

SABAH

KEY

Boundaries, International - - - - -
 Inter-State - - - - -
 Residency - - - - -
 District - - - - -

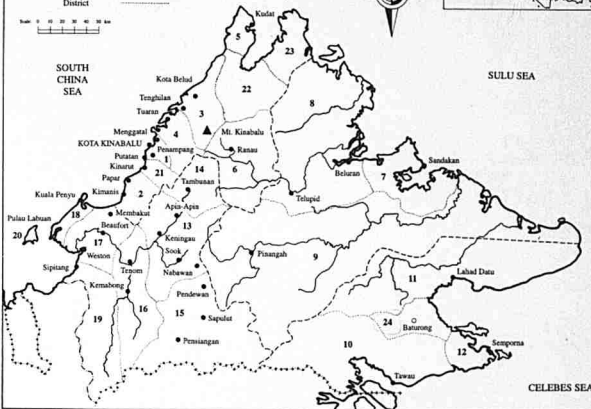
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Pulau Balaungan Pulau Banggi



SOUTH
CHINA
SEA

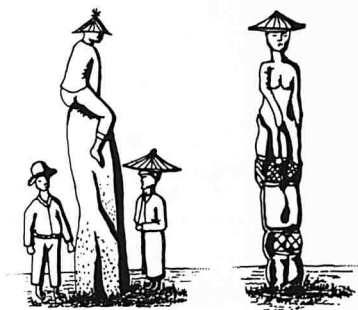
SULU SEA



NAMES OF DISTRICTS

- | | | |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. KOTA KINABALU | 9. KINABATANGAN | 17. BEAUFORT |
| 2. PAPAR | 10. TAWAU | 18. KUALA PENYU |
| 3. KOTA BELUD | 11. LAHAD DATU | 19. SIPITANG |
| 4. TUARAN | 12. SEMPORNA | 20. LABUAN |
| 5. KUDAT | 13. KENINGAU | 21. PENAMPANG |
| 6. RANAU | 14. TAMBUNAN | 22. KOTA MARUDU |
| 7. SANDAKAN | 15. PENSIANGAN | 23. PITAS |
| 8. LABUK SUGUT | 16. TENOM | 24. KUNAK |

TRADITIONAL
STONE AND WOOD MONUMENTS
OF SABAH



TRADITIONAL STONE AND WOOD MONUMENTS OF SABAH

Peter R. Phelan

with photographs by the author

Edited by

K.M. Wong



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FOREWORD

Thirty years may seem like a long period for observing a culture and getting to know it well. In Brother Peter's case, it was not a period specially devoted to this but one in which he played the significant role of a dedicated educator in Sabah. Although now retired, he continues to show the example of the inquiring mind, writing his books and articles on a number of cultural aspects which have occupied his spare time over the many years. His is not an ordinary experience, for how can one who has continuously lived with and learnt Sabah's cultures and then diligently recorded it over thirty years be an ordinary man?

Culture is an inescapable experience in Sabah, where it is, to this day, fairly conspicuous in all its diverse forms and variations, and where communities still celebrate many of their rich traditions. It is a living entity that has enthralled many visitors and scholars, and its diversity no doubt encourages the cultural observer to gather as much as possible, usually within a relatively short period *in situ*. A study such as the present one, with the advantage of the author being in Sabah and recording the many aspects of stone and wooden monuments, almost entirely first-hand and over three decades, is not easy to emulate.

The Centre for Borneo Studies, in its role of assisting to advance the frontiers of documentation of life and the environment in Borneo, regards such monographic studies as significant landmarks in the recording of Borneo events and culture. Many of the stone and wooden monuments of the past may have been abandoned, but it is an important fact that the recall of these monuments and their history and significance is still relatively fresh. Indeed, as this book shows, some aspects of this culture still live on. Most importantly, this information is now more available, and our awareness of this aspect of Sabah (history and) prehistory can be adequately focussed through a work such as this. Some preservation work has begun, but the author clearly demonstrates that several rather interesting monuments have disappeared. The results and observations compiled in this work, as such, will be the principal sources of reference for more work, in the way of the best approaches towards preserving an adequate sample of these curious monuments as a milestone of the past in Borneo.

That a work on some aspect of history and culture should itself become an integral part of our present (and for the most part of the book, the only) understanding is by itself a special achievement in the recording of Borneo. For these reasons, there is a particular pride on the part of the Centre for Borneo Studies, that this be presented as a most special study.

Y.B. Datuk Musa Aman
Director,
Yayasan Sabah



PREFACE

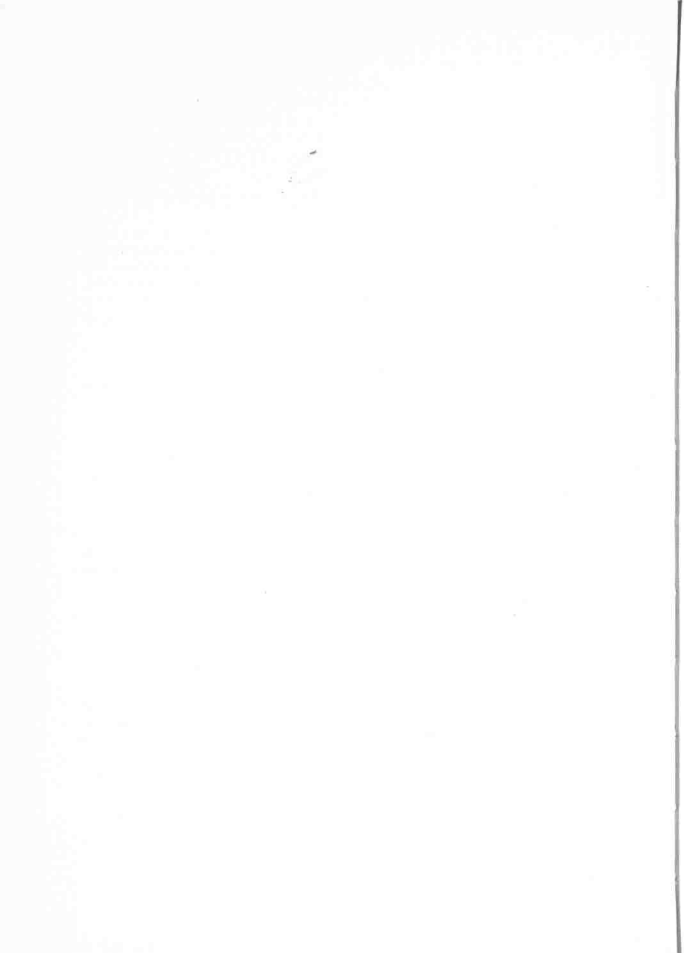
As a hobby I have been interested in the culture of the people of Sabah over a period of more than thirty years. Early in that period my attention was attracted to the existence of a number of wooden monuments standing in various rice-fields. This interest led to the writing of a few articles for the Sabah Society Journal. Stone monuments, or menhirs, found in the same area also aroused my curiosity, but it was not until 1988 that I began to systematically collect information on stone monuments found in Sabah.

Much local folklore in Sabah is associated with rocks and rock formations; names of places are sometimes derived from these rocks, such as Batu Lunguyan, Batu Punggul, or Pohon Batu. However, accounts of these rocks do not come within the ambit of this study as they are results of natural phenomena; the pages that follow are devoted to a consideration of traditional monuments that were erected by man.

I have attempted to classify the monuments into a number of categories and to present examples of the various types. It must be remembered that traditional monuments in Sabah are so numerous that many are not included here and some localities possessing a rich heritage in monuments are not dealt with.

Much of the information in this work was supplied by rural folk. An attempt has been made to preserve some of the style and simplicity of the narrative as used by the informants. In relation to different monuments and events, certain items of information are repeated: this has been permitted because the repetitions could well indicate their truth or widespread application.

The title of this book suggests that its contents is mainly about traditional stone and wooden monuments in Sabah; however, it is important to realise that fundamentally it is about people—it is a search for an understanding of the beliefs and practices of the people who erected these monuments. A study such as this has to be an endeavour at recovering information about the people who inhabited Sabah in the past. The monuments are enduring mementoes that summon us to share in the thought pattern of a former age. These emissaries of the past beckon us to satisfy our natural curiosity about people who had something in common with us and yet were very different from ourselves in how they felt and thought and how they strove to find meaning for their existence and to give expression to it.



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My sincere thanks are due to the Centre for Borneo Studies of the Sabah Foundation for sponsoring this publication and in particular to Y.B. Datuk Musa Aman, Director of Yayasan Sabah, Dr Liddy Haji Sallun, former Group Manager, Associate Prof. Dr Mohd. Haleem Hj. Razi, present Group Manager, and Mrs Zahra Yaacob, Manager of the Research Department, the Centre for Borneo Studies; to the Sabah Society for permission to use material that was formerly published in the Sabah Society Journal; to the Director of the Sabah Museum for permission to use Fig. 69 here; and to the Director of the Lands and Survey Department for permission to study and make use of plans of Penampang and Tambunan.

I wish to thank Mr Benedict Topin for the photograph shown in Fig. 2, Bro. Herbertus for the photograph used in Fig. 19, Mr Ireneus Soimon for the drawing shown in Fig. 50, Ms Susan Willie for the drawing shown in Fig. 61, Mr Robin Miasin for providing Fig. 71, Mr Cosmas Sibin for the motifs used on the title page, Madam Mary Kinti of the Sabah State Library for reference materials, Bro. Joseph McNally for sharing with me insights on eastern rock gardening, and Miss Pung Vui Lee for typing the final manuscript in her spare time. Mr Chua Kok Hian is thanked for computer assistance, and Mr Yap Yun Hun and Mr Tay Kian Hiong for redrawing all the maps and many of the line illustrations. Ms Rita Lasimbang kindly gave advice on the spelling and use of various words in the Dusun and Kadazan languages. I thank also Mr C.L. Chan for allowing his office to be used as a collection point for materials exchanged between the author, editor and the Centre for Borneo Studies during the preparation of this work. Associate Prof. Dr Wong Khoon Meng, Dr Kamariah Abu Salim and Miss Fenella Cooke very kindly proofread the manuscript during production.

I am also grateful to Mr Anuar Haji Mohamad, Miss Joan Pereira, Mr Lawrence Sibuat and Mr Welfred Jilimin for various arrangements that have promoted the progress of this work, and especially for the use of the library at the Forest Research Centre, Sepilok.

For the arrangement and presentation of this work I am deeply indebted to Associate Prof. Dr Wong Khoon Meng of the University of Malaya, whose advice and expertise have been invaluable. The artistic and attractive layout of this book is mainly due to the expertise of Mr Chan Chew Lun, who has taken a special interest in its final presentation.

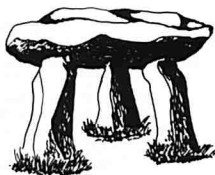
In the course of my research, I came in contact with many people, especially rural folk. Although a few of them were shy, I found the vast majority very friendly and helpful. I am grateful to all of them for the help, patience and kindness they extended to me. I am especially appreciative of my numerous ex-students who inspired, assisted and encouraged this work.



A



B



C

Fig. 1. The three types of megalith: a menhir (A), a cromlech (B) and a dolmen (C).

INTRODUCTION

The most striking remnant of the ancient human history of Sabah that is evident today is the existence of hundreds of stone monuments. These are the most notable and durable symbols that survive of ancient cultural practices. Yet the people of Sabah have relatively slight regard for these historical links with the past, and during the past quarter of a century many stone monuments have been removed from their sites and lost to posterity. There is uncertainty about the origins of some types of stone monuments and very little research by local scholars has been published. In an introduction to an article about *batu hidup* or "living stones" in Malaysia (Chandran 1978a: 128) it is stated, "But hardly anyone knows anything about them, much less appreciates the possible links among the *batu hidup* found in various parts of the country. To most people they are merely some strange and mystical manifestation of indigenous folklore with no scientific basis for their existence."

Ancient stone monuments exist in many parts of the world and numerous books have been written about them. But many of these monuments are so old that archaeologists cannot agree on their origins, and experts can only surmise on the cultural motivation that led to their erection. In the language of archaeologists any ancient stone monument is known as a megalith. According to Harrisson & Harrisson (1970: 130) "megaliths can be defined, in the Borneo context, as stones or rocks, deliberately placed or worked (incised, carved, shaped, hollowed out, balanced) by man."

Megalithic structures are generally divided into three categories (Eliade 1979: 114; Fig. 1 here):

the **menhir** (from the Breton *men*, or "stone" and *hir*, or "long") is a large stone, sometimes of considerable height, set vertically into the ground;

the **cromlech** (from *crom*, or "circle, curve" and *lech*, or "place"), which designates a group of menhirs set in a circle or half-circle (the most monumental is the cromlech of Stonehenge, near Salisbury); sometimes the menhirs are aligned in several parallel rows, as at Carnac in Brittany;

the **dolmen** (*dol* or "table" and *men* or "stone") is made up of an immense capstone supported by several upright stones arranged to form a sort of enclosure or chamber; originally the dolmen was covered by a mound.

To obtain a picture of the extent of megalithic cultures throughout the world let us again have recourse to Mircea Eliade (1979: 114, 122): "The megalithic constructions of western and northern Europe have fascinated investigators for over a century. These monuments are not isolated. They form part of a whole megalithic complex, which

extends from the Mediterranean coast of Spain, covers Portugal, half of France, the western seaboard of England, and continues into Ireland, Denmark, and the southern coast of Sweden. It is well known that, outside the Mediterranean and western and northern Europe, megaliths of prehistoric origin are spread over a vast area; Algeria, Abyssinia, the Deccan, Assam, Ceylon, Tibet, and Korea. As for the megalithic cultures that were still alive at the beginning of the twentieth century, the most notable are documented in Indonesia and Melanesia."

Apart from the uncertain claim that the grave-stones at Suromboton are cromlechs (Chapter 4) it seems that all other megaliths in Sabah are menhirs. The erection of menhirs can be considered as part of a living culture since as recently as 1989 a menhir was erected in keeping with ceremonial tradition at the opening of the new *tamu* ground in Tambunan. And to mark the celebration of the "International Decade for the World's Indigenous Peoples" a stone was inaugurated at the *Hongkod Koisaan*, Kota Kinabalu on 9 August, 1995 (Fig. 2). The blood of a cockerel was poured on the stone and traditional incantations were chanted by two ritual specialists, one from Keningau and one from Kota Belud. The ceremony was attended by representatives of several ethnic groups, including some from Sarawak and Peninsular Malaysia. An impression of the relative importance of megalithic constructions in Sabah can be obtained from Harrison & Harrison (1970: 130) who stated that Borneo was unique in Southeast Asia in having a living megalithic culture in



Fig. 2. Ceremony to inaugurate a commemorative stone to mark the International Decade for the World's Indigenous Peoples in 1995 at Kota Kinabalu. Present in their traditional costumes were representatives of the Orang Asli Semai of Peninsular Malaysia, Ibans of Sarawak, together with several Dusun and Murut groups from Sabah. (Photo: Benedict Topin)

two locations, namely the plains near Kota Kinabalu and the Kelabit highlands of Sarawak. They added that the only other such living centre in the region was the little island of Nias, off the coast of Sumatra. They maintained that other megalithic areas such as in Central Sumatra, Negeri Sembilan in Peninsular Malaysia and on the 'Plain of Jars' in Laos, had no living links in contemporary society.

