere in Borneo by elaborate public festivals. The month in general and the 15th day in particular receive very little attention in Kanowit Bazaar. A few of the Chinese residents, primarily those same Hokkien families who follow all the festivals in the annual cycle observe the occasion, but there are no extensive preparations. Rather than the large public altars, filled with food offerings, baskets of paper spirit money, and large constructions representing material goods - ships, airplanes, homes, cattle and pigs, bicycles and automobiles, clothing, radios, and even televisions - modeled from bamboo and paper, and burned as offerings to the Hungry Ghosts in other Chinese areas, the people of Kanowit offer only small amounts of incense and spirit money. Lighted candles may be placed at the doorway and steps of the home to guide the spirits out of the house, but some residents do this on the 1st and 15th days of every month, and only few additional people do it especially for the Hungry Ghosts. The 7th day of the 7th month, the Festival of the Cowherd and the Spinning Girl, now immortalized in the Milky

Way, is completely ignored.

Another of the most popular and well-known Chinese festivals, the Chung[1] Chiu[1] Chieh[2] , or Mid-Autumn Festival, also receives scant attention in Kanowit Bazaar. The holiday, which falls on the 15th day of the 8th lunar month, is usually called the Moon Festival, or simply Mooncake Day, for it is believed that the moon never shines brighter than on this night. It has been celebrated in China since the T'ang Dynasty (618-907), and was associated with harvest festivals; it also has patriotic symbolism, as legends (probably dating from the Manchu period) tell of an uprising against Mongols of the Yuan Dynasty (1260-1368) aided by messages distributed in mooncakes. It is also a time for secular parties and feasts. Mooncakes are the sole remnant of Chung[1] Chiu[1] Chieh[2] in Kanowit. These cakes come in several varieties and qualities. All measure about four inches in diameter and are about two inches thick, And are filled with sweet bean paste (the least expensive), brownish seed paste, sweetmeats, and nuts; the most expensive cakes add the preserved yolk of a duck's egg to the other ingredients. The cakes are exchanged as gifts, bestowed upon honored friends and elders, and offered to guests in the home. The cakes are not prepared in Kanowit, but are purchased in Sibu from bakers or importers there. Almost all of the Chinese in Kanowit are familiar with the festival, but few celebrate it. The period no longer coincides with harvest time, which occurs in the spring in Sarawak, the Chinese of Kanowit are not farmers anyway, and the patriotic symbolism has little meaning to these citizens of Malaysia; all may be reasons for its decline in Kanowit.

The last holiday of the annual cycle that receives any attention at all in Kanowit is the Winter Solstice Festival (Tung[1] Chih[4] ). It falls on the 21st or 22nd of December on the solar calendar, the shortest day of the year, and was traditionally associated with family ancestors and domestic gods. It features the preparation of small, marble-sized gummy rice balls, some colored red, some with a



nut-like flavor, that are both eaten and used in ceremonies. Several of these sticky spheres are attached to the door jambs within the house, as offerings to the Door Gods. The day concludes with a family-reunion banquet. The only family known to observe this festival in Kanowit in 1970-71 probably did so for the benefit of its anthropologist, but it was reported that the festival is well-known among those house-holds that observe the annual cycle, and that they celebrate it "from time to time."

There are several other types of Chinese religious activity in Kanowit Bazaar that are not regulated by the annual cycle of festivals. Some families burn incense and paper spirit money on the monthly anniversaries of the death of a family member for a year after the funeral, utilizing special shrines consisting of a photograph of the deceased and a censer, placed on a shelf or table. As previously mentioned, a few families (all Hokkien) light candles and incense in their doorways on the 1st and 15th evenings of every lunar month to guide the spirits from their homes. Most shophouse families mark the death of a family member by pasting a strip of paper diagonally across the shop's signboard, leaving it in place for one year. Most Chinese wear a mourning patch, a small square of darkcolored cloth pinned to the shirt sleeve, after the death of a close relative, but neither the colors used nor the length of time they are worn conform to the formalities of traditional custom (as described in Freedman 1958: 44).

To some Kanowit Chinese, belief in the power of spirits and demons is a reality. One Chinese woman in Kanowit is especially skilled in dealing with evil spirits, though she does so only on an occasional and part time basis. She is called upon as needed by families who share her beliefs, and was successful in exorcising the ghost of a former boyfriend from one shophouse household in late 1970. She realizes that many, especially the young, scoff at those beliefs, and she does not discuss her powers, or allow any observers during her rituals. Not so shy was a professional spirit

medium, a male, imported in 1971 to cure the daughter of a prominent family who had been driven mad by a tree spirit: his rites of exorcism were open to all who were interested, and his audience numbered over one hundred people of all races. In addition to going into a trance, being possessed by his familiar spirit, and preparing many personal and household good luck charms, he also astounded the crowd by piercing his cheek with a large metal pin, which he then wore as he continued his curing rites. He successfully located and neutralized the offending spirit, residing in a tree behind the shophouses, and the girl, in time, returned to normal. A number of previously cynical young men were seen carrying his good luck charms in their wallets thereafter.

Funerals, especially those of elder male members of the family, are highly religious events in Kanowit Bazaar, as elsewhere in Chinese society. They have been well reported in the literature in the past, with Freedman 1958, C.K. Yang 1967, and Hsu 1967 discussing their general role in Chinese culture and their associations with the cult of the ancestors, and Fei 1939, Martin Yang 1945, and Gallin 1966, among others, providing accounts of specific funeral rituals and activities. They need not be described here except to note that funerals in Kanowit are rarely as elaborate, formal, or well-attended as those described from China and Taiwan.

## The "Four Big Holidays"

Four holidays dominate the annual cycle of festivals in Kanowit Bazaar (Table 17). Each one represents one of the racial/cultural groups of Sarawak, each is recognized by the Sarawak Government as being symbolic of those cultures, and each involves some degree of interracial activity and community-wide celebration. Religion plays a varying role in these festivities; secular enjoyment dominates them. During three of the holidays, Chinese New Year, Gawai Dayak, and Hari Raya Puasa, members



of one of the major ethnic groups play host to each other, and to their friends and neighbors of the other bangsa: on the fourth, Western New Year, all of the young and/or Westernized members of the community combine to socialize together.

### TABLE 17
### THE CYCLE OF FESTIVALS IN KANOWIT BAZAAR 1971

| DATE ON WESTERN CALENDAR | FESTIVAL<br>DATE ON CHINESE OR ISLAMIC CALENDAR |
|---|---|
| January 1, 1971 | WESTERN NEW YEAR'S DAY* |
| January 27, 1971 | CHINESE NEW YEAR<br>1st day of the 1st lunar month |
| February 4, 1971 | PAI[4] T'IEN[1] KUNG[1]<br>Birthday of the King of Heaven<br>9th day of the 1st lunar month |
| February 6, 1971 | HARI RAYA HAJI<br>Festival of the Pilgrimage<br>10th day of Dhurkaidah (12th lunar month) |
| April 4, 1971 | Kwangtung CHING[1] MING[2] |
| April 5, 1971 | Hokkien CHING[1] MING[2] (CHENG BENG)<br>Festival of the Dead<br>3rd lunar month; about 106 days after the Winter Solstice |
| April 6, 1971 | Foochow CHING[1] MING[2] |
| April 11, 1971 | EASTER SUNDAY |
| May 8, 1971 | MOHAMAD's BIRTHDAY<br>12th day of Rabi-ul-Awal (3rd lunar month) |

| | |
|---|---|
| May 28, 1971 | TUAN[1] WU[3] CHIEH[2]<br>5th Moon Festival (Dragon Boat Festival)<br>5th day of the 5th lunar month |
| June 1, 1971 | GAWAI DAYAK<br>Native Harvest Festival |
| August 31, 1971 | HARI KEBANGSA'AN*<br>National Day |
| September 4, 1971 | KUEI[3] CHIEH[2]<br>Hungry Ghosts Festival<br>15th day of the 7th lunar month |
| October 3, 1971 | CHUNG[1] CHIU[1] CHIEH[2]<br>Mid-Autumn Festival (Moon Festival)<br>15th day of the 8th lunar month |
| October 21, 1971 | BULAN PUASA<br>The Month of Fasting begins<br>1st day of Ramadzan (9th lunar month) |
| November 20, 1971 | HARI RAYA PUASA<br>Celebration of the end of the Month of Fasting<br>sighting of the new moon of Shawal (10th lunar month) |
| December 22, 1971 | TUNG[1] CHIH[4] |
| December 25, 1971 | CHRISTMAS |

* non-religious festival

Hari Raya Puasa is the greatest celebration of the year among the Malays and other Moslems of Sarawak. For the previous month they have been observing the Great Fast of Ramadzan, avoiding all food and drink from sunrise til sunset each day. When the new moon of the month of Shawal is sighted, the Fast is over, and the



celebrations begin. Each family has bought as much new clothing as it can afford, and everyone dresses in his best to go visiting and to entertain his guests. Hari Raya Puasa is the only time that the traditional Malay costume is seen in Kanowit Bazaar; the men, who usually wear western-style clothing, outside of the home, put on their loose-fitting silk trousers and long-sleeved shirts, and tie short sarongs heavily embroidered with gold and silver thread around their waists. The clothing is very colorful, with bright yellows, greens, and pinks predominating. On their heads the men and boys wear the black songkok, the brimless oblong cap traditionally worn by South East Asian Moslems. The women of the family are dressed in their newest and most colorful full-length sarongs, bright colors or intricately patterned batiks, topped by the kebaya, a tight-fitting low-cut blouse that flairs out below the waist. They wear their best gold jewelry and ornaments.

The families go through the town, stopping to visit the homes of their friends. Everyone tries to go home for Hari Raya Puasa, and reunions are warm and old friendships are revived. Gifts are exchanged with family members and close friends. Each family has prepared innumerable cookies and sweet biscuits, pop corn, prawn chips, curries, and snacks, and hot and iced drinks are ready to be served; less orthodox families offer beer to their visitors. The festival is known for its cakes - large cakes iced with sweet sugary frosting, small, dainty tea cakes topped with butter, spicy pastries filled with curried meats, cakes with nuts and cakes with fruits. As with Gawai Dayak and Chinese New Year, all are welcome to the home, and strangers are frequently invited in from the street to celebrate the holiday with the family and its guests. Harrisson (1970: 168f), in his accounts of Malay household finances, cites several examples of the expenditures of typical Malay families for Hari Raya Puasa; a family with an average income of $120 per month that spent $102.70 for clothing, food, cigarettes, and household items is given as an example. Even in the small Malay

community of Kanowit, Hari Raya Puasa is a lavish and hectic event, and the Malays are generous in sharing their celebration with the others in the town.

Gawai Dayak, the holiday on June 1st in honor of the native peoples of the state and celebrating their recent harvest, is an affair of the longhouse rather than of the bazaar. It is, however, a two-day public holiday, and many of the residents of Kanowit take this opportunity to visit their Iban friends, and many Ibans come to the town during the festivities. Ibans living in the town try to return to their longhouses for the occasion, and the boarding students at the local schools are given a holiday to join their families for the gawai.

Gawai Dayak, like all longhouse life is more casual and informal than the festivities of the bazaar. Some extra activities may be organized - cockfights, dancing to the music of gongs on the ruai (yeranda) in the evening, a wild-pig hunt - but these are typical entertainments for the Iban and are not limited to Gawai Dayak. Tuak, the Iban rice beer, is brewed in large amounts, as the rice is plentiful so soon after harvest time. A few special events may be prepared, such as dressing up in the finest old traditional costumes and heirloom jewelry, or preparing charms and talismens for the longhouse, but the major distinction between Gawai Dayak and the usual Iban party is in its quantity rather than its content. And quantity there is, especially in the tuak. In fact, When Gawai Dayak is over, Iban and visitor alike may very well have had so much tuak that they no loner remember whether anything else of note occurred at all.

The visitor to the longhouse - Iban relatives and friends from other longhouse, Chinese towkays come to visit their clients, Catholic priests, government civil servants and officials, Western travelers or volunteer workers, groups of school students, male and female, Chinese, Malay, and Iban, on holiday together - enter the longhouse by ascending the notched-log tangga ladder and are



greeted by a woman with a glass of tuak that must be consumed on the spot. It is the first of many, and if the visitor refuses to drink more, a gang of older women may wrestle him to the floor and literally pour it down his throat. Tuak flows on the ruai, center for all social activities, and in the bileks of each family as well. It is customary to visit each bilek to wish them well, and at each a new glass of tuak is produced. As evening falls the gongs are brought out, and each visitor is called upon to dance for the group, and any effort receives a warm response, and another glass of tuak. Skilled dancers, male and female, are urged to come forth to display their abilities. The celebrations frequently go on all night. When the visitors leave, one last glass of tuak must be consumed to see them on their way, and to give the non-Iban visitors sufficient courage to negotiate the slippery notches of the tangga. Iban hospitality at Gawai Dayak is as sincere as it is overwhelming, and it is displayed equally to visitors of all racial groups.

Chinese New year is unquestionably the biggest event in the annual cycle of Chinese life in Kanowit. It is the only time during the whole year that all of the shophoudes in the bazaar close for the day; no other occasion is sufficiently important for all business to stop. Traditionally, Chinese celebrated New Year over a fifteen day period during the first lunar month, but today the celebrations center around the two days of public holidays granted by the government. As with the Malays and Ibans, students return home for the festival, and families try to plan reunions and visits at this time. Everyone dresses in his best clothing to visit his friends and neighbors, and all are welcome guests in the home.

Religion plays virtually no role in New Year celebrations in Kanowit Bazaar. There are no rituals, services, or special events; secular entertainment dominates completely. There are special film shows, talent contests, and sporting events, and life among the Chinese is a two-day party. Outstanding for this occasion is the food, available in quantities and quality not usual at other times of

the year. Evening feasts of ten or twelve courses, with a dozen or more guests at the table, are not unusual, and an individual may be invited to several such banquets in one day. In addition, he has been offered food and drink at each home he has visited since he began his round of greetings in the early morning. Each dialect group prepares its special foods, each housewife cooks her best recipes, and everyone is urged to try them. Beer, the most popular alcoholic drink among the Chinese of Kanowit, flows freely, and is supplemented by their favorite beverage for more elegant occasions, brandy. An empty glass is scorned, and drinking to excess is not stigmatized during the New Year festivities, though women are accorded more understanding when they decline a second glass.