No comprehensive study of all the megaliths in Sabah has been made, but in the course of their research during the 1950's and 1960's Harrison & Harrison (1970: 134-6) recorded 133 menhirs in the area around Kota Kinabalu—an area thirty miles long (49 km) and half a mile (0.8 km) deep—and they calculated that there existed on average seven menhirs per square mile in this belt. Some years later Professor J. Chandran (1978b: 19) estimated that there were over 300 menhirs in a 30-mile belt between Papar and Tuaran. He suggested at the time that all of these should be located on a map and he recommended immediate action towards their conservation.

Recent developments in the methods of dating the past show that some of the existing megaliths in France were erected before 4000 B.C. and some in England and Denmark before 3000 B.C., that is, before the building of the pyramids of Egypt. Perhaps scientific dating systems may one day be used to discover when some of the menhirs in Sabah were erected. In the meantime we can only wonder if they fit into the megalithic period of Southeast Asia or are more recent. Professor J. Chandran stated (1978a: 129) "The megalithic period in Southeast Asia is only very roughly estimated to have occurred about the time of the Bronze Age, which itself has no definite time span and can be said to have fallen between 3000 B.C. and 500 B.C."

It is appropriate to consider here the use of stone by man as a means of marking his presence in a region and of celebrating events which he wished to be remembered. Stone is recognised as an important element in the history of symbolism. In discussing this topic one expert (Jaffé 1974: 232) chose three recurring motifs with which to illustrate the presence and nature of symbolism in the art of many different periods. These, he stated, were the symbols of the stone, the animal, and the circle—each of which has had enduring psychological significance from the earliest expressions of human consciousness to the most sophisticated forms of 20th century art. He added, "Man with his symbol-making propensity, unconsciously transforms objects or forms into symbols (thereby endowing them with great psychological importance) and expresses them in both his religion and his visual art. The intertwined history of religion and art, reaching back to prehistoric times, is the record that our ancestors have left of the symbols that were meaningful and moving to them."

The megaliths found in Sabah are almost entirely without marks or carvings, but this need not diminish their importance. It is acknowledged (Jaffé 1974: 232) that "even unhewn stone had a highly symbolic meaning for ancient and primitive societies. Rough, natural stones were often believed to be the dwelling places of spirits or gods, and were used in primitive cultures as tombstones, boundary stones, or objects of religious veneration. Their use may be regarded as a primeval form of sculpture—a first attempt to invest the stone with more expressive power than chance and nature could give it."

It is not known if the scarcity of markings on the megaliths of Sabah was due to lack of knowledge or to inability or due to a decision to leave the stone monuments in their natural state. In a final quotation from Jaffé (1974: 234) it is interesting to note his observation about this characteristic in a form of sculpture that became popular in the second half of this century: "The primitive tendency to give merely a hint of a human figure, and to retain much of the stone's natural form, can also be seen in modern sculpture. Many examples show the artist's concern with the 'self-expression' of the stone; to use the language of myth, the stone is allowed to 'speak for itself'."

In eastern cultures there is a special symbolism attached to stone. Weathered rocks in themselves are a wonderful foil for plants. They stand for the eternal while the plant is for the ephemeral. They are strong and masculine where the plant is weak and feminine. They are hard whereas the plant is soft. Both rock and plant are, therefore, said to be the "yin-yang" of gardening.

In some localities in Sabah as many as ten menhirs can be seen in a single area. No discernible pattern has been recognised in the positions of the stones. In Chinese and Japanese rock gardening the arrangement of natural rocks is highly regarded. In Japanese art there is considerable subtlety in the choice, shape, colouring, placement and relationship of the different rocks so as to achieve a naturalistic effect which, in some cases, could represent in a small way the universe or part of it. In Europe it has been propounded that some megalithic formations were used as ancient solar and lunar observatories or to provide foreknowledge of solstices, equinoxes and eclipses. It is doubtful that similar proposals will ever be put forward to explain the patterns of the ancient stone monuments of Sabah.

On Easter Island in Polynesia, there are about a thousand stone statues. Since the discovery of the island by Europeans on Easter Day, 1772, experts have tried but failed to provide a universally satisfactory explanation for the existence of these statues. It is estimated that all of the monuments were erected between A.D. 1000 and 1500. Studies have confirmed that, all over the island, the more recent the statue the bigger it tends to be. In Sabah the height of menhirs above ground varies from about 30 cm to 3 m; a large number are between 1.2 m and 1.5 m. The time span within which the Sabah menhirs were erected has not been established and menhirs have not been identified according to age; consequently, it is not possible at present to say whether the most recently erected menhirs are larger.

The predominant factor determining the use of stone in Sabah as a historical record is its durability; this fact can hardly be fully appreciated by people who have never lived in Southeast Asia. Here everything is very transient with the result that records of the past are very scarce and in extensive areas none seem to exist. Writing about the historical geography of Southeast Asia, Dobby (1967: 382) dealt with this aspect and stated that anything that existed of local record and history rotted away quickly, the climate, the ants, insects and moulds soon destroying anything in wood, paper, leather or cloth. He added that: "Buildings and carvings on stone were not normal expressions of Southeast Asia

people where over large areas stone is not easily come by and where implements had not in any case developed far enough to deal with stone."

Where stone was available in Southeast Asia, people were aware of its uniqueness as a suitable material for use as a monument because of its durability. This characteristic was emphasised in Kevin Crossley-Holland's book (Blythe 1989: 1002) on the megalithic sites of Britain, "The Stones Remain". Crossley-Holland suggests that ancient stone monuments have a spiritual dimension; he claims that the stone patterns he has studied still retain a power "to raise us to a level of consciousness that has nothing whatsoever to do with the factual or the casual, but with the world of the spirit". He also stated that ancient stone monuments remind the potential traveller that their sites, although sometimes of tombs, are more about life and the everlasting than about death.

A story from Indonesia emphasises man's awareness of the imperishability of stone. When the first man and woman lived on earth the sky was much lower and God presented them with gifts suspended on string. On one occasion a stone was lowered to them but the first humans, not seeing any value in it, refused it. Soon afterwards a banana was lowered to them and they accepted it. Then they were told by God that since they had chosen the banana, that their lives would be like that of the banana; but that if they had accepted the stone their lives would have lasted forever.

In this study the traditional stone monuments of Sabah are arranged in six categories according to their functions, namely, menhirs in areas of wet rice cultivation, oath stones, guardian stones, burial stones, stones erected to commemorate a person, and stones erected to commemorate an event. The traditional wooden monuments deal with the commemoration of persons who died without leaving direct heirs, with sessions of intercessory prayer and with burial. Most, if not all, of these types of monuments had a significant spiritual dimension for the people who erected them.

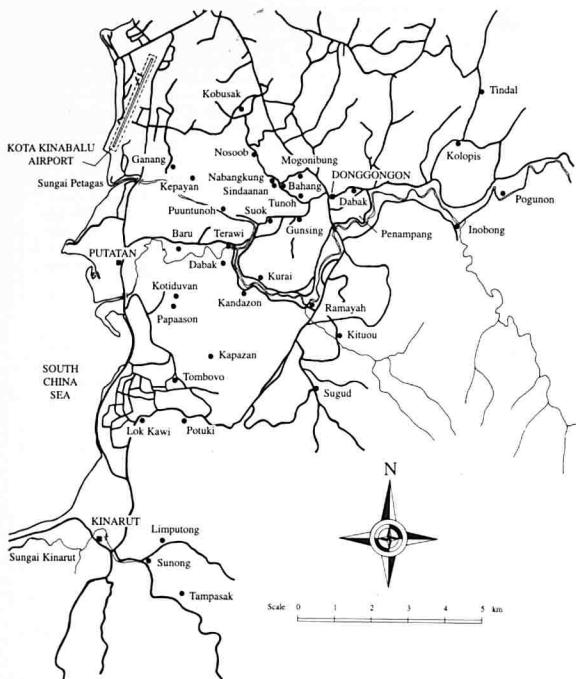


Fig. 3. The Penampang-Putatan-Kinarut area of Sabah, one of the principal areas of megalithic activity in Borneo.

MENHIRS IN AREAS OF WET RICE CULTIVATION

The area with evidence of the greatest megalithic activity is the general Penampang area (Fig. 3). The vast majority of the menhirs found here are associated with wet rice cultivation.

THE PENAMPANG DISTRICT

Kampong Kituau

A number of menhirs exist in the padi-fields of Kampong Kituau. At one site there of about 57 acres (23 ha) it is possible to see 17 menhirs. Fifteen of these menhirs were marked on the first survey map of this area, made in 1904. This survey was made for the purpose of issuing Title Deeds. Each of the mapped menhirs except one is marked on the map as a "Native Stone"; this strongly suggests that the menhirs were recognised as being the work of men. What is surprising is that one of the most typical examples of this type of menhir is marked on the map as "Old Rock". It is also surprising that two menhirs were not marked on the survey map; the possibility of the stones being put there at some time after the survey in 1904 was discounted by some of the local elders.

According to the map no menhir is situated in the middle of a plot of land; nine of them form boundary points and eight are located on boundary lines. A single large stone erected on a boundary line would appear to be of little use in demarcating the boundary. However, when this was pointed out to some local residents, an elderly man named Binidi pointed out that the menhir was placed in line with smaller boundary markers. If either of these was surreptitiously moved, it would be easy to check its correct position by aligning it with the menhir and the second boundary mark.

The 17 menhirs are associated with 15 lots which altogether cover an area of 29.35 acres (11.88 ha). The average size of a lot is 1.96 acres (0.79 ha). The largest lot among the 15 has an area of 6.12 acres (2.48 ha) and the smallest lot is 0.77 acres (0.3 ha).

Lot F, which has an area of 2.72 acres (1.1 ha) has 11 points in its boundary and four of these consist of menhirs. Lot E, the largest, is 6.12 acres (2.48 ha) and of its 19 boundary points three are marked with menhirs while two menhirs stand on its boundary lines.

The ground pattern of the location of these menhirs is shown in Fig. 4. No particular pattern appears discernible, nor are there clear figures or images. The average height of

this group of menhirs is 1.07 m. The tallest standing menhir is 1.7 m (Fig. 5). The shortest menhir is 0.63 m. The average circumference at mid-height of these menhirs is 1.3 m; that gives a diameter of 41.12 cm.

Among the group of menhirs the shortest distance separating any two menhirs is 65 m. And the menhir that is most isolated from other menhirs is 112 m from its nearest neighbour. Menhir No. 6 has fallen. It was the tallest of all the menhirs in this locality but is now lying flat and partially embedded in the ground. It is 2.34 m from end to end. It is said to have been inhabited by an unfriendly spirit when it was still erect. In the past the

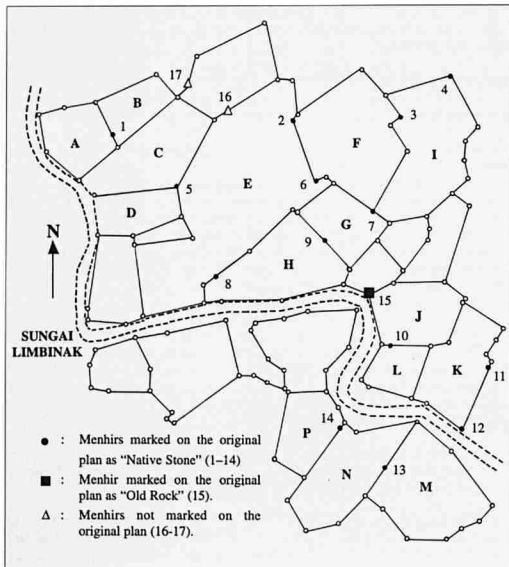


Fig. 4. Location of menhirs in Kampong Kitauu (plan of land lots based on the first survey of 1904. Lands and Survey Department, Kota Kinabalu).

local people were very afraid of it especially at night time. The padi near this menhir would not grow well and it is thought that some buffaloes that went too near it fell sick and died. It was believed that when the stone fell the spirit left it and it was no longer feared. However, one or two other stones which were considered to have unfriendly spirits in the past are no longer held in awe. One local interpretation is that since the people do not believe in these spirits any more, the spirits have no power to cause any harm.

The bank of the river where Menhir No. 12 is located has been eroded and the menhir gradually fell and slipped down the bank of the river (Fig. 6). It was lying about 3 m below field level and almost entirely covered with earth when the area was visited in 1988. Jikuil Bin Tangoi, the owner of the land where the menhir is located, was asked how he felt about having the stone erected again. He was enthusiastic about the idea; and so it transpired that with the help of ropes six senior students and their teacher together with Jikuil hauled the stone up the bank and then erected it on the boundary line some 4 m from its original position. The menhir is 1.68 m long; the circumference at one end is 1.27 m and at the other end 1.02 m.

As has been mentioned, Menhir No. 15 is marked on the original survey map as "Old Rock". However, it has the typical and regular shape of the type of menhir associated with rice-fields. Its height of 1.42 m is 35.6 cm taller than the average of this group. It is weathered to a smooth surface and was probably obtained from the coast.



Fig. 5. The largest standing menhir in Kampong Kitauu.



Fig. 6. This fallen menhir, recovered from an eroded river-bank in Kampong Kitauu in 1988, was subsequently re-erected, but without ceremony.

Even though this area is situated close to the hills, it is claimed locally that these menhirs have been taken from the islands off the coast. The size of a stone is said to have been an indication of the wealth and power of its owner. A lot of influence appears to have been needed to muster enough manpower to help in transporting the menhir, and it is believed there must also have been much expense in providing food and drink for those involved in the work and for the celebrations that accompanied the erection of the menhir.

Kampong Gusing

In 1961 a group of students reported in the Borneo Society Journal (Dionysius *et al.* 1961) having seen, in the fields near Gusing, a large stone. They found out what it was, after much guessing, from an old Kadazan *bobohizan* (priestess) living in Hungob. It was a boundary stone and a memorial to an old Kadazan warrior. If a man had a stone marking his land, he was considered both rich and courageous.

The man was said to have gone all the way to Pulau Gaya to find a worthwhile stone, for one from the nearby hill of Pogun Savat would have been worthless. The larger the stone, the better it was. Bringing over the stone was not so difficult, for the man had promised a big feast for it when it was erected. The stone was put on a bamboo raft and hauled by a boat called a *padan*. All the men in the boat rowed and shouted loudly.

They came to a place named Napas, beside a stream located in the swamp at Batu Tiga near the Sikh Temple. Teams of ten buffaloes each took turns to haul the stone, which had



Fig. 7. Knocked down by a tractor, this menhir rested at Kampong Gusing in 1972 but was later dumped near the Penampang River; it cannot be located now.

been placed on a kind of rack (*kangga*). Three or five *bobohizan* chanted prayers to clear the way of evil spirits, which might have retarded the stone's progress by making it heavier.

The stone was erected at the edge of the man's property and the blood of a slaughtered buffalo collected in a bucket was poured by a *bobohizan* over the stone. A *makan tagazo* or big feast followed, and then a white flag was put up as a sign of the courage of the owner. Seven days more of ceremonies followed. Now the owner's land had a clear boundary. When he had to fight in a quarrel over the land (formerly not an uncommon event), he stood by his stone to assert his rights and was actually said to draw strength from the stone or *pampang* he erected.

There is a sequel to the above story of the menhir at Gusing. During the early 1970's it was planned to construct the Kota Kinabalu-Tambunan Highway through this area. The road was to pass through the spot where the menhir stood. Work commenced and earth was dumped in the padi-field at and around the menhir to raise the site of the road. An earth-moving tractor was used to knock down the menhir (Fig. 7) but when this was attempted, the tractor broke down. Local people believed that this break-down of the tractor was caused by the spirit in the stone. Later a bigger machine was used and the menhir was left lying on the red earth.

The people of this area appealed against the construction of the road and one of the arguments they used was the harm that might befall them because of the disturbance to the stone. After the stone had been knocked down, some people said that they saw a faint light—similar to the burning of a cigarette—at the stone at night time. There were noises heard as if coming from the stone during the night. As a result of the appeal the highway was rerouted and the menhir was left lying beside the spot where it had formerly stood. It was at this stage that I first heard about the stone. Some local people were of the opinion that it had been erected as a sign of lasting peace between the inhabitants of two nearby villages who had a tradition of making war on one another. People had great fear of the spirit in this menhir; various strange things were reported seen there at night, such as a dog with two heads, a buffalo with no horns and no tail. It was also said that several people shortly before their death had seen an image of themselves at the stone and that such a vision of oneself at or near the stone was a premonition of death in the near future.

In 1980 a man built a new house on a plot of land behind the place where the menhir was then lying. To gain access to the site he used the course of the deserted highway but the building contractor found it necessary to move the stone slightly, so that it lay parallel and not across the access roadway used. People living across the road then expressed their concern to the man building the new house, stating that since the stone now pointed toward their house, they were afraid that something evil might befall them. This, and because the person erecting the new house heard so much about the folly of putting up a new house so near to this stone, prompted him to remove it altogether. The contractor reluctantly agreed to take away the stone. However, his machine was unable to lift it. Then the owner of the new house, a Christian, sprinkled some holy water on and around the stone, and got a very large quarry tractor to remove the stone. The menhir was taken and

dumped near the bridge where the Penampang-Papar Road crosses the Penampang River. The spot where the stone was put is now overgrown and in 1989, the person who had it brought there accompanied me to the place but was unable to locate the stone.

The menhir *Gunsolong* at Kampong Kurai

In the Kampong Kurai area of Penampang District, there is a menhir which is named *Gunsolong* (Fig. 8). In the past, this large stone stood at the intersection of bunds of padi-fields. About ten years ago a house was constructed nearby and now one corner of the garden surrounding the house extends close to the stone. The general opinion of people in this area is that such stones were erected as boundary stones; however, this was not the same as boundary marks between the properties of individuals at the present time, but a boundary mark between the padi-land of one group of people and another group (or *kampung*).

It is said that this stone was obtained from one of the islands off the coast. First a group of men had to go and locate a suitable stone. Then preparations were made for transporting it. A raft was made to carry the stone from the island and up the river to a place near the point where it was needed. A lot of work was involved in dragging the stone from the river to its location in the padi-field. This was done when the fields were wet (after ploughing but before planting) because then it would be easier to drag and slide the huge stone through the muddy soil. *Gunsolong* stands 3 m above the level of the padi-field and at mid-level it has a circumference of 2 m.



Fig. 8. The menhir *Gunsolong* in 1972.

As is the case with most menhirs, a spirit is believed to be residing in *Gunsolong*. The story of the origin of this name is as follows. One day, a woman was passing by that stone and she stared at it. When she reached home she fell ill; later a *bobohizan* was called to find out what caused the ailment. After some time the priestess explained that as the woman passed by the stone, the spirit in the stone had asked her where she was going, but she only stared at the stone and gave no reply. Receiving no answer from the human being, the spirit was annoyed and, to spite the woman, made her ill. An offering in the form of



Fig. 9. As part of a *magang* ceremony held in 1974, blood was poured on top of Vatu *Gunsolong*.

fowls was needed to pacify the spirit and when this was done at the stone by the priestess, the woman got well again. *Gunsolong* is derived from the word "to stare" and ever since that incident this menhir has been known as *Gunsolong*.

However, the spirit in the menhir *Gunsolong* is considered to be a good spirit and in the past *bobohizan* have gone there to ask for favours for people. As part of a seven-day *magang* ceremony held at the home of a man named Sikui in this area during 1974, a large group of people led by four priestesses visited this stone. Various chants were recited by the priestesses; Sikui climbed on top of the stone and then he poured on it some blood from a sacrificial pig that had been slaughtered that morning (Fig. 9); two pieces of bamboo with pieces of white cloth attached were fastened to the menhir as a sign that it had been visited during a *magang* ceremony. It is said by the elderly people in this area that in the old days when the members of a head-hunting expedition returned home, they fastened the skulls they had captured to the stone and left them there for some days.

MENHIRS AT KAMPONG TEBILONG, TAMBUNAN

To the traveller passing through Tambunan, menhirs are not conspicuous but examples of various types of ancient-looking stone monuments can be found (Fig. 10). Possibly as many as 30 are located in padi-fields close to the Pegalan River. Many others are associated with burial grounds. There is an oath-stone at the new *tamu* ground. Two menhirs not located on padi-land are said to commemorate individuals renowned for their great strength.

There is a striking resemblance between the appearance of menhirs in padi-fields in Tambunan and those in padi-fields in the Penampang District. Details of a group of ten menhirs located in a single kampong in Tambunan are presented below. The locality designated Kampong Tebilong has 264 acres (107 ha) of wet rice-land and 96 houses in

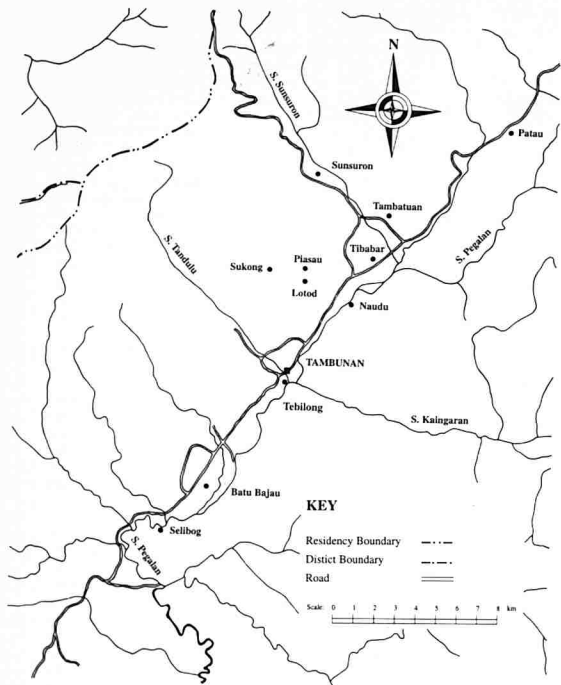


Fig. 10. Localities in Tambunan district mentioned in the text.

1990. This community has a *ketua kampong* (headman of the village) and a JKKK (Committee for the Welfare and Progress of the Kampong) but there is no focal point or nucleus of houses: the homesteads are dispersed throughout the area of the *kampong*.

Tebilong is said to mean "long-house" and it is thought by some that this was the area where the first inhabitants of Tambunan settled. This first group consisted of a great warrior named Mondowoi who came from Nunuk Ragang accompanied by another man named Mumburing and a woman. For a long time, the area now known as Tebilong was covered with jungle but gradually, as the population increased, the jungle was cleared and the land brought under wet rice cultivation.

In 1990 Tebilong had eight standing menhirs and two that had fallen. A word in the local dialect for this type of standing stone is *bogu*. But this word *bogu* is also used for the stone pillars that support houses. Each of the menhirs in the padi-fields has a specific name and in some cases two names. This is because variations existed in the dialects of the people who lived near the main river (Sibah dialect) and those who lived further from the flood-plain (Sokid dialect).

From an examination of the location of the ten menhirs (Fig. 11) it is possible to make a number of observations, discussed as follows.

Location of the menhirs in relation to the Pegalan River

The ten menhirs in Tebilong run roughly parallel to the main river, the Pegalan River. The average distance of the menhirs from the river is 137 m. The greatest distance between the river and a menhir is 218 m, that is, menhir No. 10. Menhir No. 8 is located nearest to the river, at 60 m. However, it must be noted that this is a flood-plain area and it is possible that the course of the river has changed since these menhirs were erected.

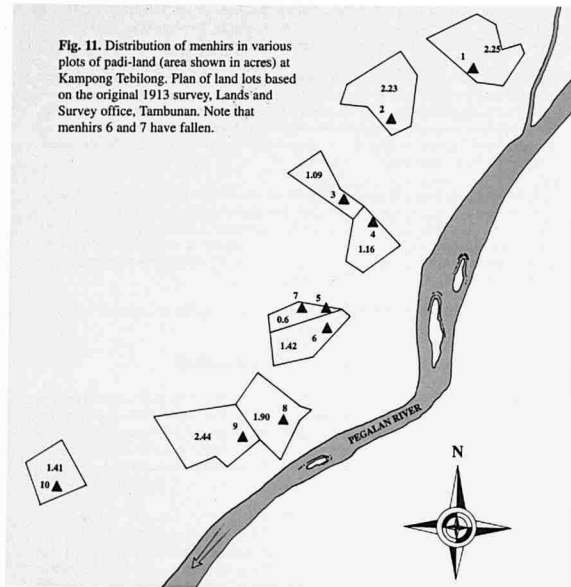
The extent of the menhirs

The distance in a straight line from one end of the pattern to the other end is 895 m. The shortest distance between two menhirs is 30 m, that is, between menhir No. 5 and menhir No. 6. The longest distance between any two of these menhirs is 294 m, that is, between menhir No. 9 and menhir No. 10.

The area of the lots of land where the menhirs are located

Since menhirs No. 5 and No. 7 are located in the same lot, there are nine lots involved. The total area of these nine lots where the menhirs are found is 14.5 acres (5.87 ha). The largest lot has an area of 2.44 acres (0.99 ha); the smallest lot has an area of 0.6 acres (0.24 ha). No individual person owns more than one lot among the nine where the menhirs occur.

Fig. 11. Distribution of menhirs in various plots of padi-land (area shown in acres) at Kampong Tebilang. Plan of land lots based on the original 1913 survey, Lands and Survey office, Tambunan. Note that menhirs 6 and 7 have fallen.



The extent to which subdivision of lots of land involving these nine lots may have occurred in the past is something that cannot be accurately determined. From a comparison of the present survey plan with the original plan of 1913 the boundaries of the present lots are unchanged except in the case where menhirs No. 5, No. 6 and No. 7 occur: this area is marked "Kampong Reserve" on the original survey of 1913.

None of these ten menhirs is situated on a boundary point or boundary line of a property; though they are located within the property, they are not centrally sited. In this respect, this group of menhirs in Tambunan contrasts with those studied in Kampong Kitauu, Penampang where all the menhirs are located on boundary points or boundary lines.

In some of the lots, bunds have been made to enable areas of slightly different levels to be uniformly covered with water during the growing season of the rice. In some cases, pairs of parallel bunds have been made to form a channel for carrying irrigation water. Three of the menhirs, namely Nos. 2, 3 and 4, are situated in or touching such bunds.

Varying suggestions to explain their origin

Suggestions from local people about the origins of these menhirs are so varied and vague and possibly conjectural that one is tempted to give up as hopeless any attempt at recording any type of systematic and accurate account. However, the recording of some of the information proffered may, at some time in the future, lead to more thorough research and an acceptable explanation for the origin of these interesting and significant menhirs. Among the explanations put forward are the following:

1. Long ago people lived in long-houses. The members of a long-house worked together and erected a stone. The leader of the long-house put a name on the stone. By means of a ceremony conducted by priests and/or priestesses, a spirit was called upon to take up residence in the stone. Many old people are still afraid of the spirit in the stone. In former times, but to a much lesser extent today, it was believed that any disturbance to the stone or to the ground around the stone would annoy the spirit who, in turn, would cause illness or misfortune to befall the guilty individual. Therefore, each year, before ploughing, the owner of the land where the menhir is situated was required to inform the spirit in the stone about the work that was about to commence. This notice of intention involved the making of an offering to the spirit accompanied by some prayers.
2. A stone was erected so that the people of the village would have a spirit to protect them. Before going to war (head-hunting) they would go to the stone and ask the spirit for protection and success on their expedition. If they returned victorious with one or more heads, they would first go to the stone to thank the spirit.
3. In the past, it was believed that a widespread sickness, such as smallpox, that came to a village was brought by evil spirits. To prevent the spread of the disease and save the lives of the people, a stone was erected to make peace with the evil spirits. (This idea is similar to that associated with Guardian Stones, Chapter 3).
4. When a man cleared land for his own use, he erected a stone to stake his claim; this was necessary in the time before the British introduced Title Deeds. If anyone else wanted to take the land he would have to fight the occupier who would take up his position beside the stone. In defending his territory he expected to receive help from the spirit living in the stone.
5. Each stone was carried by a single person. Long ago people were very big and strong and a man would carry such a stone and put it standing to show his great strength. But only some men were so powerful; the rest of the people were like ordinary individuals.

6. These menhirs are roughly in a line parallel to the river. There was a pathway along here formerly and men from this area and from further south going to fight against Mat Salleh passed along this way. However, to prove themselves strong enough to partake in the fighting they had to prove their strength and one way of doing this was for a man to carry a stone from the river and to plant it in the ground just as a person would stick a pointed stake in the earth.
7. Some stones were erected when peace was agreed to between two villages that had formerly been at war. There were two such stones in the area where the Sports Complex now is, but in constructing the playing area these stones have been covered over and can no longer be seen.

The names and details of the menhirs

Different sources agree on the names given to the ten menhirs located on Fig. 11. These are described here

1. MASATAN (GAHAI)

Menhir No. 1 is mainly known as *Masatan*. This is from the Sokid dialect, but this menhir is also known as *Gahai* in the Sibah dialect. It is situated in a rice-field. The top of the stone is 1.44 m above the ground. It has the form of a large slab and throughout has a thickness of about 28 cm. At a point 15 cm above the ground it is 0.91 m wide. The section of the menhir which is above ground has a volume of approximately 0.25 m³. There is a small stone situated at the foot of the menhir and standing about 23 cm high. There is a space of 15 cm between it and the main stone.

The name *Masatan* is said to mean "the giant man". It is related that this stone was placed there by a very strong man who carried it from the Kaingaran River. The menhir *Masatan* is said to possess a spirit. At night time, this spirit can sometimes be seen; it tends to move between this menhir and another which is situated about 91 m to the south. In 1961, the resident Catholic Priest, at the request of the local people, blessed the stone in order to remove the spirit. But, it is said, the spirit is so firmly associated with *Masatan* that the Christian blessing did not produce the required effect and the spirit still resides in the stone.

2. SABATAN

This menhir is 1.27 m tall. It is more cylindrical in shape; its circumference 60 cm above ground is 2.08 m. It stands next to a large bund at the edge of a padi-field. This menhir is said to have been obtained from the Pegalan River nearby and erected by seven strong men. The stone was carried from the river and placed there as a demonstration of the strength of these men. A spirit is associated with *Sabatan*. This spirit is a good spirit; offerings are sometimes made and prayers said at this stone in order to ask from the spirit cures for illnesses. It is to this menhir that the spirit of *Masatan* is sometimes seen coming at night time.

3. SOPIHOK (SABIHOK)

The menhir named *Sopihok* is one of the most conspicuous and impressive of this set of menhirs (Fig. 12). It consists of a large slab of sandstone; it is 1.33 m high and has an average thickness of 12.7 cm. The width at the base is 1.21 m decreasing to 0.7 m near the top. The section above ground has a volume of approximately 0.2 m³. The stone was brought from Sungai Dokutan and it was a group of three men who carried and erected the menhir.