Elder members of the family give gifts of money wrapped in red paper envelopes to their younger relatives, calling these presents by their Hokkien name, ang pow. If the family is large, these ang pow can total several hundred dollars. Every home is open, and passersby are often called in from the street to have a glass of beer and some snacks. People come in form the rural farms to visit in the town, and boatloads of families and friends ply the river visiting the gardens along the banks. Everyone is welcome, and hospitality is not limited to Chinese alone; Ibans visit their towdays, students their teachers, employees their employers, and neighbors one another.

Nothing of great importance or substance happens in Kanowit Bazaar during the days of Chinese New Year, in government, in business, in education, or in any of the routine activities of life. Its significance for anthropology lies not in its sociological patterns but in its human emotions.

Western New Year is a holiday in Sarawak as well. In Kanowit, it is celebrated by the least number of people of all the major holidays, but it is the most multiracial of festivals, as it is not sponsored by any one single racial group. A New Year's Eve party is held each year, organized by members of the young, Western-educated civil servant class, but open to anyone who pays the admission fee. Drinks are served, a band plays, there is dancing, both Western and Malay, and group games and contest, such as Musical Chairs, are played. Local talent is asked to perform for the group. In 1970 there was a contest to pick a Batik Queen, and a prize was awarded.



It is the degree of racial mixture that makes the New Year's Eve party significant to the development of a multiracial community in Kanowit. It was attended by several hundred citizens of all racial groups, and they were all at ease with the situation and comfortable in their inter-relationships. For the young, this came from a long history of interracial associations, a common educational experience, and a similar set of values and goals, all deriving from their English-language education. The older members of the community are at ease because such situations are not new to them; they have become accustomed to multiracial social relationships as they continue to become more frequent in the bazaar. Events such as the New Year's Eve party produce a body of shared experiences that tie the participants together, even if in only a trivial way, making it easier for them to bridge the gaps of communication and culture in matters of more consequences.

# CHAPTER 7: THE FAMILY[1]

The family has been the traditional center of Chinese life for as long as their history and customs have been recorded. The individual exists as a part of his family; he relates to his universe as a member of his family; the structure of human relationships was seen as an extension of the relationships of the family. The Chinese nation was one large family, and the Emperor was its leader: the Son of Heaven and the Father of his people. It was the family that provided for the individual's well being - it raised him, trained him, took care of him when he was sick, honored him when he was old, and prayed to him after his death. Through the patrilineal extension of kinship, the family became a corporate group, owning land, building temples to its ancestors, arranging alliances of marriage for its children, providing for its members. The family was, in traditional Chinese society, unquestionably the matrix of life for the individual, more important than the individual himself.

The people of Kanowit Bazaar are not "traditional Chinese;" their culture has changed with its transplantation to a new environment, and the family has changed also. But one thing that has not changed is the importance of the family to the individual member of it.

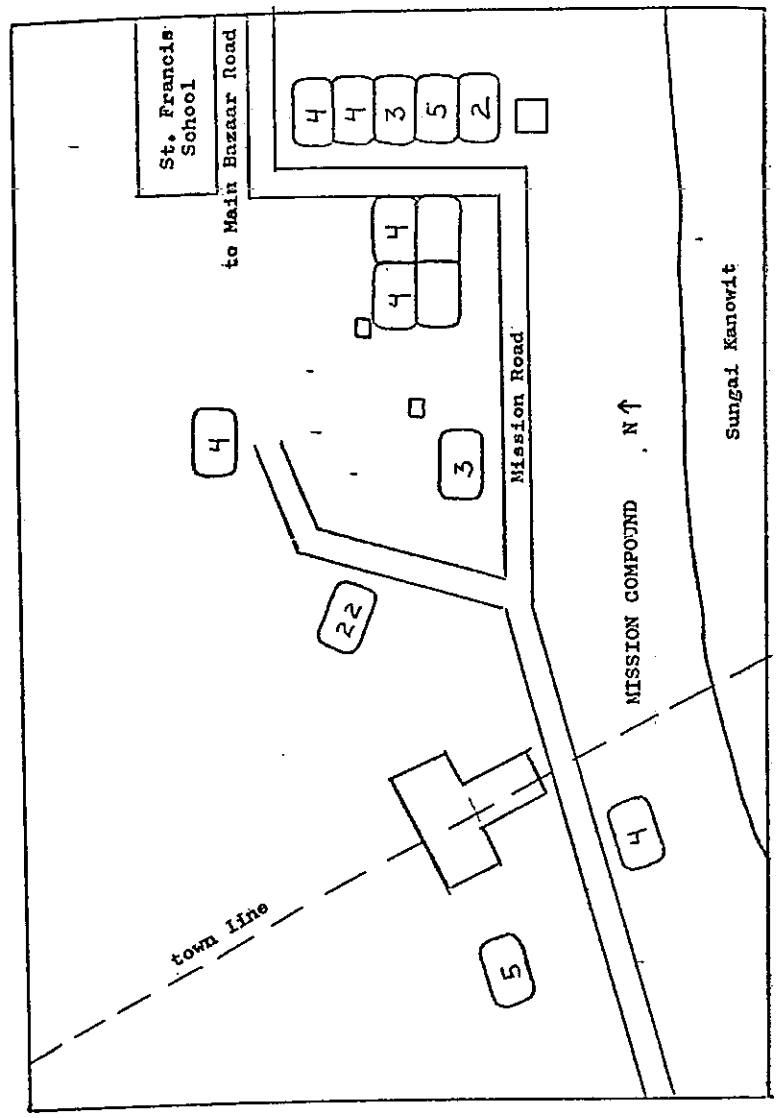
There are, in the Chinese language, two words used to speak of the family, fang[2] and chia[1], and their differences indicate the basic structure of the traditional Chinese family. The fang[2] was a basic conjugal unit of man, wife, and children; the chia[1] has been defined by Lang (1946: 13) as "the economic family, i.e., a unit consisting of members related to each other by blood, marriage, or adoption and having a common budget and common property." A chia[1] might consist of one fang[2] or several, all interrelated, and forming a part of the whole, as rooms form parts of a house. Indeed, chia[1] means "family" or "home," and " fang[2] means "room". The several fang[2] of a common chia[1] each had, if possible, their own room in the family house, built around a central hall containing the family shrine. The housing pattern is still common in rural Taiwan today. Lang's definition of a chia[1] is also the same as Freedman's (1958: 19) "household," and these two terms are interchangeable. The household in Kanowit may occasionally contain individuals other than members of the chia[1] - servants or apprentices, or the household may consist of several single people living together (though without full economic integration). But the household remains the basic unit for conceptualizing the family, and there are cases in Kanowit where several interrelated conjugal groups who live in the same building, but act independently, consider themselves to be, and behave as, separate "families" or "households" and not merely subdivisions of a single chia[1]. Though they may live together, they do not own property together, or have a common budget.



Map 15 a-e show the 261 households of Kanowit, of which 186 are Chinese, and the number of members in each household. Household size in Kanowit does not vary by race; the range of size for Chinese households (1 to 18 members) and of Malay households (1 to 17 members) are nearly identical. Nor does location within the town, per se, affect household size; that is, shophouse households are neither larger nor smaller than Cinema Road households. The major factor that does influence household size is economics, both in the number of members in one household and the number of households in one building. As mentioned in Chapter 2, young people who can not find jobs, and have no source of income, do not marry, but stay at home in the household, and economic unit, of their parents. At the same time, those households with a minimal income must frequently share their homes with other households; to share with a relative is preferred, but as the maps 6 a-e indicates, they will even share with members of a different dialect or race.

Table 18 shows the racial composition of the 261 households

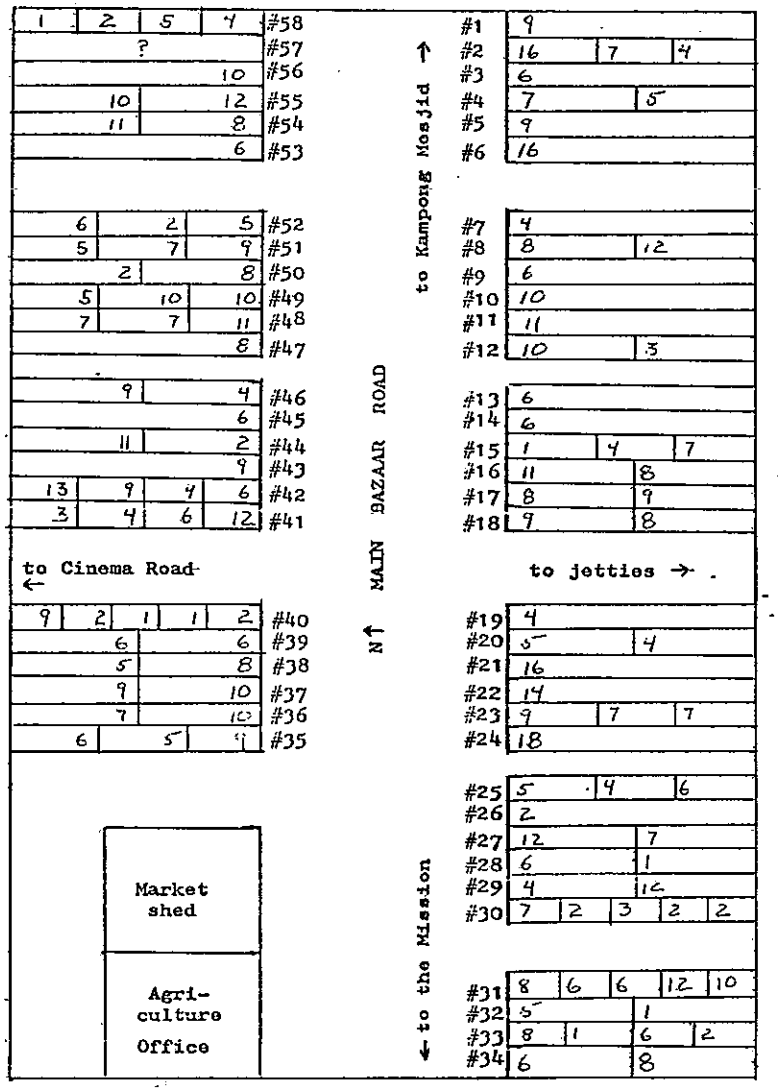
## MAP 15 a
### HOUSEHOLD SIZE




(Buildings with heavy black border are Government Quarters)

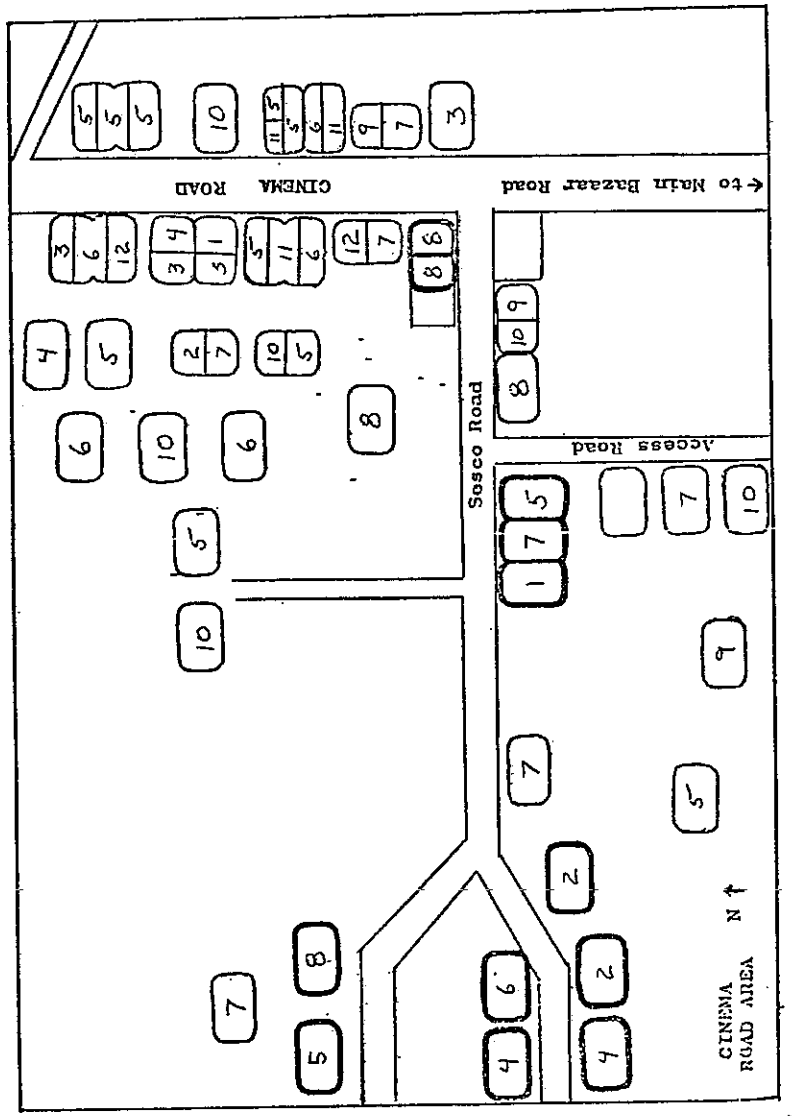


## MAP 15 b
### HOUSEHOLD SIZE




(Buildings with heavy black border are Government Quarters)

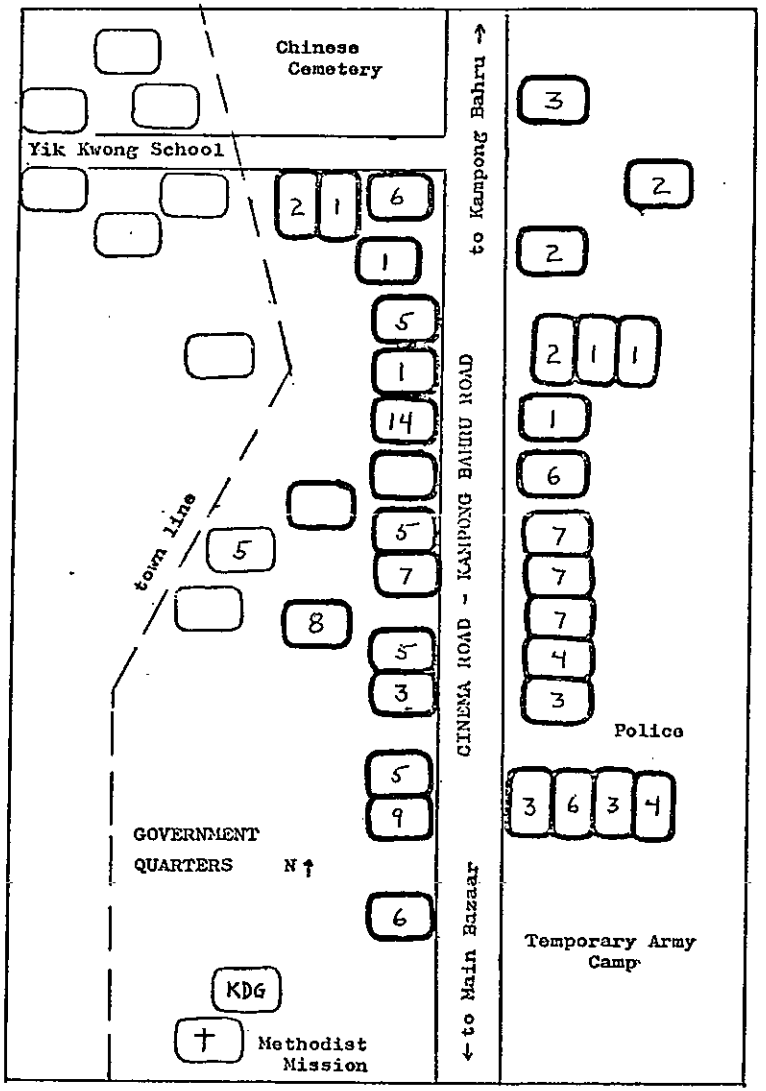
## MAP 15 c
### HOUSEHOLD SIZE




(Buildings with heavy black border are Government Quarters)