An interesting feature of this menhir is the presence of a number of man-made notches on two edges of the stone, at least 17 on the top and 41 along one side (Fig. 13). There are about 20 similar notches on the side of *Sabatan*. Different theories are given to explain these marks. If the owner of the land was not cultivating it but was renting the field to another farmer for a year, then he had to cut a notch on the stone as a way of informing the spirit that the land would not be cultivated by himself but by another person during the year. A second opinion offered was that each notch represented a head taken from an enemy village. When they returned from a successful head-hunting expedition, any heads taken were at first brought to the menhir and a notch was cut on it for each head captured. The notches are similar in form to those found on a stone marking a grave located a few kilometers from Kampong Tebilang. In this latter case each notch is said to represent a man who was present at the funeral ceremony.

We may wonder if an incident related in a folk tale concerning the striking of swords against a menhir was in common practice. A local hero in the Penampang area named



Fig. 12. The menhir named *Sopihok* in Kampong Tebilang, Tambunan.

Monsopiad had a duel with a marauding giant named Guman-tung. After a long and arduous battle Monsopiad emerged victorious and to commemorate the event, a large stone was erected over the grave of the defeated Guman-tung. However, we are told (Brooks 1970) that Monso-piad, "not wishing to claim the honour of the victory for himself alone, called on all the men of the village saying, 'Let every man strike his sword upon this stone and so bear his part in our common triumph over this tyrant'." Could the striking of the stone by each man with his sword involve the cutting of a systematic set of notches?

One of the most knowledgeable of the informants asserted that *Sopihok* was the chief among the stones of this group and it exercised the most powerful influence in the past. Another informant stated that *Sopihok* had a spirit that could sometimes be seen at night time. The spirit had the appearance of an angel which moved gently and softly and gave the impression of gentle fluttering. The spirit of *Sopihok* is considered to be a good spirit and is believed by some to be capable of curing illness.



Fig. 13. Numerous small notches can be seen on some of the edges of *Bogu Sopihok*.

4. LOBO (INDIK)

This menhir is the smallest and least impressive among the ten. It is sloping outwards from a bund and is 86.4 cm long. Slanting as it is, the top of this menhir is 60 cm above ground-level. It is called after Lobo who was said to have been the son of Masatan. It is generally felt that there is no spirit associated with this menhir. An explanation offered for its lesser importance is that the son is not as great as the father.

5. "CYCLOPS" (SIAWAN)

This menhir is 1.33 m high and is round in shape. Its circumference at mid-level is 1.93 m. In 1985 it stood in a padi-field about 7 m from the bund. Later, a house was erected about 11 m away in this plot of land and now the area around the stone has become a vegetable and fruit garden.

Because of the structural formation of this stone, it seems to have one eye; and because of this fact it is said to be evil and be possessed by a giant devil. Cyclops is a name in Greek mythology used for a one-eyed giant. Questions as to how and when this menhir acquired that name proved fruitless. It was admitted that there is no word in the local dialect that sounds similar to "cyclops". The change of name from the original *Siawan* must have occurred in fairly recent times and must have been given by a person who had some schooling.

A man named Siawan once owned the land where this menhir stands. He came from Sarawak and settled here. His daughter, Margaret Ambah, was still living in Tambunan in 1992 and said she was 80 years old.

A feature of several of the menhirs in the rice-fields of Kampong Tebilang and, as far as I know, not found in Penampang area is the presence of one or two small stones standing close to the foot of the main menhir. This feature is also noticeable at *Batu Bajau* and in the case of *Batu Bogu* at Kampong Kapayan Baru, Apin-Apin. In Kampong Tebilang these are referred to as *anak* (child). When a person comes to a stone to seek a cure for illness, he waits for some days. Then (s)he returns to the stone and if the *anak* appears to have grown, it is certain that a cure will follow; but if there is no sign of growth in the *anak*, a cure will not materialise.

Since help is not sought from "Cyclops" it was surprising to see an *anak* here. Perhaps there is some other explanation for the phenomenon. Opinions regarding pairs of smaller stones that accompany a larger menhir are provided with two different examples, namely the *Batu Sumpah* at Apin-Apin (Chapter 2), and memorial stones at Kampong Nodu (Chapter 4).

6. UNJUK

In 1985 and for many years previously, the menhir situated about 22 m to the east-southeast of "Cyclops" was lying flat and partially covered with soil; its centre portion was several centimeters above ground level. In 1989 an irrigation scheme for wet padi cultivation was provided by the government to this area and involved the laying of a large pipe about 1 m deep. A pipe was to pass through the place where the menhir lay. A large digger tractor was used to excavate the channel for the water pipe. When the tractor was moving the stone it caused the menhir to break into two pieces. At present the two sections of the broken stone can be clearly seen. The dimensions of the menhir before the breaking took place were: height 2.16 m, breadth 0.74 m, thickness 17.8 cm approximately, and circumference at the middle 1.73 m.

7. TUMBIO

This is the second menhir that has fallen. It has not sunken into the padi-field because it rests on a smaller stone which was probably an *anak*. It has a smooth, rounded surface and its length is 1.52 m.

8. TONDUGU

It is said that anybody who is protected by the spirit in this menhir cannot be harmed by weapons. This spirit is considered to be friendly and is reported to have protected the people during the Japanese Occupation. *Tondugu* has a height of 1.37 m and at mid-level has a circumference of 1.95 m.

9. BONIOK

The spirit in this menhir seems to be associated with hunting and fishing. People pray in times of scarcity for greater supplies of pork (wild boar) and fish. The menhir named *Boniok* is 1.26 m tall and at mid-level has a circumference of 1.19 m.

10. MOTINGGAM

If there is no rain or a shortage of water in the padi fields when the people want to prepare the land for padi planting, they pray to the good spirit in *Motinggam* for help. An offering of a chicken must accompany this prayer. This menhir is shorter than the average being 0.76 m in height and at mid-level it has a circumference of 1.14 m.

I was surprised to hear from an elderly man that when he was young he knew *Motinggam*. He explained that *Motinggam* was the expert authority in the locality for deciding on the proper time to start the work of preparation for rice planting. The same informant said that each stone was named after a man who was an expert leader in one particular duty and that the man whose name is carried by the stone was the one who erected it. If this is true, then the menhirs are of relatively recent origin; however, it is also possible that the name of the expert was associated with an already existing stone, the spirit in which was assigned to a particular need.

The majority of the menhirs in Tebilang bear the names of individuals who lived in this area during the period from about 1850 to 1950. It seems to be impossible to obtain any clear information as to whether those men were responsible for erecting the menhirs or whether the menhirs are much older. There is a possibility that those names are attached to the stones because they were those of the people who owned the various plots of land when the area was first surveyed during the period between 1910 and 1920.

OATH STONES OR BATU SUMPANAH

There was a custom in the past of erecting a stone as a solemn and perpetual reminder of an oath taken by two or more parties. This can be considered a living tradition since examples of the custom have been carried out in 1989 and again in 1990. It is possible to recognise five different situations where oath stones were erected:

- (a) oath stones at *tamu* grounds;
- (b) oath stones to mark the end of prolonged and intermittent fighting between two villages and the promise of future peace;
- (c) oath stones to mark an agreement to live according to the Native Law of a District and to preserve peace among different tribal groups;
- (d) oath stones near a Native Court where adversaries in court took oaths in cases where it was not possible to establish which party was in the right and which was in the wrong; and
- (e) oath stones erected to demonstrate allegiance to the government.

OATH STONES AT TAMU GROUNDS

A *tamu* is a rural market whose origin dates from pre-literary time. A special area is allocated as a *tamu* ground. Usually a *tamu* lasts for one day and is held once a week or once in ten days or, in remoter areas, twice per month. It is an important social occasion as many people meet there. It is so popular that many towns hold a weekly *tamu*.

The best-known *tamu* are those along the lowlands of the west coast. Traditionally three groups met here to barter goods—the people of the hills who supplied forest products, the farmers from the lowlands who supplied agricultural products, and the fisher-folk from the coastal villages who supplied the produce of the sea. It was a custom to erect an oath stone in each *tamu* ground. This signified that people had to trade honestly and peacefully. A traditional religious ceremony took place to inaugurate the oath stone and imbue it with a spirit. It was believed that this spirit would avenge any dishonest trading or any breach of the peace.

At the present time it is possible to see an oath stone at each of the *tamu* grounds at Inobong, Inanam, Apin-Apin, and in 1989 a *batu sumpah* was erected on the occasion of the opening of the new *tamu* ground in Tambunan (Fig. 14). When the site of a *tamu* ground was changed, the old oath stone was usually transferred to the new location and erected with traditional ceremonies. In describing the Tuaran *tamu*, Burrough (1973: 1)

states: "The *tamu* returned to the Kent College site in 1947, where a *batu sumpah* was erected, in 1951 the *batu sumpah* was moved and re-erected on the ground now occupied by Tuaran Mosque and finally, in 1968 the *tamu* ground was moved to its present position on the river bank to the north of the shophouses."

There are two oath stones in the *tamu* ground in Inobong, one in a remote corner and one in the centre. It is believed that the one in the corner was erected in the remote past; after the Second World War the *tamu* ground was enlarged and improved and a new oath stone was installed. The reason for not transferring the old stone to the centre may have been the difficulty involved because at some stage of its history the foot of the stone had been encased in concrete. Both stones have a similar height and shape.

The *batu sumpah* at the Inanam *tamu* ground (Fig. 15) is known in the local dialect as *Vatu Tatu*. It is said that this oath stone has been erected four times as the *tamu* ground changed locations—first at Sundatangan, then at Sinulian, next at Inanam Laut and finally at Pekan Inanam. The slaughtering of a buffalo and the pouring of some of its blood on the stone as an offering to the spirit living in the stone was observed on each occasion. The common belief was that anyone who cheated or quarrelled at the *tamu* would be punished by the spirit. In 1990 an elderly man in Inanam stated that the killing of the buffalo was a sign of what would happen to anyone who did wrong at the *tamu*. In a short account of this *tamu* (Majimbun 1962: 15) it is stated: "Inanam *Tamu* was originally established many years before the advent of British rule in North Borneo. At the normal ceremony for planting the *batu sumpah*, instead of using the traditional buffalo, it was decided to sacrifice a diseased Bajau, who was suffering badly from *kurap* (skin disease). This was duly done, it is commonly believed."

The oath stone at the *tamu* ground in Inanam is not very imposing: it has a height of 0.62 m and a circumference of 1.3 m.

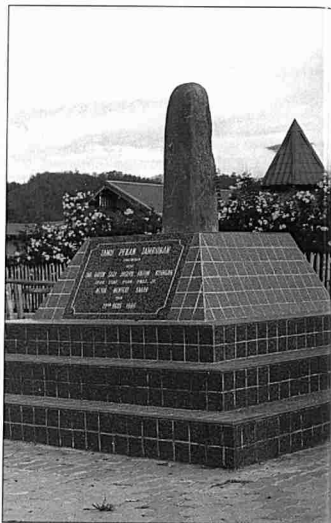


Fig. 14. A menhir erected at the official opening of the new *tamu* ground in Tambunan on 19 August, 1989. The pedestal is 1.27 m high and the menhir, with a mid-level circumference of 1.09 m, stands 1.07 m higher.

It is generally accepted that human sacrifice took place in Sabah in the distant past. The concept of offering blood sacrifices, including human sacrifice, is very ancient and was very widespread. The main objectives as practised in Sabah seem to have been to placate the spirit world as an atonement for faults committed or as an affirmation of a promise, or as supplication for help in the future together with freedom from calamities. A look at a few examples of ancient sacrificial customs in other parts of the world may give a fuller understanding of this practice.

With the Yoruba people of West Africa, it was recorded (Amrine (ed.) 1990: 262) that if they "...wanted to free themselves from their problems, they would make a human sacrifice to the gods...once the inhabitants of a village had chosen their victim, or *oluwo*,



Fig. 15. The *batu sumpah* at the Inanam tamu ground.

they made sure he had everything he wanted before his execution. On the appointed day, the *oluwo* would have his identity concealed from the villagers by being showered with chalk and ashes. Then he would be paraded through the streets and all the villagers would rush to touch him, believing that they would thus transfer their problems and sins to him. Finally, they would chop off his head, and all the troubles of the community would die with him." Also (Amrine (ed.) 1990: 262), "Every year, the ancient Greek islanders of Leucas used to throw a criminal who had been sentenced to death off an enormous cliff as a sacrifice to the gods. To temper justice with mercy, they tied feathers and live birds to him to 'lighten' the fall. If he survived, they hauled him out of the sea and gave him his freedom, on the condition that he left the island".

In an account of animism by Harris & Parrinder (1962: 13–17), we are told that "for many thousands of years men in all parts of the world have believed themselves to be surrounded by an infinite number and variety of spirits... Man ascribes to the natural forces around him a will and determination similar to his own... He is fearful of the unknown and of powers that often appear malevolent or capricious. He knows that he himself is amenable to gifts and entreaty, and so he sets out to try the same process upon the unseen powers... The beliefs of Animism have often led to cruel practices, because the spirits were thought to be exacting, sometimes capricious, and powerful above all. If we can understand the belief it will help to explain, but not justify, the cruelty."

Many primitive peoples believed that life was in the blood and some thought that the blood contained an individual's soul, that is, the life of the living being. Therefore, blood was sacred, even the blood of animals. Thus, to eat the flesh of animals without draining their blood was considered as profaning the very sacredness of life. By offering the blood of a sacrificial animal to a deity or spirit the worshippers or devotees were offering the essence and life of the victim. This concept about life being in the blood is still with us today: in appealing for blood donors a blood transfusion service is using the slogan, "Blood Is Life... Pass It On".

Tuck (1994: 758) offers an interesting insight into blood sacrifice found in a discussion on whether the offering of such sacrifice should be a male or female priestly function: "Throughout human history the ritual of blood sacrifice has been offered by the male. Primitive man saw that it is only when women bleed that they can give birth and that the birth process itself is drenched in blood. So he created for himself a drama of regeneration through the shedding of blood, precisely because this was what women did (and do) in reality rather than ritual. These ancient patterns of blood sacrifice, rooted in our biology, were gradually purified throughout the Old Testament, and finally taken up and transformed by God in the Christian story of Incarnation and sacrifice. Mankind's primitive myths were sacralised in the events celebrated at Christmas and Easter."

To conclude this section on oath stones in *tamu* grounds we will draw on a report made by a government officer, Bunbury, in 1903, in which he makes reference to the erecting of oath stones at a *tamu*. In describing progress on the construction of a bridle path between Tambunan and Keningau he stated: "The first four miles from Tambunan have been cleaned and improved. Beyond, the work of cleaning and repairing is going on well

on those parts looked after by Kampongs near Tambunan but I have had the greatest difficulty in getting people from further South. They say that they have been called down to the coast to *tanom batu* at the Papar *tamu*. But the period over which this excuse has been given makes it monotonous and if the number of stones planted accorded with the number of times I have been met with the excuse, there must be by now a budding 'Stonehenge' down there."

STONES ERECTED TO END INTER-VILLAGE FEUDS

In an article by Beresford-Peirse (1961), we can read an interesting account of the erection of oath stones (*batu sumpah*) in relation to the making of a peace treaty between the inhabitants of two tribal groups:

"Seventy or more years ago the Rumanau Alab and Mangkahak peoples, who live in the headwater of the Kinabatangan River, in North Borneo, carried out a series of head-hunting raids against each other's villages. When the fighting stopped the Rumanau were said to have taken three heads, and the Mangkahak one. Several years later an agreement was reached between the two groups, by which both sides expressed their willingness to pay *bangun* (compensation) and end the dispute.