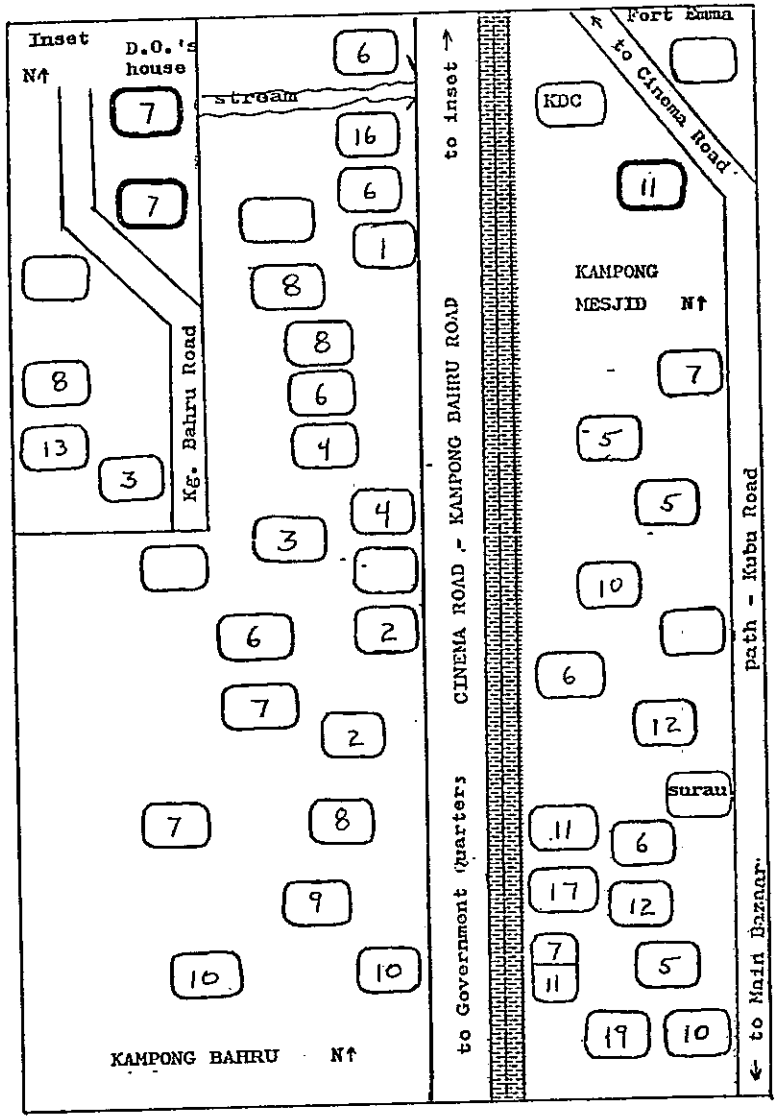


## MAP 15 d
### HOUSEHOLD SIZE




(Buildings with heavy black border are Government Quarters)

## MAP 15 e
### HOUSEHOLD SIZE




**(Buildings with heavy black border are Government Quarters)**



in Kanowit. The basic equality of household size is indicated by the degree to which the percentages of population by race agree with the percentages of households by race. There is only .3% difference between the number of Malay households and the number of Malays, and only .5% among the Ibans. The difference of 1.5% between Chinese households and Chinese in the population might indicate slightly larger Chinese families, but there is no other racial block of such a large size to use as a comparison, and the difference becomes insignificant when spread over the range of the 71.2% of households. Census figures show that the Chinese families, on the average, are not noticably larger than those of the other races. These figures also indicate another feature of housing, and household, patterns in the town: those races that have a greater percentage of households than they do of population - Melanaus, Ibans, Europeans, Sikhs, Land Dayaks, and Eurasians - are the races most frequently granted free and low-rent housing by virtue of their government or mission employment; the two races where population percentage is higher than household percentage - the Chinese and Malays - must usually provide their own housing. Racial patterns of residence by location in the town, previously presented in Maps 6 a-e, are again demonstrated here; Chinese concentrate in the shophouses and along Cinema Road, Malays in the kampongs, and the Government Quarters area is the most racially mixed.

Marriage is the means by which families are created, and there are three ways in which some Kanowit Chinese can be married - by a Kapitan China, by the Roman Catholic or Methodist Churches, or by a civil registration at the District Office. Most Chinese marriages are performed by a Kapitan China; of thirty-one marriages in 1968 and 1969, twenty-five were performed by a Kapitan, four by Roman Catholic priest, one by a Methodist minister, and one, a mixed marriage, by the civil authorities. The total number of marriages performed by the Kapitans in Kanowit

is declining, however. In 1961, they married thirty-seven Chinese couples; in 1963, thirty-six were wed; forty-three marriages were performed in 1965. By 1967, the annual total was down to sixteen, 1968 produced eighteen, and 1969 only eight. There is no increase in Chinese marriages by the churches or civil government during this period. There are several reasons for this decline, but chief among them is the growing exodus of young people from the bazaar in search of employment, and the postponement of marriage plans among those who remain. Marriage by a Kapitan China can be performed anywhere; the Kapitan is not limited to performing ceremonies in his own district, but may also officiate in other areas. Nor are Chinese couples required to register their marriage with their own Kapitan.

**TABLE 18**
**RACIAL COMPOSITIONOF THE 261 KANOWIT HOUSEHOLDS[2]**

| LOCATION* | Chinese | Malay | Malanau | Iban | European | Sikh | Land Dayak | Eur-Asian | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Shophouses | 113 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 120 |
| Cinema Road | 52 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 57 |
| Government Quarters | 11 | 9 | 0 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 33 |
| Kampongs | 4 | 34 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 39 |
| Mission | 6 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 |
| TOTAL | 186 | 46 | 4 | 18 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 261 |
| Percent of Households | 71.2 | 17.8 | 1.5 | 7.0 | 1.0 | | 1.5 | | 100.0 |
| Racial Group as Percent of Total Population | 72.7 | 18.1 | .92 | 6.5 | .40 | | 1.32 | | 100.0 |



* General area

Therefore, there is great movement of both the Kapitans and the couples at wedding times. The most common site for Chinese wedding is a restaurant or public hall, rather than the home, or office of the Kapitan, and such facilities are limited in Kanowit Bazaar. It is becoming more common for the wedding party to be held in one of the better-equipped Sibu restaurants, even when both families reside in Kanowit. Thus, some Kanowit Kapitans may be called away to marry friends or relatives in other districts.

It is customary to provide the bride with a dowry, called, in Kanowit, Phing chin (p'in[4] chin[1]; betrothal money), and the amount of this gift is registered on the marriage certificate. The average Phing chin for the eight marriages in 1969 was $1030, with a range from $800 to $1800. The dowry is omitted only in cases of the very poor, who try to offer at least a token gift, and in cases of remarriage, or the marriage of very old couples; even then there is often a token payment, as in 1966 when a 63-year-old man married a 46-year-old woman and received Phing chin of $100. Another tradition still held in Kanowit is the use of an intermediary or go-between, and the marriage papers carry his name along with those of the principals. In the past, this man would handle the negotiations between families in arranged marriages; today, it is a purely honorary position, as most marriages need no indirect arrangements, and no intermediary was used in seven of the seventeen marriages in 1968 and two of the eight in 1969. While there are reportedly several old men in the bazaar, friendly and avuncular figures, who are popular choices as go-betweens, the marriage records do not provide evidence that they are still used today, as there are no names that appear on the certificates more frequently than once or twice in a ten-year period. It is more frequent to choose a family friend or neighbor; relatives are not a suitable choice because the go-between must remain neutral and

unaffected by ties of kinship to either party.

There are no traditionally arranged marriages in Kanowit Bazaar today; the choice of a mate is influenced only by the more universal desire for family acceptance and approval. The passing of the arranged marriage and the introduction of freedom of choice in the selection of a marriage partner have broadened the range of spouses available to the Kanowit Chinese. With the increase in travel and contacts with other communities made possible by improved communications, the search for employment, and school attendance, many now marry residents of other towns and settlements. There is no way to check the locale-of-origin of marriage partners in Kanowit - residence does not appear on the Chinese certificates (as it does on the church and civil documents), and the Personal Data Forms used in the Census of 1970 omitted this question. Informants state, however, that it is becoming more frequent for a Kanowit resident, especially a male, to marry someone from another area than it is for two residents of the town to marry. Single females (of all races) in Kanowit Bazaar between the ages of 15 and 29 out-number single males 138 to 104, and the imbalance is even greater for the Chinese - 120 spinsters in this age bracket to only 89 bachelors. Female informants speak with chagrin about the young men who go off to "the city" to look for work and find new girlfriends there.

The relaxation of marriage customs can also be seen in an increase in interracial marriages in recent year. Interracial marriage are now a new phenomenon among the Chinese of Sarawak; in the early years immigration, when the male-female ratio was as high as 7:1, Chinese wives were not available and men chose spouses from among the local peoples. When the influx of unmarried men from immigration declined, and the more evenly balanced Sarawak-born generations matured, interracial marriages became less frequent. With the increased contacts of today, the long history of peaceful interracial relationships, the general



tolerance of the town population, and the development of a new multiracial culture, mixed marriages are again increasing in frequency. In a sample of 179 Chinese marriages for which data are available, seventeen, about 10%, are mixed marriages; twelve of the non-Chinese spouses are Ibans, three are Malays, one is a Melanau, and one is Eurasian. This last case is the only one in which the Chinese spouse is female; in all the other cases, a Chinese man has married a non-Chinese woman. There were five additional mixed marriages in the bazaar in 1971 - three Malay-Iban couples, a Land Dayak-Iban marriage, and an Iban with a Eurasian wife. The age profile of these mixed couples (Table 19) shows the curve, from more frequent in the past, to less frequent as the Chinese population achieved a balance sex ratio, to more frequent with the present cultural environment. It also shows that in all but one of the older mixed couples, the Chinese male is considerably older than his wife. In some of these cases, the non-Chinese woman is the man's second wife, the first having been Chinese.

In spite of there being seventeen mixed couples among the Chinese of Kanowit, interracial marriage is still not fully accepted by some of the people of the town, and a Chinese girl who marries a non-Chinese man is definitely looked down on. They suffer no discrimination or prejudice, however, and their children display no visible characteristics that distinguish them from the others of the bazaar. As it is customary in Sarawak for the children to follow the race of their father, the children of mixed marriages are considered to be Chinese. No attempts are made to disguise the interraciality of a mixed marriage, and non-Chinese affines are welcome at festivals and celebrations. At the funeral of a prominent Hokkien man in 1970, his wife's Iban relatives were present in great numbers. He was given an elaborate Hokkien funeral, but throughout the ceremonies parallel Iban rites were performed, usually in the same room with the Chinese ones. There are some families in the town in which interracial marriage has become

almost the standard; in one case a Chinese man has an Iban mother, an Iban sister-in-Law, a Land Dayak son-in-law, and his second daughter's marriage to an Iban ended tragically with her accidental death by machine-gun fire only two months after her wedding. Even in conservative communities elsewhere in Borneo mixed marriages have occurred, and one of the members of the powerful interlocking directorate of Chinese associations in one such community was the child of such a marriage. It is among the English-educated class, however, as in so many other cases of multiracial behavior, that mixed marriages are most accepted.

## TABLE 19

### AGE PROFILES OF MIXED MARRIAGES

**August, 1970**

First number = age of male
Second number = age of female

| MIXED RACE MARRIAGES | MIXED CHINESE DIALECT MARRIAGES |
|---|---|
| 75 - 40* | 68 - 56 |
| 68 - 38 | 62 - 60 |
| 67 - 58 | 60's - 60's |
| 66 - 68 | --- |
| 63 - 43 | 56 - 45 |
| 63 - 42 | --- |
| 61 - 37 | 43 - 43 |
| --- | 42 - 40 |
| 52 - 33 | 42 - 31 |
| 51 - 42 | 41 - 36 |
| --- | 41 - 35 |
| 48 - 27 | --- |
| 47 - 48 | 36 - 27 |
| 45 - 44 | 36 - ? |
| --- | 32 - 29 |
| 38 - 37 | 31 - 30 |
| 34 - 32 | 31 - 28 |
| 33 - 30 | 31 - 28 |
| --- | 31 - 27 |
| 29 - 41 | 30 - 26 |
| 29 - 30* | --- |
| 26 - 25 | 26 - 18 |
| 25 - 22 | 20 - 21 |
| 24 - 25* | |
| 22 - 19* | |
| 20's - 20's* | |

*indicates non-Chinese to non-Chinese marriage



Willmott's discussion of intermarriage between Chinese and Indonesians (1960: 89-94) closely parallels the data from Kanowit in all but one point - a far smaller percentage of such marriages occurred (only 2.2% in the period 1946 - 1954, compared to the 10% from Kanowit).

Of the 179 marriages in the sample, 14.4% were inter-dialect unions. There is still a strong preference for a spouse of the same dialect, and as Skinner has pointed out for Thailand (1957: 196-197):

> Those who marry in China almost always take wives in or near their native hsien of the same speech group, though some of the wealthier men take wives in the more cosmopolitan cities - Hongkong and Canton in particular - so that among the elite one occasionally finds Teochiu or Hokkien men with Cantonese wives. Even when immigrants marry Sino-Thai girls, they prefer descendants of their own speech group. Language is, of course, the chief barrier to inter-marriage among speech groups, but differences in customs and tradition also play a part.
>
> Exceptions to the general rule have occurred primarily because of disparate sex ratios among the various speech groups.

In Kanowit, the interdialectal marriages show no favoring of

any one group, and no one dialect predominates as husbands or as wives (as Skinner found among Cantonese men). The age profiles of these couples (Table 19) closely parallel the age pyramid for the Chinese population as a whole (Figure 1).

Role behavior within the family is similar to the customary models described by Hsu (1965 and 1967) and Wolf (1970) for those Kanowit Chinese who follow traditional patterns, but an increasing number of residents, especially the young, find them too "old fashioned" and strict. The father-son relationship dominates the family. It is a very formal relationship, with the son obedient to the wishes of the father. The son is expected to work for the father, obey his commands, follow the decisions of the father, and support him in times of need, and in old age. The father plans the life of his son, makes all of the major decisions concerning his education, employment, residence, and, in the past, marriage. Even as adults they do not approach equality, and they never interact as friends. The mother is far more flexible toward her sons; she can be approached with daily problems and concerns, but she is in control of household affairs, and must also be obeyed. The elder brother dominates the younger, much as a surrogate father. The brother-sister relationship is more relaxed, but is subject to sexual separation and the division of labor; division of labor is especially true of older sisters, who frequently serve as assistants to their mothers in raising the children.

Some Chinese families in Kanowit have kept these patterns, and the sons both respect and fear their fathers. Many, however, have become more relaxed about their roles, and the relationships have become more like those in the West. There is great variation in family role behavior in Kanowit, and the children do not openly rebel against the older generation if it is slow to change. But the parents realize that to adjust to the changing social environment, and to assure the best chances for a successful future for their children, they must relax their domination over their children and



adapt to the new conditions in the family as they have to the new environment and society.

## TIES OF RELATIONSHIP

The Chinese of Kanowit originated in a part of China where the associations between land and lineage were the strongest in the country. Freedman (1958: 1...3) has described this relationship as follows:

> Nearly everywhere in China the more or less compact village formed a basic unit of rural society. The clan (as the lineage is often called in the literature) was usually but one section of a village. In the provinces of Fukien and Kwangtung, however, the lineage and the village tended markedly to coincide, so that many villages consisted of single lineages. This coincidence of agnatic and local community was found in other parts of the country too, especially in the central provinces, but in the south-east it appears to have been most pronounced.
>
> "Sib," "clan," and "single surname" mean in such contexts that there were local communities consisting of male agnates with unmarried female agnates and the wives of the men. The rule of lineage exogamy followed, as we shall see, from the rule of surname exogamy. The relationship between agnatic group and village may be set out in a number of alternatives, of which the first was clearly very common.
>
> One village might include two or more lineages, in which case these units were territorially distinct within the village.
>
> A single descent-group might be spread over more than one village.

These localized lineages in Fukien and Kwangtung brought together the kinship group, and its ancestors, and a defined piece of property. Land, lineage, and family became one unit. The male member of the household was born into the natal home of his father,

lived side by side with his agnatic kinsmen, brought his wife ir this household, worked the land of his lineage, produced ! successors to its ownership, and worshiped his predecessors on Freedman has pointed out the relationship between the lineage an its ancestors by stating that in "exploring the structure of the South-eastern Chinese lineage we have seen that household-families and extended families, at one end of the scale, and the lineage and sub-lineages, at the other end, defined themselves in terms of the cult of the ancestors" (1958: 81).

As pointed out in Chapter 6, the worship of the ancestors as a vital unifying force in social groupings has not been transplanted to Kanowit Bazaar. Ancestors were associated with the land, and like the land, and the gods of that land, could not be removed to Sarawak. The worship of the ancestors of the line, and the ceremonial temples and paraphernalia associated with them, was passed to the eldest members of the surviving generation, who remained on the land to administer the family trust. Any member who left the land also left his ancestors, as their shrines were not movable; to worship them, one had to return to their land. Therefore, lineages that were defined in terms of their lands did not remain as a viable social unit to those who left the land and migrated to South East Asia; lineages that were defined in terms of their ancestors stayed behind when their members left the ancestral halls and settled in Kanowit. New lineages could have developed in the new community (as they did in Taiwan), but they did not; too few members of any one group came to Kanowit together, there was no genealogical depth in the first few crucial generations, and most important of all, land was not the basis of economic subsistence for the Chinese of the bazaar. The abandonment of a lineageoriented existence followed swiftly once the cycle of land-lineage-ancestors was broken. As shown on maps 14a & b, only 15% of the Chinese households in Kanowit even bother to erect the most elementary of household shrines to their



ebears. Likewise, the surname groups, always assumed in China be the ultimate kinship group, lost their importance. In an agnatic i eage village, all members of the owning family shared the same surname. They believed that all Chinese who bore the same surname were all descended from the same body of ancestors. Tenuous as these ties of kinship might be, they were sufficiently strong to create a commonality and to serve as a unifying force. Surname groups did survive the migration to Sarawak in other parts of the state, where they served as sponsoring agents for further immigration, but they did not reach Kanowit. As seen in Table 20, fifty-three different surnames are found in the town of Kanowit - one tenth of all those known for all China, and an even greater percentage of those found in 19th Century Fukien and Kwangtung. Like the more restricted lineage, the surname became too shallow a unit to aid the newly arrived resident of Kanowit. Ideas of surname kinship have so evaporated during the change from a village of one to a town of fifty-three, that even the rules of surname exogamy, which were once stronger in south-east China than anywhere else in the nation, have ceased to have effect, and the marriage of two Chinese with the same surname is accepted with nothing more than a raised eyebrow. The Chinese of Kanowit themselves use the acceptance of such marriages among them as an example of how much of their attitudes and customs have changed in the new land.

In place of the patrilineage and its body of kinsmen, bilateral ties have been strengthened to unify the Chinese residents of Kanowit. Chinese kinship terminology (Appendix III), in all three dialects most widely spoken in Kanowit, distinguishes between those kinsmen in the patrilineal line (t'ang$^2$ relatives) from those in other lines (piao$^3$ relatives). While t'ang$^2$ relatives were stressed in the lineage structure and lineage village, the piao$^3$ group was not ignored. In Kanowit, they are both treated as equals, and even affinal ties are strong, as if to make use of every possible relative

that ego could trace. Among the 1,250 Chinese of Kanowit, 435

**TABLE 20**
**CHINESE SURNAMES IN KANOWIT BAZAAR**

| Chinese Character | Romanizations | Total number of Adults | Total number of Households |
|---|---|---|---|
| 林 | Lim, Ling | 69 | 33 |
| 江 | Kong, Kang, Chiong | 32 | 13 |
| 黄 | Wong, Wee, Wui, Bong | 31 | 13 |
| 谢 | Chia, Sia | 20 | 9 |
| 蔡 | Chu, Chua | 20 | 9 |
| 陳 | Chan, Chen, Ting, Tan | 18 | 8 |
| 47 others | | 217 | 100 |
| not identified | | 25 | 1 |
| TOTAL: 53 Surnames | | 432 | 186 |

PERCENTAGES;

Surnames identified: 94.2% (407 of 432)
Surnames not identified: 5.8% (25 of 432)
Six most frequent surnames as percent of total adults: 46.6%

can be classed as full adults, defined by their being either married or no longer living with their families in their natal households. Of these 435 people, data on the ties of kinship they have in the town are available for 395 individuals, 90% of the total. Of these 395 for whom there is data, 186 people had a bilateral relative living in another household in Kanowit Bazaar; this is 47.1% of all the adult Chinese in the town. When affinal ties are added, the number increases; with the household taken as a unit, tracing the bilateral ties of all of its members as a whole, 109 of the 186 Chinese households had a relative in another Kanowit household.



While they are not all related to everyone else, nearly 60% of the households were related, reckoning bilaterally, with some other household unit. There is a noticeable correlation between type of housing (and location and history in the town) and these kinship ties: sixty-eight of the 113 Chinese households in the shophouses - 60% - have ties to another household. Of the forty-four households in private housing along Cinema Road and its vicinity, thirty-two - 73% - are related to other families. But in the Government Quarters, where the residents are more mobile, only five of the nineteen Chinese families - 25% - had such ties of kinship in the town. (Map 16 a-e shows the locations of the 109 households with bilateral ties. Government Quarters are outlined in black. ) In Kanowit Bazaar today, bilateral ties of kinship have fully replaced the agnatic ones of their south-eastern China heritage.

The best-known form of household among the Chinese, in the literature and in the stereotyped image, is the extended family group, often called the "joint family." It consists of several fang[2], nuclear families, all joined together through the male line and living in a common house (chia[1]) with a common income, budget, and economic union, owning property together and living as a single unit. The residence of the joint family usually began as a simple two-room unit, containing a common room with its household ancestor shrine and a sleeping room for the man, his wife, and their children. As the children matured, the girls married and left the family, moving into the households of their husbands; the sons stayed in their natal home, and additional sleeping rooms were added to the house to accommodate them and their fang[2] as they married and brought their wives into the household. After several generations the home had become a compound, containing brothers, cousins, and second cousins, and their families, all linked agnatically. In Taiwan today compounds such as these can still be seen, housing more than 100 members of a single chia[1]. Compounds from the Ch'ing Dynasty (1644-1911) in Taipei were even larger,

forming an entire city block in some cases.

## MAPS 16 a-e

### BILATERAL TIES OF KINSHIP

Among Chinese Households in Kanowit Bazaar, 1971

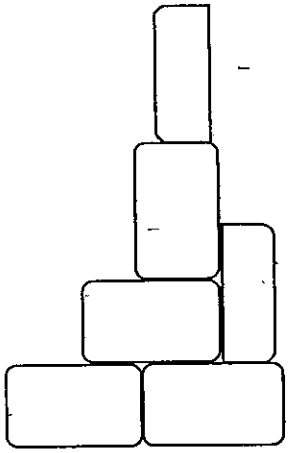
BT = Chinese households in which one member has a relative, reckoned bilaterally, in another Kanowit Bazaar household.

• = Other Chinese households.

= Non-Chinese households

= Building is a Government Quarter.

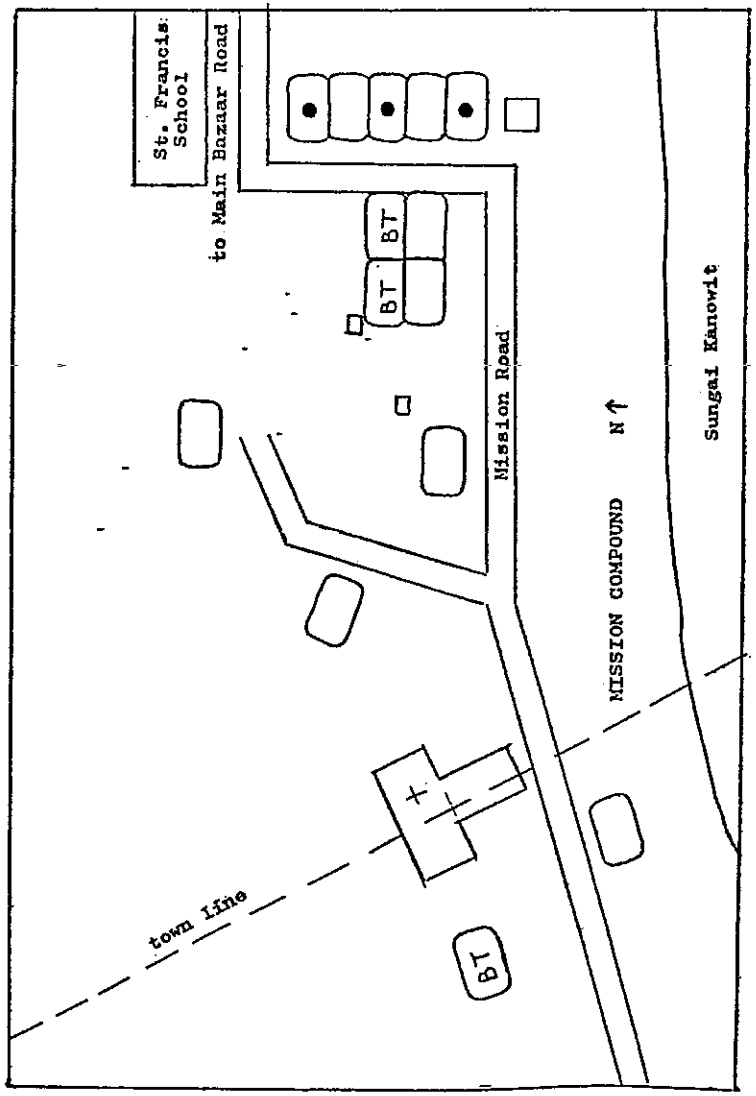
COORDINATION OF MAPS:





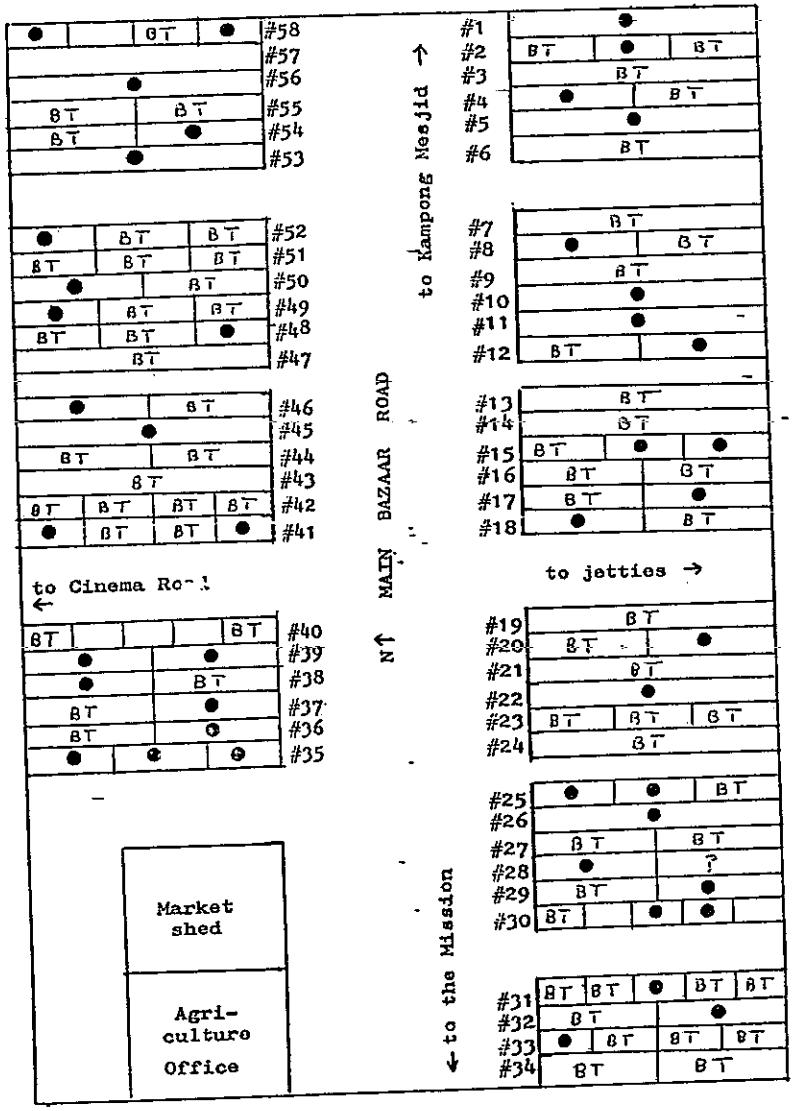
## MAP 16 a

### BILATERAL TIES OF KINSHIP AMONG CHINESE HOUSEHOLDS, 1971



## MAP 16 b

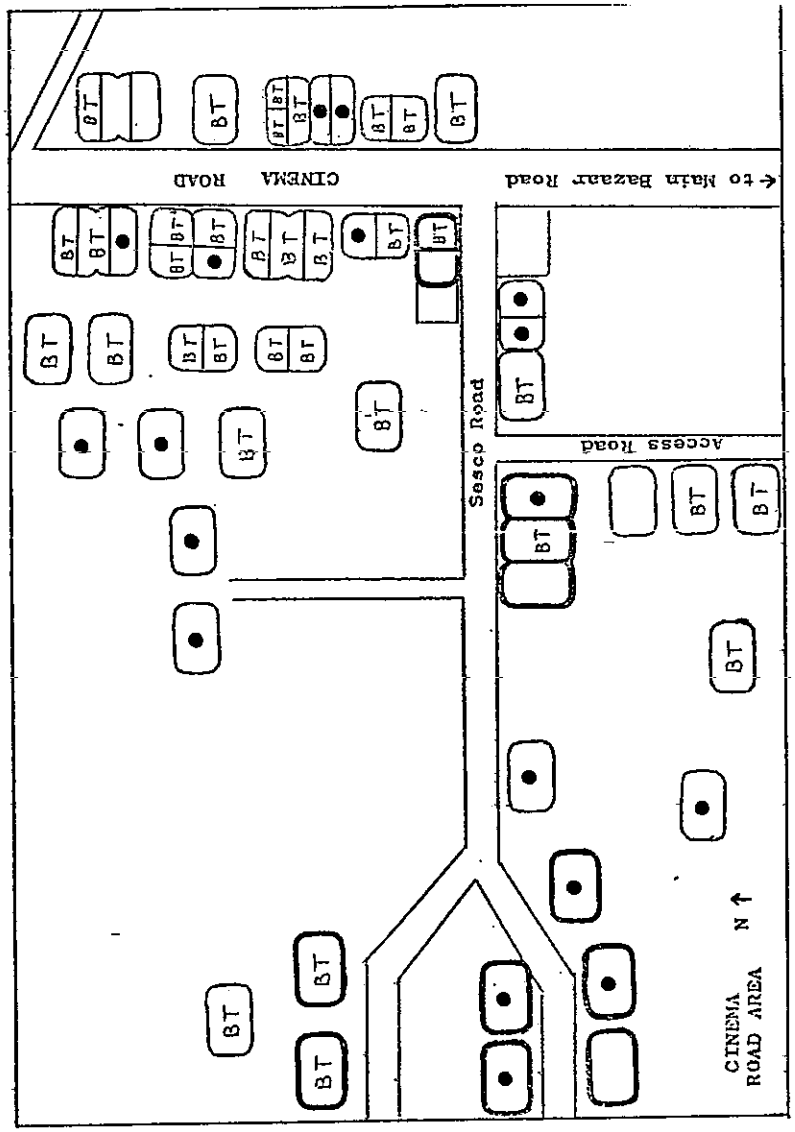
### BILATERAL TIES OF KINSHIP AMONG CHINESE HOUSEHOLDS, 1971





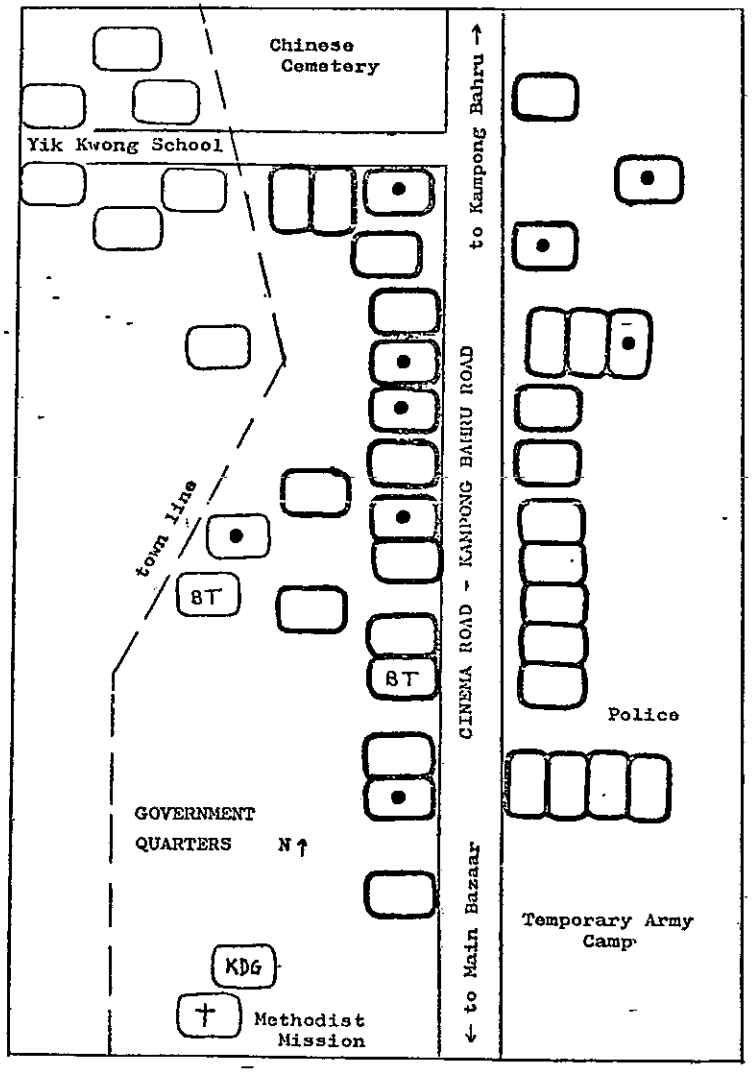

## MAP 16 c

### BILATERAL TIES OF KINSHIP AMONG CHINESE HOUSEHOLDS, 1971



## MAP 16 d

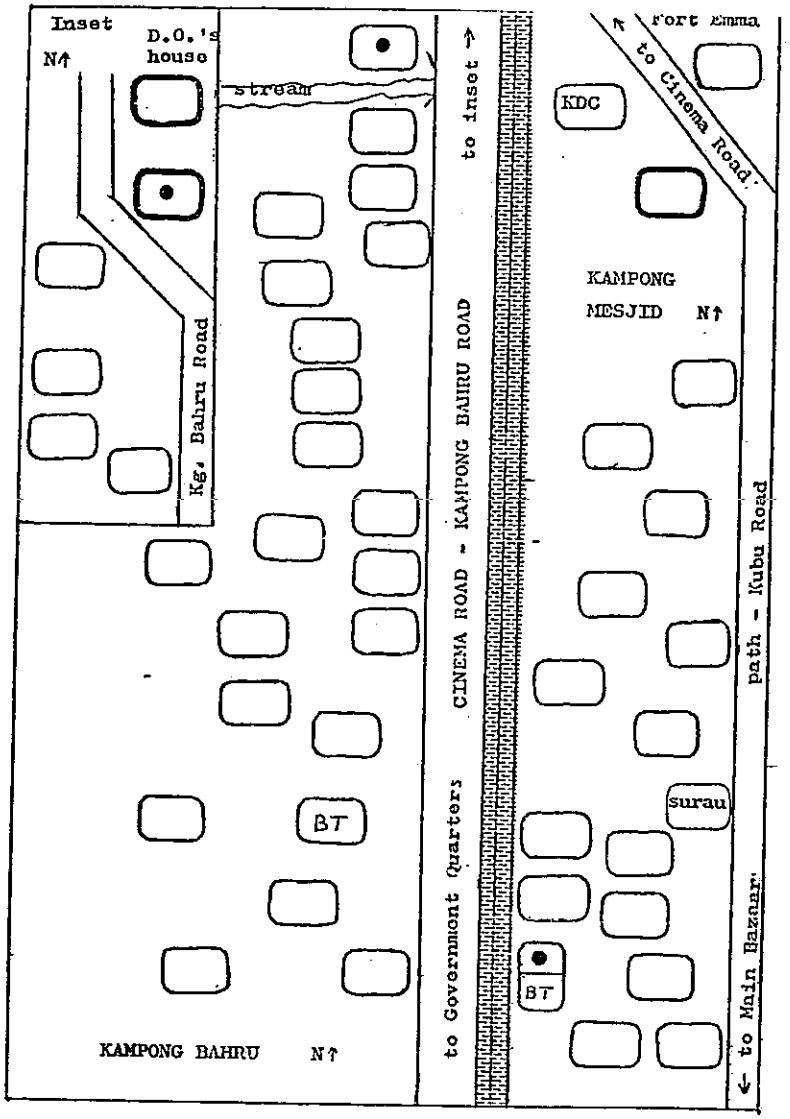
### BILATERAL TIES OF KINSHIP AMONG CHINESE HOUSEHOLDS, 1971






## MAP 16 e

### BILATERAL TIES OF KINSHIP AMONG CHINESE HOUSEHOLDS, 1971



The fact that not all, or even most, Chinese ever lived in one of these extended households is well known, and the fact is stressed in every new publication on the subject. Just as common are two other types of households. One is the stem family, in which one child stays at home with his parents (in China, it was usually a male), and brings his spouse into the household and raises his family there, while his siblings move out to other quarters. The other type is the simple nuclear family of man, wife, and children; in the literature on Chinese families, this is usually called the "conjugal family."

Of the 186 Chinese households in Kanowit Bazaar in 1970-71, there is sufficient data on family membership available to classify, with a high degree of accuracy, 164 of these families by their residence type.3 Based on this 88% sample, seven different organizations appear:

1) The nuclear family (conjugal family), found in 110 of the 164 households, 67% of the total.

2) Joint family, type 1, consisting of a man and wife, two or more of their married sons, the wives and children of those sons, and the unmarried children of the parental couple. Only 7 (4%) of the families in Kanowit form this "standard" type of chial.

3) Joint family, type 2, is similar to type 1, but does not have a parental couple in the household. In some cases, this was a type 1 joint family and the parents have died, but it can also be two brothers who have set up housekeeping together away from their natal home. There are five type 2 joint families in Kanowit, 3% of the total.

4) The male stem family, one son staying in his natal household with his parents, and bringing in his wife. Twenty-four of the 164 families - 14% - are of this type, though seven of them still have unmarried siblings at home, and they may eventually develop into joint families.

5) Female stem families, when the child who stays with the parents is a daughter, and her husband moves into her natal household. There are eight such families in Kanowit, 5%, and five of them also contain unmarried siblings of the daughter-wife.



6) A married couple, with no children. For some time to come, they will not become anything more than a nuclear family. There are eight (5%) in Kanowit.

7) A mother and her daughter, with no married males in the household. There are two such cases, 2% of the total.

There are no cases of joint families through the female line - parents, two daughters, and their husbands, and there are no father-daughter or father-unmarried son households.

All of these types are diagrammed in Figure 9.

In order to compare these data from Kanowit with similar materials from China and Taiwan, it is necessary to combine these seven types into the three used in other studies. Using the definitions provided by Lang (1946: 14-15), the nuclear, married couple, and mother-daughter families of Kanowit can be classed as :conjugal," the two types of stems as "stem," and the two joint types as "joint." This yields 120 conjugal families, 74%, thirty-two stem families, 19%, and twelve joint families, 7%.

Bernard Gallin, in his study of the Hokkien farming community of Hsin Hsing in Taiwan, found (1966: 13-38) that among its 99 families, 66% were conjugal, 29% were stem, and 5% were joint. Olga Lang's research among forty Fukien households (1946), with 37.5% conjugal families, 35% stem families, and 27.5% joint families, is a classic in the study of Chinese families, as it was one of the first to demonstrate that the "standard" joint family is not standard at all, and to analyze the economic reasons why it is not.

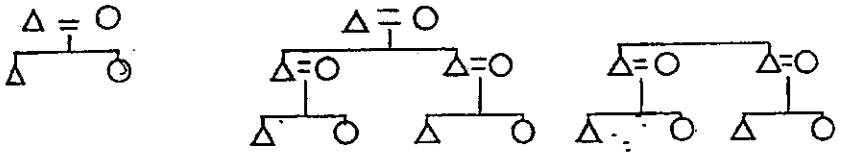
Lang stated that while the large joint household was the ideal to which others aspired, most families could not afford to live in them. Only 1/7th of the poor peasant families could afford such households, while 2/3rds of the merchants and landowners had the

## FIGURE 9

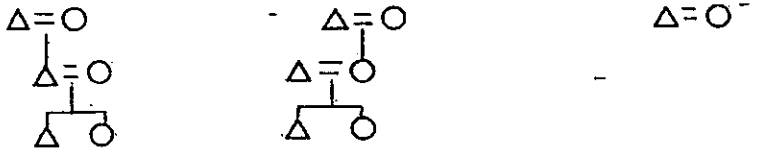
### FAMILY ORGANIZATION OF 164 CHINESE HOUSEHOLDS

Stating Type, Number, and Percentage of Total

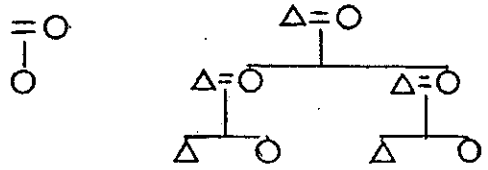
| NUCLEAR | JOINT – 1 | JOINT – 2 |
|---|---|---|
| 110 | 7 | 5 |
| 67% | 4% | 3% |



| MALE STEM | FEMALE STEM | MARRIED COUPLE |
|---|---|---|
| 24 | 8 | 8 |
| 14% | 5% | 5% |



| MOTHER–DAUGHTER | JOINT THROUGH FEMALE | FATHER – DAUGHTER |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 2% | | |





means to establish them (Table 22). To have an extended family household, there had to be enough land to support all of the constituent fang[2], in addition to the expense of building and maintaining the structure. Her data reveal a direct relationship between conjugal and poor and joint and wealthy, and only eleven of the forty families in her village were able to bring together the resources necessary to achieve the ideal form of residence.