The two parties duly met at the first appointed place. The Rumanau delivered their *bangun*, and payment was followed by the usual *sumpah*. The stone erected on this occasion is still standing. According to custom, a second meeting should have taken place shortly afterwards near the Mangkahak country, at which the latter should have paid their compensation: this should have been followed by a second *sumpah*. Unfortunately the second meeting never took place, owing to a severe outbreak of smallpox among the Rumanau, which carried off more than half the community.

Time went by and memories faded, until one evening in 1951, when H.E. the Governor was visiting the Kinabatangan District and a party was being given in his honour at Lamag. Towards the end of the proceedings a Mangkahak, who had already had rather too much *tapai*, was asked to sit down with some of the Rumanau headmen and have a drink. He answered quickly that nothing would persuade him to do so, as they had killed his father. One of the headmen heard him, and replied that if that was how the Mangkahak felt about it, the Rumanau would demand their long-overdue *bangun*, which they had forgotten about."

Protracted negotiations took place before the men of Mangkahak agreed to pay the *bangun* demanded by the men of Rumanau. The oath of agreement was taken on 4th May, 1953 though the handing over of the *bangun* would not take place until the Panengah *tamu* in July of that year. On this second occasion of oath-taking a wooden post made of *belian* (*Eusideroxylon zwageri*) was erected with two rocks on either side of it, one placed there by the Rumanau and one by the Mangkahak. The peace agreement, sworn to by both parties in turn, included promises of the following—

- never to fight again, and to live peacefully as neighbours;
- never to raise the question of *bangun* again;
- never to refer to any feud between the two tribes in speech or any other way;
- that there should be no restrictions between them, and that intermarriage should be allowed,

that travellers and visitors from either side should be looked after as though they were their own brothers;
allegiance to the Queen and Her Government.

We are told that after the oath-taking each side killed a fowl and smeared some blood on the *belian* post and the two fowl were then left hanging there.

There are several points of interest arising from this informative narrative. The first *batu sumpah* had been erected about seventy years earlier and was still standing, but at the second belated meeting, a *belian* post was erected with two rocks on either side of it, one placed there by each of the contracting parties. We may rightly wonder why, on this occasion, a *belian* post was used in preference to a stone. Perhaps it was not possible to find in the locality a stone of suitable size and shape. Though the author noted that about fifty people attended the ceremony, there is no indication that a *bobolian* (priest or priestess) was present. It was also stated that according to their custom it was not necessary for all the male villagers to attend. It should be noted also that the incident occurred in the valley of an east coast river, remote from the main areas of menhir activity.

Throughout history the practice of raising some form of monument to signify a lasting peace agreement has been carried out. Probably the earliest example is to be found in the book of Genesis (31: 44–54). Because Jacob had sensed a change of attitude in his father-in-law, Laban, he decided to take his family and property and return to his own country. While Jacob was on his way, Laban and his followers overtook him and blamed Jacob for having run away secretly and cheated his father-in-law. After Jacob had given his point of view, Laban seemed satisfied and said, "I am ready to make an agreement with you. Let us make a pile of stones to remind us of our agreement."

The story continues: "Jacob took a stone and set it up as a memorial. He told his men to gather some rocks and pile them up. Then they ate a meal beside the pile of rocks. Laban named it Jegar Sahadutha, while Jacob named it Galeed. Laban said to Jacob, 'This pile of rocks will be a reminder for both of us...' Laban went on, 'If you ill-treat my daughters or if you marry other women, even though I don't know about it, remember that God is watching us. Here are the rocks that I have piled up between us, and here is the memorial stone. Both this pile and this memorial stone are reminders. I will never go beyond this pile to attack you, and you must never go beyond it or beyond this memorial stone to attack me.'" (Good News Bible, 1979: 37).

A treaty monument at Penontomon

Another example of hardwood being used as an alternative to stone in solemnizing a peace agreement is to be found at Penontomon in the remote district of Nabawan. No one in the area knows the year of the treaty but all are of the opinion that it occurred before the birth of the oldest inhabitants. The commemorative pillar was made from *belian* or *tahas*, to use the local Murut name.

The peace agreement was made between two groups, the Baukan Murut and the Paluan Murut. These two groups had been at enmity over a long period. Head-hunting raids were made and a number of deaths resulted on both sides. It would seem that the Paluan made the proposal of a peace agreement; they were in a more exposed location which was difficult to defend and it was not easy to retaliate against their traditional adversaries who inhabited the remoter headwater areas of several rivers.

The Paluan had suffered the greater amount of casualties. Consequently, as part of the truce, the Baukan agreed to give one young, unmarried woman to the Paluan with the understanding that they could keep her or execute her. To solemnize the agreement a pillar of hardwood, *belian*, was erected in the presence of leaders and representatives from both groups. *Belian* was chosen because of its known durability; it is estimated that if this wood is above water-level it will last from 50 to 200 years. The Baukan promised that they would not pass beyond the pillar. According to legend the girl surrendered by the Baukan was executed but the story does not tell the manner of execution.

The height of the original pillar is not known (though one person from Penontomon suggested 1.5–2 m). It is claimed that the wood took root and began to grow: not only did it become a tree but it also gave life to a number of smaller *belian* trees around it which were considered to be children (*anak*) of the former wooden monument, now become a tree. The smaller *belian* trees—it is thought five—were later cut down to be used as supports (stilts) for houses. At present there is no other *belian* tree in close proximity with this living memorial. Many of the younger inhabitants are unaware of the origin of this tree and a few years ago when a man proposed that the tree be cut down for its wood, the proposal roused indignation among the older folk.

According to an officer of the Forestry Department *belian* cannot be grown from a cutting; it will grow only from seed. However, there is a possibility that there was a small piece of root on the end of the *belian* that was inserted in the ground. Though many of the local people think that there is no longer a spirit in the *belian*, Baukan Murut, if not afraid, are at least still nervous of going past this peace-agreement tree. In recent years some of them who have done so have experienced various types of sickness, though of a mild nature, for example, fever, head-ache or dizziness.

In 1995 the circumference of the base of the tree was almost 1 m and its height was between 10 m and 15 m.

Removal of a "Peace Stone"

Reference was made by Bunbury (1903: 206) to the removal of a "peace stone" in an area between Tambunan and Ranau. His report states:

"A representative from Mesangong having reported to me that the 'batu' lately planted by them and certain Bajaus had been removed I wanted to verify the report ... On the way I met Sendawar, the O.T. of Mesangong, coming to meet me: brought him along with me and went to the place where the Bajaus had planted 'batu' with the people of Mesangong.

The stones had been removed but evidently only the day before, when it was known that I was near. I made full enquiries as to whether any more Bajaus had been heard of about there but could hear nothing, and everything seemed quiet. This is very satisfactory after the conduct of the people on my predecessor's last visit when the house in which he stayed was fired at. The inmates of the houses which were in consequence burned have moved a little upstream."

The date of the above incident was three years after the defeat of Mat Salleh at his fort at Tibabar in nearby Tambunan. I have not had the opportunity to research the oral tradition in the area of Mesangong regarding this incident or to pursue any possible written accounts related to the event; such investigation together with the background information that would have to accompany it should prove interesting.

CONFIRMATION OF FIDELITY TO LOCAL ADAT

The Batu Sumpah at Apin-Apin

Apin-Apin is one of the ten administrative areas, each known as *Mukim*, of the District of Keningau. It is situated at the northern end of the Keningau plain. According to the statistics in the Operations Room of the District Office, Keningau, the Apin-Apin Mukim had a population of 8016 in 1990. Most of these live in the lowlands around the confluence of the Apin-Apin and Pegalan Rivers. For the purpose of administration of native affairs there is one Native Chief, two Assistant Native Chiefs and 30 Headmen (*Ketua Kampong*).

On 12 May, 1990, in the presence of a large gathering, a newly erected oath stone was officially inaugurated. This was probably the fourth time that such an inauguration had taken place in Apin-Apin. Early in the twentieth century a group of people from the Tambunan District settled in Apin-Apin. While the inhabitants there had no objection to migrants from other parts of Sabah coming to cultivate unused land, they wished to ensure that these new settlers, termed Dusun Gana, would abide by the customary laws of the Apin-Apin area. The settlers willingly agreed to comply with the requirement and it was decided to solemnize and ratify the agreement by erecting a *batu sumpah*. The date of the ceremony is not remembered. However, the stone was regarded as a sign of friendship between the original inhabitants and the recently arrived migrants. The original oath stone is said to have been long and slender, resembling a wooden post used in a fence. Recent attempts to locate that oath stone have failed, though there are a number of people who recall having seen it.

When life returned to normal after the Japanese Occupation and the population of the Apin-Apin area began to increase, a decision was made to renew the original agreement and for this purpose a new oath stone was used. This stone can still be seen in the old village of Apin-Apin which is said to have been the earliest settlement in the area. On the occasion of the inauguration of the oath stone a religious ceremony was observed in order

to endow the stone with a powerful spirit. The oath of agreement was pronounced by two male *bobolian* (priests), Dambiar on behalf of the original inhabitants and Dimal on behalf of the migrants: the two groups were urged to respect each other and any form of enmity was strictly prohibited. If any evil act occurred to cause dissension between the groups, those responsible would be punished by the spirit living in the stone.

At the ceremony two pigs (one black and one white) and two chickens were slaughtered and offered to the spirit in the stone with the intention of giving greater power to the spirit. Each group provided a pig and the idea of having two differently coloured pigs was to add more strength to the spirit. At that time there were no Muslims living in the area. It was partly in deference to people of Muslim religion that a buffalo was used in conjunction with similar ceremonies held in Apin-Apin many years later. The oath stone erected on this occasion soon after World War II can still be seen: it is 0.86 m high and at mid-level has a circumference of 0.81 m. Two smaller stones, about 30 cm high, can be found beside the oath stone.

On 12 May, 1960 the inauguration of a *batu sumpah* took place for the third time. By this period many more migrants had come from various parts of Sabah and settled in the Apin-Apin area. These consisted of Dusun, Kweijau, Laban Gana and Kuriau. The proposal to renew the ceremony was made by Datuk Angian and Datuk Anthony Undan. It was felt that some people were not aware of the existence and function of the old *batu sumpah*: a renewal of the *batu sumpah* would be of benefit to all the people of the area.

It was decided that the oath stone should be located at the *tamu* ground because this was the main meeting place of the district. Relatively few people would see the *batu sumpah* if located in the old village. A decision was made not to transfer the old oath stone but to erect a new one. This was done. The *menhir* was put standing in the earth and it had a height of 0.86 m. The circumference of this cylindrical stone at mid-level is 0.79 m. It is almost identical in dimension with the oath stone in the old village.

A special feature of the 1960 oath stone and as a replica of its predecessor is the fact that it did not stand alone. About 1 m in front of it and about 0.7 m apart were placed two smaller stones; these were 30–38 cm high. All of the stones had been taken from the Apin-Apin River and had been rounded and smoothened by river erosion.

When asked about the significance of the two smaller stones an informant stated that the decision to put them there came from the way of thinking of the people in the past: they felt that the *batu sumpah* should have some companions. Moreover, he added, if strangers came and saw only one stone they might think that it was a natural thing, but if they saw a pattern of stones they would immediately realise that the structure had a special purpose and was not just accidental.

At the ceremony inaugurating the *batu sumpah* in 1960, five *bobolian* (priests and priestesses) took part. Incantations were chanted and offerings of a buffalo, two pigs and two chickens made and thus the stone was endowed with a spirit. There was no specific name for this spirit and the same spirit resided in the two smaller stones also. It was the

same spirit that lived in the oath stone at the old village; it now lived in both oath stones. If there was a different spirit for each of the two oath stones, the two spirits would quarrel. According to the priestess who officiated at the new oath stone on 12th May, 1990 and who had assisted in 1960, a person in need of help could come at any time and pray to the spirit in the stone. It is said that long ago persons involved in Native Court cases came to the stone to take their oath.

Apart from the traditional functions of the *batu sumpah*, the oath stone erected in 1960 took on an additional role. Its inauguration coincided with the first *mukim*-level Harvest Festival held in Apin-Apin and the oath stone was intended to commemorate this event. During the years prior to 1960 proposals had been made for the withdrawal of British control from this area then known as British North Borneo. There was a development of national consciousness which caused groups to reflect on their origins. In the search for self-identity there was the feeling of a need for group-identity. Several political parties reflected ethnic communities. One of the results of these social developments was a greater emphasis being given to cultural traditions and activities intended to unite the group.

During the 1980's the main road through Apin-Apin was widened and sealed by the Public Works Department. As a result the fence of the *tamu* ground was moved back from the old road and the *tamu* ground became smaller. As a consequence the *batu sumpah* was now situated on the grass margin between the road and the *tamu* ground. According to a local informant the employees of the Public Works Department responsible for erecting the fence in its new location and those engaged in laying the new road were afraid to do anything about the *batu sumpah*.

For the 30th anniversary of the first official *Mukim*-level celebration of the Harvest Festival in Apin-Apin it was decided to have a ceremony "*untuk menghidupkan lagi batu sumpah*" ("to cause the *batu sumpah* to live again"). One might be inclined to imagine from this expression that the people thought that the spirit had left the stone or that it had lost its power. However, questions put to local leaders showed that the purpose of the 30th anniversary ceremony was to renew the awareness of all the inhabitants of the district of the purpose of the *batu sumpah*. Though not directly expressed there was the impression that in the present period there is very noticeable growth and development in social standards as well as expectations of further advance. This economic development brings with it competition which in turn leads to individualism and selfishness. Such tendencies are not in keeping with traditional attitudes. As a result the local leaders felt that a renewal of the ceremony of the *batu sumpah* would be useful.

The suggestion that the attention of the people be drawn to the purpose of the *batu sumpah* was first made by *Ketua Anak Negeri* (KAN or Native Chief) Michael Undalag in early 1990. As a way of doing this, it was proposed that a new stone should be erected beside the former stone near the *tamu* ground and that its inauguration should be accompanied by the usual religious ceremonies and offerings and the promises to live in harmony and peace.

Three days prior to the day of the ceremony a huge rock was carried from a nearby area under the control of the Drainage and Irrigation Department to the required site. The shape of the stone was considered to be suitable, even though it departed from the customary form. The rock was transported by a large earth-moving tractor owned by the *Majlis Daerah* or District Council. The new stone was erected beside the former one. The distance separating them is about 0.7 m and both main stones are now parallel to the road. A concrete base measuring 3.53 m by 1.47 m was made all round the stones. The concrete is on average 20 cm deep. A cavity measuring 45.7 cm by 30.5 cm approximately was left in the cement at the rear of the new oath stone; various offerings were to be placed here towards the end of the ceremony. The concrete work was done by the committee on a *gotong royong* (voluntary group effort) basis. The dimensions of the new oath stone were: height (above the concrete base) 1.17 m; breadth 1.83 m; and thickness (from front to rear) 0.86 m.