While the statistics of residence in Hsin Hsing are closer to those from Kanowit than are Lang's, Gallin concurs with the statement that the large joint household is the ideal, and that the families in Hsin Hsing aspire to have them. The 66% who live in conjugal households do so because they can not afford the luxury of the ideal. He states (1966: 141-142):

> Many villagers still feel that when each person in the joint family fulfills his role properly, this form of family structure has great advantages. They say that only the large family can "become wealthy" and have "power." The large family makes it possible for people to work at a combination of occupations. While most of the family lives in the village and works the large landholdings which villagers believe only a large family can accumulate, some of the members may work in the town or perhaps locally as minor civil servants. Only a large family can have numerous contacts outside the village with relatives by marriage and with friends. To the Hsin Hsing villager, these expensive relationships with outside people, and frequent visits from these people, symbolize the family's status and enhance its reputation and prestige.
>
> The villagers' views about the advantages which accrue to the large family which make it their ideal are not without foundation. There are families in the Hsin Hsing area, usually landlord families, which the above description fits perfectly. While the large joint families in the village constitute only a small minority, the form is nevertheless within the realm of achievement for a family which can manage to have enough children who work hard and cooperate toward this end.

## TABLE 21

### COMPARISON OF KANOWIT FAMILY STRUCTURE

With Lang 1946 (Fukien) and Gallin 1966 (Taiwan)
Stating Number of Families and Percent of Total

| | CONJUGAL* | STEM | JOINT | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| KANOWIT | 120 | 32 | 12 | 164 |
| | 74% | 19% | 7% | |
| LANG 1946 | 15 | 14 | 11 | 40 |
| | 37.5% | 35% | 27.5% | |
| GALLIN 1966 | 65 | 29 | 5 | 99 |
| | 66% | 29% | 5% | |

* including nuclear, married couples, and mother-daughter families.

## TABLE 22

### LANG' ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF 40 FAMILIES

Correlated with Family Structure

| ECONOMIC LEVEL | CONJUGAL | STEM | JOINT | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Poor peasants | 10 | 8 | 3 | 21 |
| Middle peasants | 3 | 5 | 1 | 9 |
| Well-to-do peasants | 1 | 0 | 3 | 4 |
| Merchants and Land-Owners | 1 | 1 | 4 | 6 |
| TOTAL | 15 | 14 | 11 | 40 |

Source: Lang 1946: 350

The case in Kanowit is entirely different, the exact opposite. The nuclear family household is the ideal toward which people aspire; the large joint family is what they have



when they cannot afford better. When a family is poor, they cannot afford to rent separate homes for everyone. A son with a low salary, or none at all, brings his wife to live in his parents home until "things get better." When his economic status has improved, he "moves up" to a home of his own, modeled, most often, upon those of the government servants. There are still some "old fashioned" people in the town who like the joint household, but the people in the town who are considered to have been successful in their occupations live in nuclear family households. One reason for this difference from the traditional ideal is that Kanowit economics are not based on land. There is no need to keep the family members on the land of the lineage, or to maintain the lineage through its land holdings. The people of Kanowit operate on a cash economy, derived from business or salaries, and rent costs money; those who do not have sufficient funds save money by living with relatives; those who can afford to do so do not need to share their households with others.

In his Social Structure (1949: 137), George Peter Murdock makes the following statement about the influence of economic factors on social organization:

> Our twelfth assumption is that the forms of social structure are not determined by kinship patterns or terminology, or influenced in any major degree by them, but are created by forces external to social organization, especially by economic factors..... It is further assumed that the prevailing types and distribution of property favor particular rules of inheritance, that wealth or its lack affects marriage (e.g., encourageing or inhibiting polygyny), and that these and other factors external to social structure can strongly influence rules of residence and marriage and through them the forms of social organization and kinship structure.

It is Murdock's thesis that "it is in respect to residence that changes in economy, technology, property, government, or religion

first alter the structural relationships of related individuals to one another, giving impetus to subsequent modifications in forms of the family, in consanguineal and compromise kin groups, and in kinship terminology (1949: 202)." The people of Kanowit have undergone vast changes in their economic patterns, property ownership, and religious practices in the course of their adaptation to life in Kanowit. The changing structure of family organization and the ideals of household type are a visible result of these changes in Kanowit Bazaar.



# CHAPTER 8: KANOWIT BAZAAR AND THE "PLURAL SOCIETY"

> In Burma, as in Java, probably the first thing that strikes the visitor is the medley of peoples - European, Chinese, Indian and native. It is in the strictest sense a medley, for they mix but do not combine. Each group holds by its own religion, its own culture and language, its own ideas and ways. As individuals they meet, but only in the market-place, in buying and selling. There is a plural society, with different sections of the community living side by side, but separately, within the same political unit. Even in the economic sphere there is a division of labour along racial lines... One finds similar conditions all over the Tropical Far East - under Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, British, French or American rule; among Filipinos, Javanese, Malays, Burmans and Annamese; whether the objective of the colonial power has been tribute, trade or material resources; under direct rule and under indirect. The obvious and outstanding result of contact between East and West has been the evolution of a plural society... (Furnivall 1948: 304-305)

"The Plural Society," as a term referring to those societies having sharp and noticeable cleavages between two or more different population groups coresident in a common political unit, was introduced to sociological and anthropological studies in 1948 by J.S. Furnivall in his study of colonial policies in South East Asia, Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India. Furnivall used this term to designate the type of multiracial community described in the quotation above, a type of society common in the urban and coastal areas of South East Asia, which he accepts as a standard demographic feature of the Tropical Far East and believes to be a direct result of European colonialism. This term has been adopted by other scholars, and applied to societies in other parts of the world - societies that feature a set of "characteristic expressions of pluralism; and

demonstrate dissensus and, frequently, conflict among the differing racial, religious, linguistic, tribal, and cultural groups living within one common political system.

In the course of expanding the idea of the "plural society" from Furnivall's original descriptions of the bazaars of Rangoon and Djakarta to a general concept applicable to any non-homogenous social grouping, scholars have encountered many problems in defining their terminology, delineating the social, cultural, and political boundaries of the systemic units under discussion, establishing a set of criteria to be used in creating categories capable of cross-cultural analysis, and outlining how those categories shall be applied to the data available. As a result, these features characterize the small body of theoretical literature on the subject that has appeared since the publication of Furivall's original statement:

1) There is an overwhelming concern with the semantic aspects of the problem, with the delineation of terminology, the comparison and contrasting of one author's term of-reference with those of other writers, and the creation, of a jargon. Two of the best-known articles on the subject demonstrate this preoccupation: M.G. Smith's "Social and Cultural Pluralism" (1965) devotes six of its seventeen pages to defining the terms and vocabulary of "plural societies," while J. Clyde Mitchell's "Tribalism and the Plural Society" (1960) discusses the problem for six of its thirteen pages. Neither attempt has resulted in a standardized body of terms, and both writers on the subject feel required to preface their remarks with yet another discourse on its semantic aspects.

2) The theoretical literature on "plural societies" appears to have developed independent of the descriptive and illustrative ethnographic data from "plural" societies around the world. Theoretical statements on the nature, behavior, and function of pluralism are seldom followed by ethnographic examples or citations from the literature in support of the thesis. Mitchell (1960:



264) states that ".....it seems abundantly clear from the evidence we have that tribal norms and values only operate when tribesmen interact as tribesmen;" he does not state what "evidence we have, " nor does he indicate why this "evidence" makes his thesis "abundantly clear." An example of the extremes to which this tolerance for inadequate referencing can lead is found in M.G. Smith's "Social and Cultural Pluralism" (1965), where he states (p. 77), "Nevertheless, Radcliffe Brown offered a useful criterion for distinguishing structural systems. In a homogenous system each status and role has a uniform definition. When identical statuses and roles are defined differently we have a plurality of structural systems." As evidence for his statement he cites, not Radcliffe-Brown, but page 36 of Meyer Fortes' "The Structure of Unilineal Descent Groups" (1953), on which Fortes describes the structural bonds of corporate kin groups. He believes that "corporate descent groups can exist only in more or less homogenous societies," and that a "working definition" of the term "homogenous society" is "ideally one in which any person in the sense given to this term by Radcliffe Brown in his recent (1950) essay, can be substituted for any other person of the same category without bringing about changes in the social structure" (1953: 36). Radcliffe-Brown's "recent (1950) essay," cited without page number, is his "Introduction" to African Systems of Kinship and Marriage (1950). Nowhere in this "Introduction" does Radcliffe-Brown discuss "plural societies," homogenous vs. heterogeneous societies, or the relation of status and role behavior to any subject other than kinship systems. The probable source of Fortes' remarks occurs in this discussion of the function of corporate kin groups (p 86): "A person will thereby find himself connected by specific social ties, subject to established institutional modes of behavior, with a large number of other persons. In the absence or weak development of political structure this gives an effective system of social integration."

Theoretical articles that fail to cite ethnographic references, or that base their statements on derivitive materials cited out of context, do not contribute to the study of "plural societies."

3) Although the authors of theoretical articles on "Plural Societies" rarely cite their ethnographic sources, a large body of descriptive data does exist for societies that contain a variety of different ethnic or racial groups. Some of these "plural societies" are European colonies or newly-independent states; others are long-established national units; some are Asian, some European, some Carribean, many are African; some are "democratic" and some are "despotic." The sample of "Pluralistic Societies" used by Van den Berghe (1969: 74) to formulate his "four ideal types of societies" includes the following: Switzerland, Belgium, Canada, India, Israel, Colonial and slave regimes of Asia, Africe, and the Americas, Tsarist and Stalinist Russia, Napoleonic Empire, Sudanic Empires, and Ethiopia. Elsewhere in his article he uses South Africa and the United States as examples. Furnivall's references come from Burma and Indonesia, Smith's from the British West Indies, and Mitchell's from the Bemba and Lozi of the Rhodesian copper belt. Faced with the problem of making their theoretical concepts equally applicable to societies as difference in time, geography, history, and tradition as Switzerland and Swaziland, the Burmese and the Bemba, the authors of these articles have carried abstractness into the realms of vagueness, and vagueness to the point of uselessness. For example, little is to be gained in our attempts to understand the nature and behavior of "plural societies" by the following statements:

> While pluralistic societies tend to be more complex, dynamic, unstable, and conflict-ridden than homogenous ones, these qualities do not serve to differentiate democratic plural societies from despotic ones, except insofar as the latter tend to be more pluralistic than the former. (Van den berghe 1969: 78)

> The contrast between the two types of society (democratic or despotic) is such that the same forms or processes may serve antithetical functions; or they may serve similar functions for some groups and antithetical functions for others. (Kuper 1969: 18)



Resulting from this inattention to ethnographic fact are two models that dominate the literature on the subject of "plural societies."

The "Conflict Model" states that non-homogenous societies, lacking a common set of social values and goals, are highly unstable, and can be held together only by force. Such force is usually applied by one of the constituent sub-groups upon the members of all of the other sub-groups. As Smith states it (1965: 86): "Given the fundamental differences of belief, value, and organization that connote pluralism, the monopoly of power by one cultural section is the essential precondition for the maintenance of the total society in its current form." There is a basic distinction between two types of societies; integrated societies are characterized by consensus and cultural and social homogeneity; regulated societies are characterized by dissensus and cultural and social pluralism. Among those scholars who support the "Conflict Model" are Furnivall (1948), Mitchell (1960), Smith (1965, 1969), Kuper (1969), and Van den Berghe (1969).

Furnivall (1948: 303-312) believes that the plural society has a great variety of forms, but that in some form or another it is the distinctive feature of modern tropical economies. In a plural society, each section is "a crowd and not a community (307)," and there is no "common social will," or set of common values and goals, to regulate immigration and economic behavior. The marketplace is dominated by the "test of cheapness," and results in each member of the society looking out for only himself, with no regard for the common good of the society as a whole, a "disorganization of social demand." "In such a society the

disorganization of social demand allows the economic process of natural selection by the survival of the cheapest to prevail." (p 310) The Western colonial powers, in their desire to exploit the economic resources of their client states, have imported immigrant labor, created plural societies, and maintained them through their laissez-faire economic policies, their imposed statuatory law, and the power of their political dominance. The members of the constituent ethnic groups live separate lives and meet only in the marketplace,

There are three obvious flaws in Furnivall's thesis:

1) While the "medley of peoples" Furnivall so colorfully describes does exist in South East Asia, it is not the only form of demographic distribution found there. In the cities, along the coasts, and in areas open to easy communication, the mixture of peoples is great; in the interior, in the mountains, off the main highways, unitary communities are the norm rather than the exception. What Furnivall describes as a "feature of the Tropical Far East" is in reality mainly a feature of the major urban centers of those territories. Colonialism, per se, does not cause pluralism; pluralism is not the "outstanding result of contact between East and West (p 304)." Iban longhouses and Malay kampongs have both been as subject to British colonialism in Sarawak as Kanowit Bazaar has, yet they are not "plural" communities. Urbanism, and its economic base, lead to pluralism,; colonialism may be the instigating force for the development of such urban centers, but it is not in itself the cause of pluralism.

2) Pluralism existed in Indonesia, and throughout South East Asia, before the arrival of the Western colonial powers. The total number of discrete ethnic groups in the Indonesian archepeligo larger than 100,000 persons and speaking mutually unintelligible languages exceeds thirty-five. The Sundanese (12.5 million), Madurese (5 million) and the Toba Batak (950,000) are three examples of ethnic groups in Indonesia who have lived in "plural"



societies since before the arrival of the Dutch (Skinner 1959: 270). Chinese settlement in Sarawak before the Brooke Raj has previously been discussed in Chapter 2. The history of South East Asia has been basically one of the movement and mixture of peoples. Colonialism brought new ethnic groups into the mixture; it did not in itself originate this feature.

3) Both before and during Western colonialism, individuals from differing racial and ethnic groups did not meet each other "only in the market place." Furnivall himself describes (1948: 371-379) the development of schools in the Asian colonies, beginning in India in 1815 and extending throughout the region. Some schools were provided by the government; others by missionary groups. Their prime function was to supply a reserve of literate civil servants for the colonial powers. These schools, these missions, and the Civil Service itself were places for social interaction between races. The bangsa of Kanowit meet each other not only in the bazaar, but in the schools, and churches, on the playing fields and public transport, in the coffee shops, the theatres, the government offices, and even in each others' homes. If Furnivall saw social interaction between racial groups only in the market place, it is because he never looked beyond it.

One feature of "plural societies" upon which all of the scholars mentioned above agree is the presence of a dominant social group that enforces social unity. Plural societies can not exist without such coercion under the "Conflict Model."

> Hence constraint rather than consensus would seem to be the basis of cohesion in plural societies. (Mitchell 1960: 267)

> When the dominant section is also a minority, the structural implications if cultural pluralism have their most extreme expression, and the dependence on regulation by force is greatest. (Smith 1965: 88)

> Plural societies are held together by regulation and not by

> integration... There is no predominance of common values and of common motivations in the plural society, and in consequence the society must be hold together by regulation...Thus authority, power, and regulation are of crutial significance in maintaining, controlling, and coordinating the plural society. (Kuper 1969: 13)

> At one extreme, societies characterized by a high degree of social pluralism are integrated only through a set of central political institutions controlled by the dominant group, and of economic institutions in which members of different groups interact asymmetrically. (Van den Berghe 1969: 71)

Kanowit Bazaar, the state of Sarawak, and the Federation of Malaysia are, without a doubt, "plural societies." Within each level of the social and political structure every ethnic group is a minority group. Within the community, within the state, and within the nation cooperation and compromise are daily necessities for survival. If the more widely followed "Conflict Model" is accepted as valid and applied to the "pluralism" of Kanowit and Sarawak, one ethnic or political group must, to fit the model, dominate the others in the society; if this dominant group is a minority group (as all groups are in Sarawak), it will rely on a coercion in inverse rotation to its size. Only by force can a Sarawak bangsa containing no more than 33% of the state's population hold the society together, preventing the inevitable anarchy incipient in plural communities. Thus states the "Conflict Model" and its adherents.

The "Conflict Model" does not describe the pluralism of Kanowit Bazaar. Neither does its alternative, the "Equilibrium Model," supported by Kornhauser (1960). The "Equilibrium Model" tends to equate pluralism with democracy, and vice versa. Liberty and democracy tend to be strong where social pluralism is strong. Edward Shils, another supporter of the "Equilibrium Model" has stated (1956: 153-154):

> Every society is constructed of a set of spheres and systems: the domestic and kinship system, the economic system, and religious sphere, the cultural sphere, and the like. Different types of societies are characterized by the preponderance of one of the systems or spheres over the others...The system of individualistic democracy or liberatism is characterized by an approximate balance among the spheres. Liberalism is a system of pluralism.



Kanowit Bazaar has the mixture of racial and ethnic groups as described in the "Conflict Model." It has the variation in norms and values, the parallel structures and institutions, and the economic motivations upon which this model is based. It does not have a dominant ethnic group regulating the total society by force. Kanowit Bazaar has the balance of systems and spheres, the overlapping plurality of structures, described by the "Equilibrium Model." It is not a paragon of liberalism and democracy. Kanowit Bazaar, while containing all of the features of the "Conflict" and "Equilibrium" schools, is neither the despotic armed camp nor the idealized social democracy that these model would make of it. Like the state and the nation, Kanowit Bazaar survives on a balance of powers, a balance of tensions, and a balance of individual and ethnic-group desires with the necessities of communal existence. Maurice Freedman (1960: 288) describes the plural society of Malaya as follows:

> One of the disadvantages of the notion of the plural society, as Morris has pointed out, is that it tempts us to argue from cultural and "racial" appearances to social realities. Through most of its modern history Malaya has shown important cultural and "racial" divisions, but these divisions had not created cleavages running the length and breadth of the society. The social ideals of Malays, Chinese, and Indians were different and their interrelations governed by narrowly defined political and economic interests; but there was no framework for the massive alignment of ethnic forces. In the Federation of Malaya the attainment of Independence has furnished conditions for such an alignment. Malays, Chinese, and Indians are forced to confront one another and pushed into speaking for their own ethnic communities on a national scale.

> But of course the ethnic alignment is not complete; there are other cleavages in the society (some within ethnic groups, to weaken them; other marking divisions across ethnic groups). The political compromise of the Alliance will presumably go on working as long as it can keep within bounds the realization of the principles on which it is based; it could be destroyed by the logic of the communalism which it imperfectly enshrines.

The Government of the Federation of Malaysia is formed by the Alliance Party, a union of the United Malays National Organization, the Malaysian Chinese Association, and the Malaysian Indian Congress, three racially-oriented political parties. In the northern state of Penang, the Alliance has formed a coalition government with the basically Chinese opposition party, Gerakan. In the state of Perak the Alliance has invited the People's Progressive Party to join the state government in order to increase government support among the non-Malays; its prime opponent in Perak is the Party Islam, a devoutly religious and politically conservative Malay opposition party. A coalition with Party Islam is being discussed for the state of Kelantan. (Far Eastern Economic Review; August 26, 1972: 9). In Sarawak, the Alliance Party consists of a union of a Malay party, one of the two Chinese parties, and one of the two Iban parties. It currently governs Sarawak through a coalition with the predominantly Chinese Sarawak United Peoples Party; its Chief Minister is a Sarawak Malay, and Its Deputy Chief Ministers are a Chinese and an Iban.

Alliance and coalition, in politics, in economics, in education, in daily behavior, are the foundations upon which the multiracial society of Kanowit, Sarawak, and Malaysia rest. Mutual recognition of the balances of power and mutual recognition of the necessity for cooperation dominate the current social climate. In this climate of mutual tolerance, a new, shared, multiracial culture is beginning to grow.



# APPENDIX I

## INVENTORY OF BANKRUPT SMALL CHINESE SHOPHOUSE DEALING IN "GENERAL GOODS"

### EQUIPMENT

Cement
Counter
Dining table
Glass covers (3)
Gravel
Ladder
Meatsafe
Refrigerator
Safe
Sewing machine
Show cases (3)
Stools, wooden (4)
Tables (3)
Tools
Wall clock
Wall show case (2)
Wardrobe
Wooden rack

### GOODS FOR SALE

Account books
Assorted tinned goods
Baking power
Barley water
Bed
Bed (plant)
Belts
Black beans (tinned)
Blouses
Bolts and nuts
Books
Bowls (large)
Bowls (shallow)
Bowls (small)
Candles
Carpet
Chalk pencils
Chili sauce
Chuka
Cigarette stand
Cigarette papers
Cleanser
Cloth (pieces)
Cloth (assorted)
Cloth (flowered)
Coffee powder
Coffee (tinned)
Combs (two types)

Bracelets
Brassieres
Buttons
Drawing books
Drawing pencils
Earthen tray
Empty bottles
Empty tins
Exercise books
Felt hats
Firecrackers
Fish hooks
Fishing line
Fish (tinned)
Forks
Fruit syrup
Glasses (drinking)
Gowns
Gunny sacks
Hair clips
Hair nets
Hair oil
Handkerchiefs
Hinges
Hoe (Zinc)
Hooks
Ink
Ink pads
Iron bars
Irons
Key chains
Lamps (oil)
Lemon sugar
Cooking utensils
Cups
Curry mutton (tinned)
Medicines
Mosquito incense
Nails
Necklaces
Orange syrup
Outboard engine
Padi (rice)
Paint
pants (long)
Pants (short)
Pelita
Pencils
Pepper
Pickles, mixed (tinned)
Pineapple (tinned)
Pins
Plates (china)
Plates (zinc)
Pork and mushrooms (tinned)
Prawn sauce
Pressure lamps
Pumps (large)
Pumps (small)
Rubber slippers
Rulers
safety pins
Sansi
Sardines (four types) (tinned)
Sarongs (men's)
Sarongs (women's)



Lighter fluid
Lipstick
Locks
Lychees in syrup (tinned)
Mantles
Mantle heads
Shirts (men's)
Shirts (women's native style)
Shotgun
Singlets
Soap
Socks
Spectacle case
Spoons (large)
Spoons (small)
Spoons (tea)
Straw
Sugar
Tapping tools
Sauced clams (tinned)
Scales
Scent (Florida water)
Scented oil
Screws and bolts
Sewing oil
Thread
Toothbrushes
Toothpicks
Torches (flashlights)
Torch bulbs
Trays
Trouser buckles
Wallets
White grapes (tinned)
White tape
Wicks
Wire
Wire brushes
Yard measures

Total estimated value of all equipment and goods: $3,469.70 (1958 prices)

**SOME OTHER ITEMS FREQUENTLY FOUND IN "GENERAL GOODS" SHOPS IN KANOWIT BAZAAR**

Acid (for rubber)
Asperin
Axes
Baby pills
Baby powder
Bags
Bananas
Buckets
Camphorated oil
Carborundum stones
Castor oil
Chain
Chinese drugs
Chopsticks

Basins
Baskets
Batteries
Beef (tinned)
Betal nut wrapper
Bicycles tires and parts
Biscuits
Bovril
Brylcream

Corn flour
Cough medicine
Crayons
Crochet hooks
Curry powder
Detergents
Disinfectants
Elastic
Elastoplast
Envelopes
Eucalyptus oil
Fish (dried)
Flints (for lighters)
Flour (loose)
Flour (tinned)
Food containers
Frying pans
Games and toys
Garlic
Kerosene
Kettles
Kidney tablets
Knives

Cigarette cases
Cigarette lighters
Cigarette wrappers (native)
Cigarettes
Coats
Cocoa
Coconut oil
Cod liver oil
Cold cream
Corks
Nail files
Needles
Noodles
Olives (local)
Onions
Ovaltine
Paper of all kinds
Paper flowers
Peanut butter
Peas (dried)
Peas (tinned)
Pens
Peppermints
Phonographs
Phonograph records
Pipes
Prawns (dried)
Prawns (tinned)
Purses
Quaker oats
Radios
Razor blades
Razors



Lactogen (dried milk)
Ladles
Lamp chimneys
Lead weights
Lime (for betal)
Matches
Methylated spirits
Milk (tinned)
Milo
Mirrors
Moth balls
Motor oil and grease
Mouth organs
Sloane's liniment
Sodas
Stomach powders
String
Sweaters
Talcum powder
Tapping knives
Tea
Thermos flasks
Thumb tacks
Tiger Balm
Tobacco

Religious items
Rope
Rubber bands
Rubber tubing
Salmon (tinned)
Salt
Saws
Scarves
Scissors
Shoes
Shoe polish
Sieves and strainers
Skin creams
Toilet paper
Tooth paste
Towels
Tweezers
Umbrellas
Vaseline
Vegetables (salted)
Vegetables (tinned)
Watches and clocks
Wine
Worm powders

# APPENDIX II

## OUTLINE OF THE MINUTES OF A TYPICAL MEETING OF THE KANOWIT DISTRICT COUNCIL

Note: The proper names of individuals mentioned in these minutes have been omitted here, and their names have been replaced by dashes. The ethnic group of each individual has been added within brackets. The abbreviation Cr. means "Councillor."

Full Meeting 2/71

Minutes of the Council full meeting held on Tuesday 25th May, 1971 at 9:00 A.M. in the Council Chamber, Kanowit

Present: Cr. Penghulu ————[Iban] (Chairman)
Cr. ————[Chinese] (Vice-Chairman)

The names of the twenty-two additional councilors, nineteen Iban and three Chinese, follow.

Absent: Nil
In attendance : Mr. [Chinese] (Secretary)

AGENDA

1. Chairman's address
2. To confirm minutes of last meeting.
3. To note/discuss matters arising.
4. To adopt/approve or otherwise minutes of Committees:-
   (1) Finance and General Purposes
   (2) Education Committee
   (3) Public Health Committee
5. To note/discuss collection of revenue in the ulu area.
6. To note the registration of children for admission to schools 1972.



7. To consider any other relevant business:-
   Early communication of death to next of kin by Medical Department on deaths occurred in Hospitals.

3/71 1. Chairman's address

The Chairman Penghulu——[Iban] declared the meeting open and gave a brief speech as follows:-

"The Hon'ble members of Parliament and all the members of the Council present to-day. I am very pleased indeed to see that this meeting is attended by all of us and there is none absent. For this reason I would say that this is very encouraging and worth of recording.

Today is 25th of May 1971 and is the second full meeting for the year. Though there are no matters of great importance in the agenda as you can see I would like as usual to ask you to be patient and tolerant when we are-dealing and considering the problems we are facing to-day. We are presenting the people to sit in the Council and therefore we must carry out our duties conscientiously and in the best we can in order that we may continually be respected and trusted by the people who have elected us. We have heavy responsibility and burden in planning the progress of the Council and implementing various projects which have been approved. But the responsibility and the burden can be reduced considerably if this is to be shared by all of us through discussion, co-operation and mutual understanding. As we are aware that the Council has a great number of development projects in hand it is difficult for me to mention here all of them. I will later ask the Secretary to explain or brief all the matters as included in the agenda for discussion to-day. I now conclude my talk and wish the Council and all of you every success and prosperity."

9/71 2. To confirm minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on 19th January 1971 having been circulated to the members previously were read.

10/71 3. To note/discuss matters arising

Minutes 4/71(1) - The Sesco had agreed to change their running schedule from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. daily to 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. daily as requested by the Councillor of the Ward-Julau Bazaar.

Minutes 5/71 - The contents of letter DM03/667/112 dated 18.3.71 from the Div. Medical Officer, 3rd Division were explained to the meeting. No further comments were made.

Minutes 7/71(5) - The reply quoted by the Div. Medical Officer, 3rd Division in his letter DM03/667/118 dated 27.3.71 was encouraging and satisfying after the Secretary had informed the meeting that a Health Centre or Health SubCentre comprised a number of medical staff including a medical practioner. While it was agreed that Kanowit was near to Sibu and there was no problem or transport in case to Sibu and there was no problem or transport in case of emergency, the question of what transport and whose expenses it should be in sending patients of emergency case to Sibu was raised. Both the 2 Hon'ble members of Parliament suggested that a special boat with outboard motor engine be made available to station at Ng. Kanowit, while an Ambulance stationed at Ng. Julau for the purpose of sending patients of emergency cases to Sibu. It was considered that the above transport facility would be very essential and helpful to patients in case of emergency. The normal public transport would not only hardly be available but also expensive beyond the regular schedule of service.