Parallel to the menhirs and 1.2 m apart on the north side of them a concrete pillar measuring 1.14 m in height, 0.86 m in breadth, and 25 cm in thickness was constructed to bear two plaques which bore the following inscriptions:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1. TUGU PERINGATAN
 ULANG TAHUN KE-30
 PERAYAAN
 PESTA KA'AMATAN
 MUKIM APIN-APIN
 12hb/5/1960-12hb/5/1990</p> | <p>(Translation)
 Monument commemorating
 the 30th anniversary
 of the celebration
 of the Harvest Festival
 at the Mukim of Apin-Apin.
 12th May, 1960-12th May, 1990</p> |
| <p>2. UPACARA
 BATU PERJANJIAN
 PERSETUJUAN,
 PERSAUDARAAN
 PERSAHABATAN AMAN DAN DAMAI
 DISAKSIKAN OLEH
 KAN Michael Undalag, ADK.
 WKAN Stephen Umpuroh
 WKAN Anahong Rangkap
 WKAN Francis Amik
 PADA 12HB-5-1990</p> | <p>(Translation)
 Ceremony of
 Treaty Stone
 of Agreement,
 Brotherhood,
 Peaceful and harmonious friendship.
 Witnessed by
 KAN Michael Undalag, ADK.
 WKAN Stephen Umpuroh
 WKAN Anahong Rangkap
 WKAN Francis Amik
 on 12th May, 1990</p> |

On the morning of 12 May, 1990 a 2-year-old male buffalo, two black male pigs and two whitish hens were brought to the area of the *batu sumpah*. There were three *bobolian* in attendance, namely, Mr Yankim Dambui from Kampong Ranggum, Mr Gidong Opod from Kampong Ritting and Madam Lisah Kambuku also from Kampong Ritting. All three are Dusun. Gidong and Lisah are husband and wife and they had been among the five *bobolian* who officiated at the ceremony in 1960. On this occasion they were the representatives of the original inhabitants whereas Yankim was the representative of those

who had migrated to the area in more recent times. The two men wore Kadazan/Dusun costume and Lisah wore the dress (*baju kebaya*) she ordinarily used. Each of the men also wore a piece of red cloth tied around his head while Lisah wore a black, knitted cap and had a piece of red cloth draped over her left shoulder.

The ceremony began at 10.00 a.m. Gidong held a spear which measured about 2.7 m in length. The blade was made of steel and the handle of wood. At the end of the wooden shaft next to the metal tip a piece of red cloth was tied. Yankim held a wooden baton 60 cm in length and with a diameter of about 5 cm. This was fresh wood and for about half of its length the bark had been pared away. Around the centre of this piece of wood, a red piece of cloth was tied. This baton-like stick is known as *tandus* in Dusun and as *buzuk* in Malay and in this ceremony is officially called *Peningkan Sumangat Watu Pisumpa* (Fig. 16).

To introduce the ceremony Chief Michael Undalag gave an explanation of its significance. Unfortunately, he did not have a loudspeaker and the noise from a nearby generator supplying electricity to Apin-Apin prevented many from hearing what he had to say. When the Native Chief had finished, Yankim held the baton aloft in his right hand and in the Dusun language said the following: "Oh God, look on us in this ceremony to renew the spirit of this stone. This oath stone was erected long ago for the purpose of making oaths—oaths of friendship. Anyone who does any evil—steals, curses and the like—will be punished by the Spirit of the Oath Stone. Since those who endowed this stone with a



Fig. 16. Bobolian Yankim holds the *tandus* aloft as he officiates at the inauguration of the *batu sumpah* at Apin-Apin in 1990. The *tandus* is beaten on the ground three times at the conclusion of the ceremony, in confirmation of the oath.



Fig. 17. The three *bobolian*, Gidong (left), Lisah (centre) and Yankim, who officiated at the inauguration of the *batu sumpah* in Apin-Apin in 1990. The smaller menhir on the left was erected in 1960.

spirit have already died, we as their representatives are going to make an oath of friendship. We ask that the spirit of this oath stone be renewed—this oath stone of brotherhood.” At the conclusion of his words he struck the earth near the oath stone very vigorously three times with the baton.

Next Lisah took the baton in her right hand and said the following: “Oh God, look on us who are renewing the spirit in this oath stone which is a sign of brotherhood. This oath stone is for friendship. Whoever does any evil will be punished by the oath stone. If migrants cause any harm to the original inhabitants, the spirit in the stone will punish those migrants responsible.” Lisah also struck the earth three times with the baton. This action by her and by Yankim was an important part of the ceremony in imparting the spirit to the stone.

The next part of the ceremony was the killing of the two pigs. This was done by Gidong. The pigs, whose feet were tied, were lying on the concrete base at the foot of the new oath stone. Using his spear Gidong pierced the heart of each pig in turn. Then the three *bobolian* dipped their hands in the fresh blood and smeared it on the *batu sumpah* (Fig. 17). Before expiring the pigs created quite a din. This feature is appreciated because it is considered a good omen in the performance of the ceremony—it will please the spirit in the stone.

Next Lisah, the priestess, killed the two fowl by slitting their throats and as they bled she drew the bleeding birds over the stone so that it was smeared with their blood. After that the buffalo which had been tied nearby had his legs tied and he was forced to lie on the ground. Four men held the animal still and a Haji Sermin cut its throat. Some of the blood was collected in a bowl by Chief Michael Undalag and then the three *bobolian* and the four representatives confirming the agreement smeared the blood on the stone with their hands. Then the four representatives, namely, Chief Michael Undalag, and representatives Stephen Umpuroh, Anahong Rangkap and Francis Amik, stood around the oath stone and, with hands still bloodstained, shook hands with one another as a sign of harmony among all the people of Mukim Apin-Apin.

Something unplanned in the programme then occurred, when an elderly man named Kundaya Burongot from Kampong Nantunan stood beside the stone and said that he wished to make a clarification regarding the oath pronounced by Lisah. He stated, "It is not proper to have an oath which applies to one side only. The migrants came to this area and wished to be friendly with the original inhabitants. Anyone who did evil, irrespective of whether he/she was a local or a migrant, would be punished by the spirit in the stone."

Some observations can be noted regarding the ceremony: firstly, both Yankim and Lisah addressed Kinaroingan (God) and not the spirit in the stone; and secondly, the language used by the *bobolian* was local Dusun and not the traditional language of *bobolian*. (Later I was informed that these *bobolian* were not experts but rather "part-time *bobolian*".)

The marking of the stone with the blood of slain animals reminds us of the action of the ancient Israelites on the night prior to their marching from slavery in Egypt, when they were instructed to slaughter a lamb and smear its blood on the doorframes of their houses, in order to escape a mortal plague.

A stone erected at Kampong Kaliangau in 1986

In Sabah political parties are relatively new and during the recent past electioneering activity has often been a very divisive agency amidst the traditional sombre and peaceful atmosphere of village settlements. Seemingly it was to heal the hurts of a bitter political campaign that a decision was made by the elders of Kampong Kaliangau near Menggatal to erect a stone as a sign of peace and harmony among the inhabitants. On that occasion the headman stated in his speech that the people had their hearts upset because of different political ideologies and that this was the time to forgive and forget. And on the same occasion local dignitary John Majimbun called on those present to respect and observe whatever oaths had been made during the planting of the stone so that everything would be in good order and all bad deeds be forgotten. He added that the stone was a symbol of brotherhood among the people.

However, there was a second reason for this traditional ceremony. From time to time, people from various parts of Sabah had settled in Kampong Kaliangau. According to an informant from the village the headman should not have allowed them to build houses in

the *kampung* reserve; he could have directed them to build on other land owned by the village. Since it was now too late to alter the situation, it was decided to hold this ceremony in order to integrate them fully into the village. For this purpose the settlers would promise to abide by the local customs. This is the function that is intended by a heading on the notice-board beside the stone, namely, "Official Opening of Village Residential Land".

Two local ritual specialists, Aki Borit Bin Jinol and Ampayak Binte Danson chanted traditional prayers and made offerings as part of the ceremony. A buffalo, which was purchased by means of collections and donations of the villagers, was slaughtered.

The stone at Kampong Kaliangau stands 1.2 m in height and has a cement footing around it. Cut into the stone are the date (June 29, 1986) and the words *batu asas*. *Asas* usually means "foundation" but here the best translation of *batu asas* would be "traditional stone". Beside the stone there is a short account in Malay of its history and purpose; a translation would read:

TRADITIONAL STONE

29th June, 1986

OFFICIAL OPENING OF VILLAGE RESIDENTIAL LAND
ERECTION AND INAUGURATION OF A TRADITIONAL STONE
PRAYERS BY A PRIEST AND PRIESTESS ACCORDING TO DUSUN TRADITION
WITH THE OBLIGATORY OFFERING OF A BUFFALO AS ATONEMENT (*Sogit*)

INAUGURATED BY: OKK JOHN MOJIMBUN
WITNESSED BY VILLAGE HEADMAN MAJABIN KUNIR,
PRIEST AND PRIESTESS AND INHABITANTS OF KAMPONG KALIANGAU.

MAY THE BONDS OF FRIENDSHIP LAST FOREVER.

It was during research into the purpose and significance of this oath stone made some nine years after its erection that an interesting item of information was offered gratuitously: it was stated that at the inauguration of such a stone long ago each man present came forward to take the oath individually and was handed a special sword or a *parang* by a priest or priestess; as he pronounced the oath, he drew the sword or *parang* across the stone. This is probably the most plausible explanation for the notches found on a number of stone monuments. However, the formation of the notches or nicks probably required more action or workmanship than merely drawing a sword or *parang* across the stone. It is possible that where the sword or *parang* made its initial mark a deeper nick was cut. (See notes under the *Sopihok* menhir, Chapter 1, and the menhir at Kampong Sukong, Chapter 4 for other explanations suggested to account for notches on stone monuments.)

OATH STONES ASSOCIATED WITH NATIVE COURTS

There were occasions in the past when a case in the Native Court could not be resolved because the two lines of evidence were contradictory; while it was evident that one of the parties must have been telling lies, it was impossible for the District Chief presiding as judge to determine which of the two parties was lying. Then both parties in the case proceeded to an oath stone usually located near the administrative offices of the town. There, a presiding elder would explain the procedure of the oath-taking. Each party would make a declaration in terms similar to the following: "I swear that what I claim is true and if I am wrong, I am willing to die or accept any other consequences." The person taking the oath would keep his right hand raised while pronouncing the oath. Another occasion when such an oath might be taken was when a suspicious husband or wife accused his/her partner of having an illicit relationship and demanded that she/he deny the fact with an oath in front of the oath stone.

In some localities, mostly coastal, there was an additional ceremony to the main oath-taking; this was probably introduced as a result of Chinese influence. When both parties had completed their oaths a white cockerel was slaughtered by having its throat cut and then each of the oath-taking parties drank a few drops of the blood of the cockerel.

The people believed that a spirit living in the stone would show by a sign which was the untruthful party and such a sign usually came in the form of a severe loss. In a case in Kuala Penyu related to me, one of the men who took such an oath died suddenly one week afterwards. It was a question of a claim to ownership of a buffalo. Experts can conjecture as to whether the strength of the belief could have such an effect on a guilty conscience as to cause death. The taking of such oaths was rare because the fear that accompanied such an ordeal often caused one of the parties to withdraw his evidence or forego his claim.

An account of an oath stone among the Murut people of Sapulut is provided by Tom and Barbara Harrison (1970: 132). According to them, the stone was said to be inhabited by the spirit of a Murut ancestor named Kelasan, and so the stone was known as *Aru Kelasan* (Fig. 18):

"When the Sapulut courthouse was built early in this century, the stone was moved out into the open on the hillside, thirty yards [27 m] away, close to the flagpole. Long before that it was used as an oath stone, as it still is. That is: oaths of honesty, *sumpah* (*ampator* locally) are taken on it.

"*Aru Kelasan* has been used for specific oath taking at least since Tunon, now 75, was a small boy, no doubt before. Kelasan himself was "generations" before Tunon. Native Chief Lindong regularly turns to it in court cases, when, as he puts it, one party or the other must by lying."

A clerk at the Native Court of Sapulut from 1985 to 1994 recalls that only once during that nine-year period did an oath ceremony take place at *Aru Kelasan*. In that case nothing



Fig. 18. The oath stone, *Aru Kelasan*, Sapulut.

happened to either of the two individuals who took the oath. The clerk said that oaths are no longer taken at the stone because "now there are many Christians in the area and Satan has left the stone".

According to Harrison & Harrison, *Aru Kelasan* had a diameter of 23 to 26 inches (58 to 66 cm) and its greatest height, including the section in the ground, was 10 inches (25 cm). In 1995, *Aru Kelasan* was resting on a square piece of concrete located 6 m in front of the Native Court. According to an inscription on the concrete the work of constructing the concrete base for the oath stone was carried out on 1 November, 1988. This stone is not a particularly hard type and, being exposed to the elements, it is weathering relatively fast.

The Oath Stone at Pensiangan

In Pensiangan, where the community consists almost entirely of Muruts, there is an oath stone associated with the Native Court House. The stone itself is not very imposing as it

stands only about 46 cm above ground. In the local Murut dialect the oath stone is also known as *Batu Intok Ampator*.

In order to examine the origin of this oath stone it is necessary to take a brief look at the recent history of the area. Japanese forces occupied Sabah from January, 1943 to August, 1945 and over two hundred Japanese were stationed in Pensiangan. The first British official to come to the area after the withdrawal of the Japanese was Lieutenant Hill. The centre of administration was at Kuala Sebangali, 8 km upriver, and not Pensiangan because the latter had been bombed by the allied forces. Lieutenant Hill arrived from Keningau accompanied by four policemen, one of whom was a sergeant named Lakai.

A man named Osman Pamiang was on duty here as a policeman under the Japanese administration. In 1935, at the age of twenty, he had joined the British North Borneo Police Force. He had come from Kampong Babayasing situated on the River Tagul between Pensiangan and Sebangali. When the main towns of Sabah were bombed by the Japanese and the British administration collapsed, Osman Pamiang returned to the Pensiangan area and was soon employed as a policeman by the Japanese.

Lieutenant Hill raised Osman to the rank of corporal and put him in charge of the area. One of the first duties demanded of him was to collect all the ammunition throughout the locality. This consisted of rifles, ammunition and hand-grenades that had been supplied to some local men to resist the Japanese. Hill also requested Corporal Osman to get a stone about 1.5 m long that could be used as an oath stone. The corporal searched but the best stone he could find was only about 0.6 m long; this was taken from the bed of the River Tagul.

Prior to 1946 there had never been an oath stone in Pensiangan. However, in disputes that could not be resolved, oaths were taken. The two disputants stood in an open area and the oaths were witnessed by the headman. A fowl was killed and its head was buried. The belief was that the person in the wrong would be punished by an evil spirit invoked through the head of the chicken.

It would seem that from his experience in other parts of Sabah, Hill wanted to make this practice more visible and solemn. For the inauguration of the oath stone, a great crowd had assembled. Police and messengers had been sent to call them to an assembly and some had come a day's journey.

There was a temporary court house in Sebangali. In front of it a place was prepared for the oath stone. The fowl to be slaughtered should be a cock and white in colour. In this case the cock was white and red and this was acceptable. A local headman named Biau Bin Likok held the fowl over the hole prepared for the stone and he and Hill together cut off its head and placed it in the earth. Then the stone was erected in position and the soil arranged around it. In conjunction with the inauguration of the oath stone, all the police present carrying rifles took part in a drill display and presented arms but no shots were fired.

Hill spoke to the assembly about the need to respect the laws of the country and he promised on behalf of the government to provide protection and safeguard the rights of the people. He pronounced the oath in both English and Malay and apologised that he could not speak Murut. Hill then dealt with an incident that had occurred towards the end of the war. An allied aeroplane had crash-landed on the bank of Sungai Sibaban, a small tributary of the River Talangkai, some kilometers up-river from Sapulut. A survivor from the crash was taken by a man from a nearby village to the police station in Sapulut where there was a single policeman. A number of people gathered and it is not clear what motivated them—it may have been fear of the Japanese who were still in control—but the outcome was that the crash-victim was taken down to the area beside the river and shot by the policeman. Hill said that if the people had protected the allied soldier, they would have received rewards. The policeman who had carried out the execution was present at the inauguration of the oath stone. According to Osman, Hill knew who had shot the soldier; he did not take any action against the policeman but included the incident in his oath before the stone. During his two-day visit, Hill gave the Murut policemen a choice of continuing in the service of the new government or of quitting the force. Some decided to withdraw and among them was the man who had shot the soldier. It is said that one month later the individual died; it was a natural death but the real cause was not known because there was no hospital or medical personnel in the area. Whether this death was a coincidence or not it certainly reinforced the belief of the people in the power of the spirit in the stone to wreak vengeance.