11/71 4. To adopt/approve or otherwise minutes of Committees

(1) Finance and General Purposes Committee dated 20.2.71, 1.4.71 and 17.5.71

The minutes of the above Committee meetings were discussed thoroughly and adopted with the following comments and variations:-

F.C. 8/71 - The meeting after having obtained the explanation and request of Cr._____ [Chinese] of the Ward concerned who was not the member of the above Committee agreed to vary the decision made by the Committee. A hawker license was therefore granted to Mr. _____ [Chinese].

F.C. 15/71 - In further discussion on the applications for village shop license undecided in the above Committee the following decisions were made:-

1. _____[Iban] application was approved.
2. _____'s [Iban] application was held up for further investigation of sex and other background.
3. _____'s [Iban] application - Councillor was asked to withdraw from the meeting when discussion took place on his application. As it was found that had now moved form his former house - Rh. _____, Maong, his application was approved regardless of complaint from _____[Iban] who was no longer living in the same house.

F.C. 19/71 - Mr. _____[Chinese] requested that his tender for classroom and office at Batu_____ School be amended to read $5,100 instead of $4,100, because of miscalculation. The meeting had not agreed to accept his request for his tender of $4,100, being the lowest had already been accepted by the Committee. If it were to be amended to $5,100, his tender would not have been recommended because there was another tender of $4,700.

It was therefore decided that if he was not prepared to enter into contract at $4,100, his deposit should be forfeited and the project be retendered.

(2) Education Committee Meeting
Dated 19.2.71 and 1.4.71

The minutes of the above Committee meetings were accepted accordingly with following comments:-

It was expressed that school mothers with too many children always had their duties affected by the interferences of their children. Their works were slowed down if they took care of their children as precedence to their duties. It was proposed the selection of candidates for school mother should be more carefully made in future and where possible candidates with a great number of children especially the young ones should be excluded from selection.

Meeting adjourned at 12.15 p.m.

Meeting resumed at 2.00 p.m.

(3) Public Health Committee Meetings dated 17.5.71

The minutes of the above Committee meetings were discussed and adopted without comments.

12/71 5. To adopt / discuss collection of revenue in the ulu area

The Secretary informed the meeting that he had again proposed to send a clerk to Ng.——— to collect various revenue from the people under the jurisdiction of Cr.——— [Iban], Cr.——— [Iban], Cr. ——— [Iban], Cr.——— [Iban] and Cr.———[Iban]. The proposed dated were Monday 21st-23rd June, 1971 and Monday 13th-15th in



September, 1971. He hoped that all the people wishing to pay fees, taxes and rates etc, should take the opportunity to come on the above dates. He also emphasized the early settle ment of out standing rates by all the defaulters, as the Council had been lenient enough not to take legal action yet against them for the recovery. But it would be necessary to institute legal proceedings against the defaulters who appeared to have arrears of many years and had made no attempt to pay them. In order that this special arrangement could be made known to all, the members of the Wards concerned were requested to bring it to the notice of the defaulters and give publicity to the people in their Wards as widely as possible, apart from the notices which had already been distributed to all the Tuai Rumahs, Penghulus and Councillors themselves.

13/71 5. To note the registration of children for admission to schools 1972

The meeting was informed that the registration of children born in 1965 for admission to primary in 1972 had commenced in May. Parents who wished to send their children to school must have their names registered at the nearest school as soon as possible in order that places, books and necessary funds would be made available in the estimates for the approval of the Government. Failing to register their names now, great difficulty might be encountered in seeking entry and place next year. Letters had been sent out to all schools under the Council's management requesting Headmasters to take necessary action on registration of all children for admission to Primary One in 1972. But it would not be a success if there would be no cooperation from the parents concerned to register their

children in time. All the members were therefore requested to give their best assistance in this matter and impress on the people the importance and absolute necessity of the registration of their children within the specified time.

14/71 7. To consider any other relevant business

Early communication of death to next of kin by Medical Department on deaths occurredin Hospitals.

It was disclosed to the meeting that there were cases when patients undergoing treatment died in the Hospital the deceased next of kin was informed several days after the death had occurred. As a result the body had to be kept in the mortuary awaiting claim and/or subsequent disposal. This had been regarded as unsatisfactory especially where the death could be notified to t he next of kin without difficulty. The meeting discussed this problem and agreed that request should be submitted to the Div. Medical Officer, 3rd Division for his consideration in improving this matter where possible.

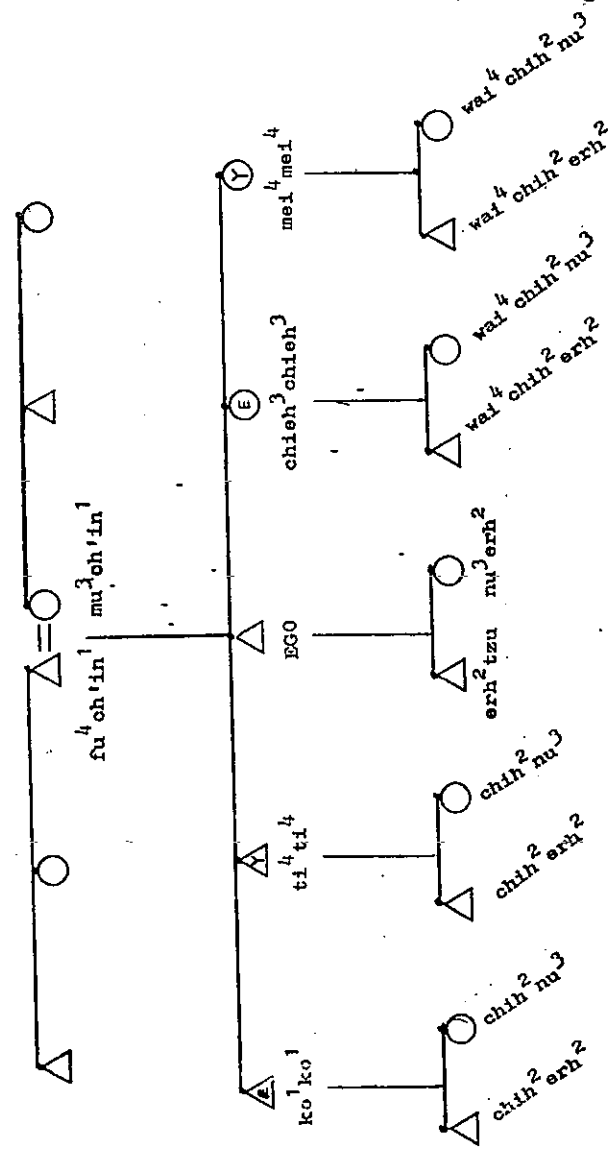
There being no other business, the Chairman declared the meeting adjourned at 3.30 p.m.

Chairman,
Kanowit District Council

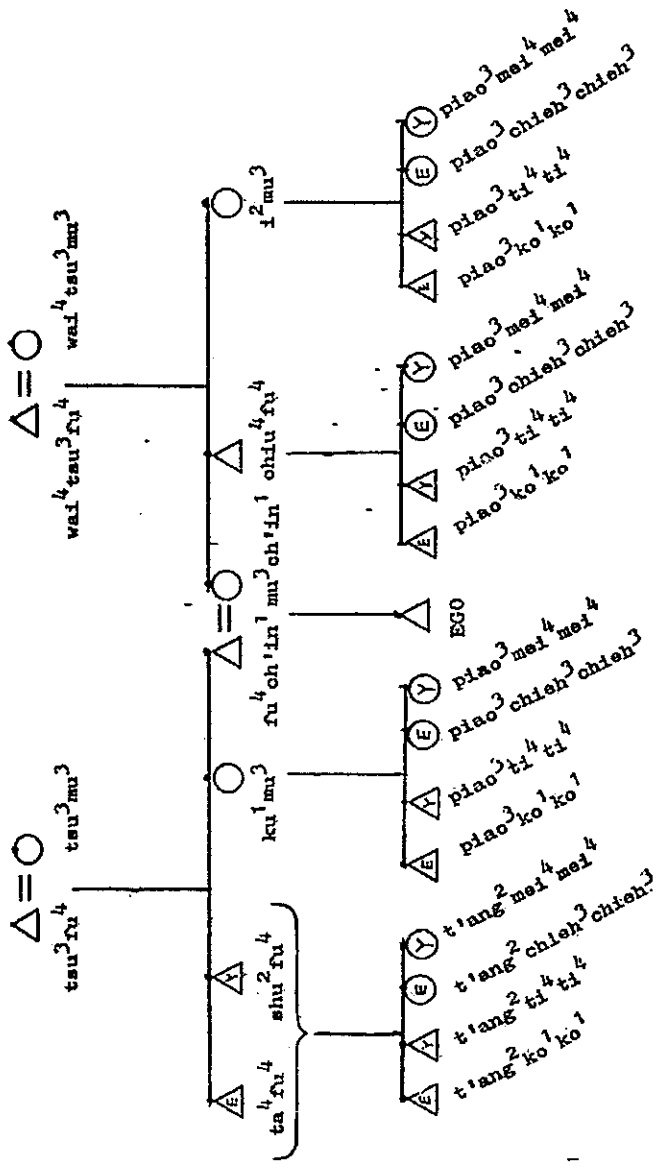


# APPENDIX III

## CHINESE KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY (Mandaring Dialect)



CHINESE KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY (continued)






# NOTES

## CHAPTER 1

1. Official exchange rates during the fieldwork period, 1970-71, were US $1.00 = M$3.06. Rates after the devaluation of the American dollar in 1972 have been US $1.00 = M$2.85. Hereafter, unless otherwise noted, monetary figures will be given in Malaysia dollars, without the prefix M.

2. Weights and measures used in Chinese shophouse:
tahil - 1 1/3 Troy ounces
kati = 1 1/3 pounds
picul = 100 kati = 133 pounds
gantang = measure of bulk or volume, somewhat variable, being a little less than a quart.

3. For more detailed information on the history of Sarawak and Kanowit District, see:

Irwin, Nineteenth-Century Borneo, 1955.
Rawlins, Sarawak, 1839-1968, 1969.
Runciman, The Whit Rajahs, 1960.
Stevens, A History of Kanowit District, 1970.

## CHAPTER 2

1. Stationed within the boundaries of the Kanowit Bazaar Census Area are approximately one hundred members of the Malaysian Armed Forces. They are housed in temporary camps. 34% are natives of West Malaysia; 66% are Sarawakians. They are of the following races: Iban (predominating), Malay, Chinese, Melanau, Tamil, Kayan, Kenyah, and Murut. There are additional of his informants, are both well illustrated by a personal example:

forces stationed near the town, outside of the boundaries of the census area, in other temporary camps.

Neither these camps nor the soldiers station in them are considered by the residents of Kanowit Bazaar to be a permanent feature of their community, and they are not counted in the census figures given in this paper, nor included in any discussion of town activities unless specifically identified.

2. The Sarawak Census of 1970, recognizing these differences, subdivides the Chinese into dialect groups. The population figures below, and the percentages derived from them, are based on each individual's response to the Census classifications.

## CHAPTER 3

1. A list of the creditors of a bankrupt Chinese shopkeeper taken from court records (Table II), and a list of this towkay's debtors from the court's copies of his account books (Table 10), do not provide sufficient evidence one way or another on this question. Of the twenty-two creditors of the bankrupt towkay, only three shared the same surname, and it is one of the most common of Chinese names. However, the surnames of the towkays of the fourteen shops to which he was in debt are not known. There is also no indication in the records of the dialect groups or regions-of-origin of any of these Chinese. The same is true of the thirty - five Chinese debtors. In addition, the bankrupt towkay was not doing business in Kanowit Bazaar, but in a rural settlement; the influence of this interior location is an additional variable that affects the usefulness of these data for testing T'ien's hypothesis.

## CHAPTER 6

1. This lack of knowledge of traditional beliefs, and the ability of an anthropological observer to influence and bias the behavior



The Chinese family with whom I lived performed only a few of the Chinese festivals in the annual cycle, and those only in an extremely abbreviated and perfunctory manner. Chinese New Year, the 5th Moon Festival, and the Mid-Autumn Festival were the only three they normally observed, and then only by the preparation of the associated special foods and the luxury of a banquet dinner. The first festival to occur after my moving into their shophouse was the 5th Moon Festival. The mother had prepared, as she normally did, the traditional triangular rice cakes, and offered some to me.

They were able to tell me the names of the cakes, and of the festival, and its date on the Chinese calendar, but could not answer any of my other questions about the festival, its rituals, or its significance, in spite of excellent trans-lingual communications. When I looked up a description of the ceremony in Wong's A Cycle of Chinese Festivities, they were fascinated, and translated this account of "how it ought to be done" to every member of the family.

While they never consulted my references for instructions on how to conduct one of their rituals properly, they did frequently ask me to compare for them what they had already done with what was described as the "right way" in my books. They showed my references to a few friends and neighbors and discussed the topic with them. They became aware of their own remembered tradition, and revived a few practices that they had not done for some time, because "they knew I was interested in things like that."

As with many Chinese, they had great respect for the printed word, and the fact that these rituals were of sufficient importance to have books written about them, worthy of my coming to Kanowit to study and write about them, increased their awareness of their own cultural heritage.

## CHAPTER 7

1. The family, marriage, and kinship systems of the Malays and the Ibans will not be covered in this chapter. They have already been adequately described, and the sources below provide their essential details. The family life of these people will only be included in this chapter when it is of consequence to the town as a whole. The terms "family," "marriage," "household," "kinship," and the like should be understood to refer to Chinese only, unless otherwise noted.

| | |
|---|---|
| Abang Yusuf 1966: | Some Aspects of the Marriage Customs Among the Sarawak Malays |
| Djamour 1965: | Malay Kinship and Marriage in Singapore |
| Firth 1943: | Housekeeping Among Malay Peasants |
| Winstedt 1950: | The Malays: A Cultural History |
| Freeman 1955: | Iban Agriculture |
| Freeman 1958: | "The Family System of the Iban of Borneo" |
| Freeman 1960: | "The Iban of Western Borneo" |

2. The race of a household is herein classified as being the race of the head of the household, the oldest male, oldest married couple, or household head recognized by the 1970 Census.

3. This is an admittedly etic approach to the problem, as these classifications are based on census data. It was impossible to interview members of all 186 Chinese households to determine the history of their development, and the causes for their present structure. Those who were interviewed provided the basic data from which I have generalized the typology. A full discussion of this problem in kinship and family studies can be found in Goodenough's "Residence Rules" (1956).



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