Fig. 19. The Native Chief of Pensiangan, Sibawon, beside the oath stone in its new setting to which it was transferred in 1992. (Photo: Brother Herbertus)

It was after the stone had been set in position that the inscription was cut on it. This was done by Sergeant Lakai using a hammer and chisel. After about six months, when new buildings had been erected in Pensiangan, the oath stone made the 8-km journey down-river and was installed in front of the newly-constructed court house. This was carried out by Corporal Osman Pamiang. He brought the skull of the chicken and placed it underneath the oath stone at its installation in Pensiangan.

Up to 1992 the oath stone stood on the edge of the Town Padang in front of the Native Court House. In 1986 a new Court House was built in a different location and the old Court House was demolished leaving only the concrete floor. During the years following 1986 whenever there was a case that required an oath at the stone, the parties involved in the case and the officials went to the oath stone. In 1992 the *batu sumpah* was transferred from its old site to a location in front of the present Native Court building (Fig. 19). It was the idea of the local Native Chief that

the oath stone should be more conspicuous and for this purpose a large barrel was embedded in the ground, filled with earth and the stone placed standing in the earth in the barrel. To provide the stone with greater status and as a form of decoration the barrel was painted; the colours used—blue and white—do not have special significance. At the same time it was decided to make the inscription on the stone more legible: the front part of the stone was painted white and the letters and digits of the inscription were overlaid with a dark-coloured paint.

The transfer of the oath stone was carried out in an official manner in the presence of the Native Chief and Headmen of the area. Underneath the stone were placed the head of a fowl and a twenty-cent coin. According to the Native Chief, Sibawon, the head of the chicken signifies that the person who knowingly takes a false oath will "be eaten", that is, will suffer great loss; the only explanation offered for the twenty-cent coin was that this was the custom (*adat*) of the community in Pensiangan.

STONE SYMBOLS OF ALLEGIANCE

In 1882 a Ranau group in the area of the Kegibangan River swore allegiance to the government of the Chartered Company which was represented on this occasion by Mr. Frank Hatton. An account of the event is recorded in his diary (Rutter 1929: 239–240) but only a brief reference to the stone used in the ceremony is given as, obviously, he was more interested in other aspects of the ritualistic event:

"The old men and all the tribe having assembled, the ceremonies began. First the jungle was cleared for about twenty yards, and then a hole dug about a foot deep, in which was placed a large water jar. In this country these jars are of enormous value, \$30, \$40, and even \$100 worth of gutta being given for a single jar. The bottom of the jar in question was knocked out, so as to render it useless in future. The clay taken out to make the hole was thrown into the jar, and now the old men commenced declaiming, 'Oh Kinaringan, hear us' —a loud cry to Kinaringan. The sound echoed away down the valleys, and as it died a stone was placed near the jar. Then for half an hour, the old men declared that by fire (which was represented by a burning stick), by water (which was brought in a bamboo and poured into the jar), and earth, that they would be true to all white men. A *sumptitan* (blowpipe) was then fetched, and an arrow shot into the air to summon Kinaringan. We now placed our four guns, which were all the arms my party of eight mustered, on the mouth of the jar, and each put a hand in and took a little clay out and put it away. Finally several volleys were shot over the place and the ceremony terminated."

Mr. Hatton was involved in a similar oath of allegiance a few days previously but in his account of that event there is no reference to a stone being erected.

A District Officer named Charles Bruce wrote about his experiences in administration during the period following the defeat of Mat Salleh. In describing a peace-making ceremony which involved the "planting of a stone", he wrote (Bruce 1924: 111): "This archaic ceremony was always 'featured' whenever a surrender, either of a village or an individual, took place. The material required consisted of a buffalo, a suitable cylindrical



Fig. 20. The Oath Stone of Allegiance in Keningau.

river-stone about two feet long and six or so inches in diameter, some salt and some rice." Bruce then went on to describe the promises made by both parties.

A more recent oath stone of allegiance can be seen in front of the main entrance to the mini-secretariat in Keningau (Fig. 20). It is embedded in a three-tiered concrete pedestal and the exposed part of the stone stands 1.64 m high. It has a breadth of 1.05 m at its widest part, and has a thickness of 33 cm. One face of the stone is fairly flat and at this part a metal plaque measuring 76 cm by 53 cm is fastened to the stone. An inscription on the plaque is in the Malay language and is as follows:

BATU SUMPAH PERINGATAN
Mengikut Perlembagaan

1. Ugama bebas dalam Sabah
2. Tanah² dalam Sabah dikuasa oleh Kerajaan Sabah
3. Adat Istiadat anak rayat Sabah dihormati dan dipelihara oleh Kerajaan

Sabalek pula Rayat² Sabah di-dalam Interior bersumpah ta'at setia kepada Kerajaan Malaysia

(Translation)

Memorial Oath Stone
in accordance with the Constitution

1. Freedom of Religion in Sabah
2. The land of Sabah to be controlled by the Sabah Government
3. The Adat of the people of Sabah to be respected and guarded by the Government

In return the Sabah people of the Interior swear loyalty to the Government of Malaysia

This *batu sumpah* was erected and officially inaugurated near the former District Office in Keningau on 31st August, 1964. The District Officer of Keningau at that time (Lind 1991: 3) provides the background explanation to the decision to erect this oath stone:

"When former Malaysian Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman made the announcement over Radio Malaya sometime in 1962, about the proposal to form a Federation of Malaysia, the people of Sabah were reluctant to join as they were unfamiliar with the concept of Federation.

However, after many meetings and discussions held between the various political and community groups and the representatives of the Malayan government, the people of Sabah finally agreed to the formation of the Federation of Malaysia, with Sabah as one of the component states in the Federation with certain conditions, for example, the 20 points. The native people in the Interior Residency, in addition to the 20 Points, wanted some safeguards to be added in the form of the traditional Oath Stone.

Many of them were unfamiliar with the idea of a written constitution. Therefore, the Oath Stone was decided upon to satisfy their need for tangible proof of the promises in relation to the establishment of the Federation.

The Oath Stone was very significant to the local natives, because it gave them an assurance that their rights, customs and history would be preserved and protected."

An extensive search for a suitable stone was made. The one finally selected was taken from the Pegalan River in the vicinity of Senagang, a small village midway along the road between Keningau and Tenom. Lind (1991: 3) recorded: "The District Chiefs agreed on the wording for the inscription on the plaque. The words were inscribed in bronze by Thornycraft Shipyard in Singapore."

Concerning the representatives involved, the solemnising ceremony and the significance of the oath stone, the former District Officer states (Lind 1991: 3):

"Since the locals requested the unveiling of the plaque to be performed in the presence of either the then Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman or his deputy, there was some concern when word was received that neither could attend the ceremony.

However, the then Federal Minister of Labour, the late Tan Sri V. Manickavasagam (then Mr) was delegated the task of officiating at the ceremony.

According to local customs and beliefs, one of the spiritual leaders performed the brief solemn ceremony which involved the sacrificing of a cockerel. The bird's blood was sprinkled over the Oath Stone to bless and affirm the power of the Oath Stone.

This Oath Stone is of considerable importance to the Natives of the Interior Residency in particular and to the people of Sabah in general.

The late OKK Sedomon Gusanad and the late OKK Angian Andulag were the initiators of the setting up of the Oath Stone. As local leaders, they represented the wishes of the native people of the Interior Residency."

In an account of the event in a local newspaper it was reported (Sabah Times, 3 Sept. 1964: 10):

"The Federal Minister of Labour, Enche V. Manickavasagam officially unveiled the Memorial Oath Stone at Keningau on Malaysia Day (August 31) after a brief ceremony performed by the native people who called upon the gods to witness the occasion... The Oath Stone is to commemorate the setting up of Malaysia and was originated because the illiterate people of Sabah wanted assurances over the 20 points in the Constitution. Dato

Angian bin Andulag, PDK, gave much of his energy towards the erection of the Oath Stone."

In 1981 plans were being prepared for the construction of a proposed dual-carriageway in Keningau and the Public Works Department requested that the *batu sumpah* be transferred to another site. The District Chief pointed out that this could not be done because such an action could bring punishment from the spirit of the stone on the representatives of the people who had taken the oath or some form of misfortune upon all the people of the area, and it was suggested that the plans for the new highway should be altered so as not to disturb the oath stone. When it was pointed out that it was impossible to alter the road-plan, much negotiation took place. Eventually it was agreed that a ceremony could be held to pacify the spirit of the stone for its transference to a new location and this was done in late 1982. An outlay of Malaysian Ringgit 5000 was agreed to by the government to cover the expenditure of the ceremony. The main items requested for the ritual were a three-year-old buffalo, three pigs and four chickens. Two *bobolian* were employed and received Malaysian Ringgit 150 each for their services. A large part of the sum of Malaysian Ringgit 5000 was spent on food and refreshments for the celebration which followed the transferring ceremony.

In January, 1994 this stone was in the news again, involving a 29-year-old man accused before the Native Court of having made an 18-year-old girl pregnant about a year previously. When the man demanded to prove his innocence by taking an oath before the oath stone, the court decided to suspend judgement on the case. The swearing ceremony was witnessed by the three Native Chiefs presiding over the court on that occasion and a number of other people were also present. More than a year later no catastrophe had overtaken the accused and it seemed that the case was closed.

It is possible to find a parallel in ancient history to this type of oath stone of allegiance found in Sabah, as when the biblical Joshua made a stone monument as a witness that the people had promised to perform their duties to God.

GUARDIAN STONES: TINGOLIG

GUARDIAN STONES DESCRIBED BY I.H.N. EVANS

In the past guardian stones were extensively in use in Sabah. These stones were erected at the entrances to a village or at the front and at the rear of a house and were endowed with spirits that would fight against spirits of disease that might approach the village or house. Evans (1953: 149) states: "The guardian stones protecting up-country villages are called *ponungolig do pomogunan*, *ponungolig* being derived from *tolig*, one word for a wall, especially up-country, the walls, made of heaped stones, of fish-traps in the river. *Ponungolig do pomogunan* may be translated 'protective walling of the territory', for each up-country Dusun village has its own territory (*pomogunan*) recognised, by custom, outside which its inhabitants do not plant rice—mostly shifting hill cultivation."

The same author (Evans 1953: 155) has the following to say regarding the guardian stones that are put in place to protect houses from the spirits of sickness:

"At Tambatun there are not only *ponungolig do pomogunan* but *ponungolig do walai*, 'house guardian walls', as well. These are small protective stones, two in number, set up when a house is built. They are not usually visible later on, having become buried, or got knocked down by pigs, but can be re-erected, if necessary, should epidemic disease threaten the village. Unkog, however, being something of a priest, kept his *ponungolig* in evidence and had planted some ornamental shrubs, crotons, round them. The *ponungolig* consisted of a wooden spear, a stone, three sticks, one being forked and two little wooden figures of men, very roughly carved.

According to Langgitoi, priestess of Kahung Saraiyoh, the *ponungolig do walai*, two in number, are set up, one in front of the house, one behind it. They are only 'awakened' if epidemic disease comes near, and nobody bothers about them subsequently. *Tempagar*, friendly spirits 'fencing' (*pagar*, 'fence') the house are in the *ponungolig* and there is a rite called *Monungolig* that is used when they are to be awakened. If somebody builds a new house near an old one, the people of the latter awaken their *ponungolig*."

While discussing this topic with a friend from the Patau area, he informed me of the existence of such stones in his area. Once as a small boy he was playing near the house of a companion. He happened to kick a stone which to him seemed to have no significance. But his friend was quite concerned and said that his father would be very angry if anyone disturbed the stone. In the Patau area such guardian stones are known as *pagon*. Another friend suggested that the old custom of guardian stones of the house would probably explain the fact that many families on becoming Christian, particularly in the 1950's, erected a cross at the front and also at the rear of their houses.

Guardian stones were usually small, being only about 15 cm high; but Evans noted that one such guardian stone was "about four feet high [i.e., 1.2 m]."

In the past the concept of guardian stones existed in many parts of Southeast Asia. Perry (1918: 63) stated:

"The *pargantaho* of the Olo Ngadju are the residences of guardian spirits. Formerly they were bathed with the blood of human sacrifice before being set in place, and on setting out to fight warriors broke an egg against them. On their return home, the blood and the head of the slain enemy were brought to the stone, and the heads were placed in a hut nearby. The holy stones of the Kenyah are also residences of guardian spirits. The holy stones of the villages of east Nias are evidently the abodes of guardian spirits, for they are placed there in order that the inhabitants of the village may be at unity. The offering-stone upon which the priest of the Mao Naga pours beer when he performs a rite, also appears to be of this nature. The Mao and Maikel Naga have stones to which heads taken on raids are shown: these stones resemble...the *pargantaho* of the Olo Ngadju of Borneo."

TWO TINGOLIG IN TAMBUNAN

There is a picturesque pair of small hills in the centre of a rice-growing valley which includes Kampong Piasau, Kampong Lotud and Kampong Sukong in Tambunan. On the lower hill there is a *balai raya* (community centre) and a small rice mill. The top of the higher hill is covered with short grass and was formerly used as a burial ground. On the highest point there is a menhir (Fig. 21) which has a height of 1.09 m, a breadth of 52.1 cm and a width of 33 cm. This menhir is locally known as a *tingolig*. About a kilometer away beside the road between this point and Kampong Lotud there is another menhir which is also known as a *tingolig*.

According to an informant from the area *tingolig* means "helper". He explained that in the old days inter-village warfare was common. This took the form of head-hunting when the warriors of one village killed one or more persons in a rival village and took home the heads of those killed to be hung up and displayed as trophies of bravery. The relatives of the victims would later retaliate and so the feuding became a constant practice. In an effort to put an end to this unhappy state of existence and as a form of protection, the people of this area erected a large stone. To solemnize the event a special ceremony was held. Several priestesses attended and chanted special prayers. A buffalo, a pig and several chickens were slaughtered at the spot as offerings to the spirit of the stone. Two pairs of human eyes—one pair from a man and the other from a woman—taken from their enemies were also offered. Some of the blood of the buffalo, pig and chickens and the two pairs of human eyes were put in a jar which was inserted to half its depth in the ground beside the stone. The jar can no longer be seen because it has been broken.

The informant added that during the years following the erection of the menhir the spirit living in it was very powerful and it was a great benefit to the people living nearby. However, they had to be very alert to the movements of their enemies; if they were attacked, they ran to the stone named *tingolig* and shouted for help. When the spirit in the

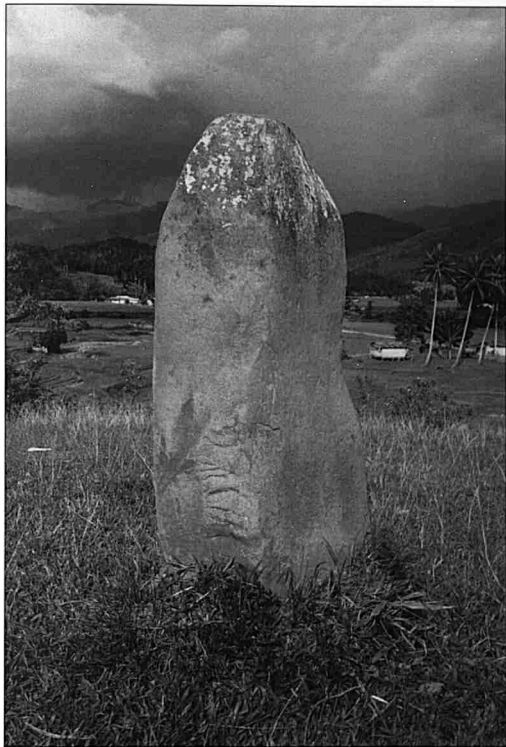


Fig. 21. A *tingolig* near Kampong Piasau, Tambunan.

stone heard the cries for help it gave out a tremendous scream in return. On hearing such a fearful sound the enemies retreated because they thought that powerful friends of the attacked were coming to assist them. Even if the attackers tried to pursue the victims past the stone, invisible hands fought them back.

There are examples of legendary speaking stones in other cultures. An 18-metre-high statue in Luxor, Egypt known as one of the Colossi of Memnon and dating from the fourteenth century B.C. emitted sounds that were believed to be the voice of a god and thought to have been an oracle. On a mound at Tara in Ireland stands a stone which dates from neolithic times. It is known as *Lia Fáil* or the Stone of Destiny. According to legend a new king was installed on or beside this stone. If the new king was the genuine occupant of the throne, *Lia Fáil* cried out to voice its approval. A stone referred to as the Stone of Help was associated in the time of Samuel with the defeat of the Philistines at Mizpah when they were demoralised by a loud voice that thundered loudly in their midst.

BATU SINALUANG (STONES THAT SCARE AWAY ILLNESS)

Another form of guardian stone, though scarcely deserving of being considered a monument, is worth recording here. In a number of homes in the Pensiangan area, it is still possible to see a small stone suspended from the door lintel (Fig. 22 and Fig. 23). The stone is usually about the size of an egg and has a smooth surface. The most unusual feature about the stone is that it has a small hole through it. A string or wire or rattan is passed through this hole for the purpose of hanging it. The stone hangs 15 cm to 30 cm

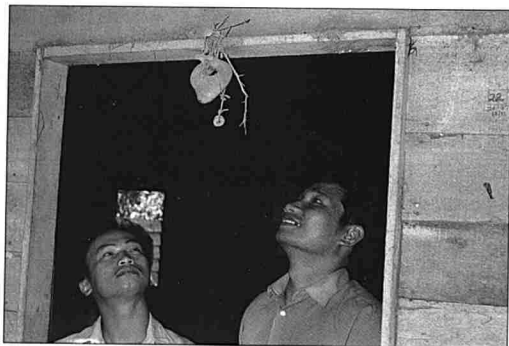


Fig. 22. A *batu sinaluang* in Tetagas, Nabawan.

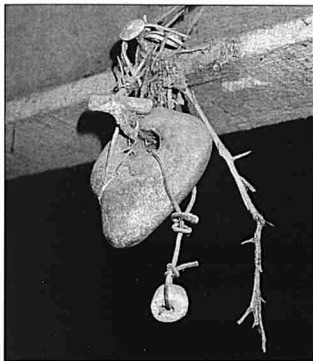


Fig. 23. The same *batu sinaluang* shown in Fig. 22; note the hole through the stone.

below the door lintel. It is believed that if this stone is obtained in the proper way and suspended in the traditional manner, it will prevent illness from affecting the members of the household and also ensure that the home will not be destroyed by fire.

The hole in the stone is natural. When an elderly woman was asked if the hole in the stone was caused by nature or was man-made, she answered with surprise, "How could a person make a hole like that in a stone!" It must be remembered that up to very recent times, modern mechanical implements were rarely used in this area. And another senior citizen remarked, "Such stones are not found near the sea, right?"

How is such a guardian stone obtained? It cannot be bought. A person does not go on his own initiative to search for such a stone. It is said that a person is told in a dream where such a stone is; the individual is given a vision of the stone and its location. Then the next day or soon afterwards the person goes and gets the stone. Its location is usually in the hills or mountains and, surprisingly, less frequently near a river. Again when asked if the person who saw the stone in a dream could request another person to go and collect it, an elderly woman replied with another question, "How could another person know where to find it?"

In the Murut dialect of Pensiangan such a stone is generally known as *batu sinaluang*, *luang* meaning "hole". But some gave its name as *batu hitu pangilala ra aruol* which means "a stone to scare away illness". It is also believed that the *batu sinaluang* will preserve the house against destruction by fire. To prove this point one informant gave an example of a family that went off to work at their hill padi, leaving behind a couple of young children whose playing with embers set fire to the kitchen. When the adult members of the family returned they were surprised to see that the kitchen which was an annexe to the main building and connected by a wooden passage was the only portion of the house damaged by fire.

It is believed that a guardian spirit resides in the *batu sinaluang*. The stone is installed without any special ceremony. Moreover, it is not necessary to make any offerings to this

guardian spirit or to pay it any special respect. If a person builds or acquires a new house, he can bring the guardian stone with him and suspend it in the usual way. Also if a person lives in a rented house or if an employee stays in staff quarters, he can bring his *batu sinaluang* with him.

Similar talismanic stones can be met with in other parts of the world. The most powerful talismanic object in England is said to be the Stone of Scone. This stone, weighing about 200 kilograms, is built into the coronation chair in Westminster Abbey, London. Every English monarch since the thirteenth century has been crowned on this stone. Prior to that it was used for the enthronement of kings of Scotland. There are amazing stories that trace the stone's history and some even say that this was the stone on which Jacob rested his head when he witnessed in a dream a vision of a great ladder connecting earth to heaven.

BURIAL STONES

CEMETERY STONES AT KAMPONG SUROMBOTON, TENGHILAN

H.G. Keith (1947) gave an account of "an excellent series of cromlechs" he had come across in 1937 close to the village of Suromboton, Tenghilan. He used the term "cromlech" in the sense of W.J. Perry (1918) and T.E. Peet (1912). When a person of Kampong Suromboton was buried a wooden grave-house was built over the grave (Fig. 24) and a number of upright stones were put standing around the house and partially leaning against it. The following observations were made by H.G. Keith: "The Tenghilan Dusun cromlechs at Kampong Sarambutan [*sic!*] do not fall precisely into any one of the well-defined types given by Perry (1918) and except for those stones that surround the grave-houses they do not always mark out a definite space and appear rather to be in the form of grave markers.



Fig. 24. Some of the 39 grave-houses (*kalabangan*) in the burial ground at Kampong Suromboton in 1990.

Those stones that surround the grave-houses obviously would, after the houses had rotted and fallen in, enclose rectangular spaces only, because the grave-houses themselves are rectangular. Some of the stones, particularly the irregular slab-shaped pieces, that surround the grave-houses are not planted firmly in the ground but merely rest upon the surface and are supported by the sides of the grave-houses in an upright position. As a grave-house rots away many of these unplanted stone slabs fall over.

The Tenghilan Dusun cromlechs at Kampong Sarambutan are not carved in any way and are similar generally to the 'upright stones' in Sumatra as illustrated by van der Hoop c. 1932."

In fact, not only the people of Kampong Suromboton, but also the people in other villages in the district, had the custom of building grave-houses and then erecting stones around them (Fig. 25). At the present time the practice is still found but not in all cases of burial. The custom of building grave-houses is widespread in Sabah, not only among the Kadazan/ Dusun but also among the Muruts. According to an informant from Tenghilan

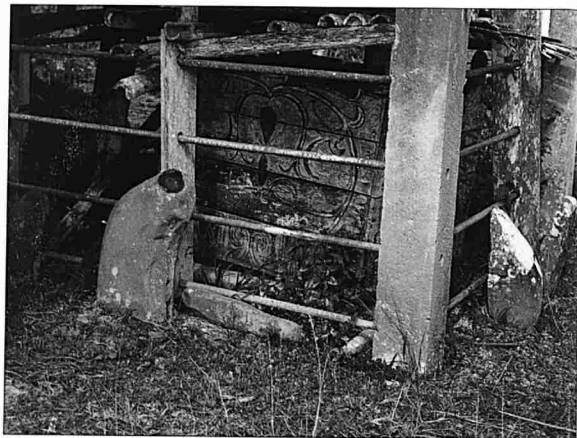


Fig. 25. The *kalabangan* over the grave of Linka (buried 1969) stands on four concrete and four wooden supports and is enclosed with metal piping. Stones known as *tulang mondou* have been placed around the grave.

the name of the deceased person was written on one of the stones; it was painted on or cut in the stone by using a hammer and chisel. However, the stones I examined in 1990 had no names visible. The stones are said to stand as a sign that there is a grave there and these stones endure long after the grave-house has collapsed and disappeared. It is a very serious matter if someone should dig or begin to dig a grave where a person had already been buried no matter how long ago. In this district, this fault would have to be atoned for by paying a *sogit* (penalty) of one buffalo.

It may be of interest to record here a widespread custom with regard to the digging of a grave. It may happen that a grave is dug or partially dug and then a decision is made to select another site for the grave. I knew of a case where a family decided to bury on their own property the old man of the family who had died. But the spot chosen was near the edge of the property and close to the houses of some neighbours. When the neighbours saw where the grave was being dug, they protested. As a result another site was chosen. But according to custom a trunk of a banana tree was placed in the unused grave before it was filled in.

The stones that were erected at the graves near Kampong Suromboton were obtained from the river or from the nearby jungle. Once in place these stones were known as *tulung mondou* in the Dusun dialect of Tenghilan. *Tulung* means "stone", and *mondou* means "a lion". There were no specific size requirements for these stones; the main criteria were that the stone be elongated in shape and capable of being put standing. It would never be permissible to take one or more stones from an old grave-site for use at a new grave.

An informant from Tenghilan was unaware of a tradition found in other parts of Sabah related to the selection of stones as grave markers: when a man, with a few companions, goes to the river to get a suitable stone to serve as a grave marker, he must take the first suitable stone he sees; he cannot go about searching far and wide for a specially attractive stone. It is still believed by some that if this tradition is not adhered to, another death in the family will soon follow. This tradition may help to explain the lack of uniformity in size and shape of the grave stones seen in some burial grounds.

The stone formations at the burial ground near Kampong Suromboton described by H.G. Keith in 1947 can be seen to the present day. The number of standing stones is impressive. The tallest stone is 1.57 m high. Two others among the larger stones measure 1.14 m and 1.09 m in height. There are about twenty grave-houses in a reasonably good state of preservation. One of them is built on concrete pillars and around it are eleven standing stones. The grave is the burial place of a Christian named Linka who died on 22 September, 1969.

GIN TUTUN DO MOHOING:

A STONE ERECTED TO THE MEMORY OF A CHILDLESS COUPLE

In Kampong Kandazon in Penampang District there is a stone monument erected on a hillock called Dazan beside the Petagas River and some 9 m above the level of the river.

The stone is known as *Gintutun Do Mohoing* (Fig. 26). The top section of the stone, 61 cm in length, is broken off and in 1974 was lying beside the main piece. The height of the standing section above the ground is 1.98 m; the menhir was, therefore, 2.6 m high formerly. About 183 m away there is a menhir known as *Sinogindai* which is 2.9 m high and about 1 km away in the opposite direction is the menhir *Gunsolong* which is 3 m high. But these two latter stones were erected at the intersection of bunds of padi-fields.

Living across the road from *Gintutun Do Mohoing* is a man named Gundohing Dousia Moujing, who is well-versed in native culture and is the son of former famous *bobohizan* (priestess) Bianty Gindal. It was an ancestor of this family who erected the monument to the memory of his brother, who had been village Headman, and to his sister-in-law. The man commemorated by the stone was named Tuza'ai and his wife's name was Sunduai. They died without leaving any children and were buried on the hillock named Dazan. The name of the menhir—*Gintutun Do Mohoing*—is said to mean "commemoration of people who die without children".

The stone was obtained on Pulau Sulug and erected beside the graves. Pulau Sulug is about 3 km from the mouth of the Petagas River and the grave-site is about 7 km upriver from the sea by the original river course. The top part of 61 cm was broken off when a tree fell across it during a storm. There is no evidence of the tree now. No particular significance is attached to the fact that the stone was broken.

According to local tradition, the hillock where the menhir now stands was once used as an ancient burial ground. In those days people made use of a large jar, the top being covered with a brass gong, to bury their dead. In 1978 the hillock was levelled by bulldozer to prepare a site for a house but the stone was not disturbed. When the area was bulldozed, there were many pieces of broken jars noticeable but no bones. At the west side of the hillock, facing a small padi-field, there remains a big jar still partially buried; a small part of it was exposed to the surface by the bulldozing work. However, nobody can say whether the jar is still intact for nobody dares to approach and examine it. According to Gundohing Dousia the remains of his great-great-grandmother were placed inside that jar.



Fig. 26. Blood is poured on the menhir *Gintutun Do Mohoing* during a 1974 *magang* ceremony.

Though the menhir, *Gintutan Do Mohoing*, is said to have been erected to commemorate a husband and wife who died childless, it is believed that the stone has fulfilled other functions also. In the ancient days, especially in the time of the hero Monsopiad, the custom was that when the local warriors returned from a successful head-hunting expedition bamboo poles were erected around the menhir and heads taken from the enemy were hung on the bamboo structure known as a *bangkaha*. When the skin, flesh and hair had decayed and fallen away, a ceremony was held to carry each skull to the home of the victor where it was installed.

It is said that a memorable ceremony was held at this menhir to seal an agreement of peace between the people of Kandazan and the people of Kurai who had been at enmity for many generations. According to oral tradition, a man was sacrificed as the central event and symbol of agreement. The sacrificial victim is said to have been a man named Binut who was from Tuaran. He was tied to the stone and each person—man, woman and child—from both villages made a cut on Binut's body until he died from pain and loss of blood.

During a seven-day *magang* ceremony held at the home of Gundohing Dousia in 1974 both this menhir and the menhir *Sinogindai* were visited by a group of people led by seven priestesses (Fig. 27). Chants were recited to the spirit believed to be living in each stone; a man climbed on each menhir and poured the blood of a pig on it (Fig. 28); then to each stone were fastened two pieces of bamboo to which white cloth and *hisad* (the leaf of a *Licuala* palm) were attached. In coming down from the stone, the man who had poured the blood was not permitted to climb down lest he be harmed by the spirit while doing so; instead he had to make a clean jump from the top of the stone to the ground.

Fig. 27. Ceremony around the menhir *Sinogindai* in Kampong Kandazan, 1974.



THE MENHIR AT KAMPONG SUKONG, TAMBUNAN

There is a menhir at Kampong Sukong, Tambunan (Fig. 29) which is of interest because of markings etched on it. This stone was erected at the grave of a man named Daratau Bin Dolinting, who is said to have lived to possibly a hundred. (The year of his death has been forgotten but his grand-daughter, Tubong was 80 years old in 1991 when she was living at Kampong Korombunai, Tuaran.) In 1987 the menhir was lying flat because a couple of years previously it was knocked down and pushed aside by a bulldozer during road construction.

The stone had been erected beside the grave of Daratau by his sons and relatives. The stone was obtained from a nearby stream known as Tompokonin. Details of the menhir are as follows: length 1.17 m; width 26.7 cm; breadth 20.3 cm; and marked by at least 31 notches.

Small notches have been cut into the stone and it is said that each notch represents a man who attended the ceremony of erecting the memorial. This event took place on the seventh day after the death of Daratau. In those days, it was the custom that women and children did not go to the grave to attend such a function. If the story of the origin of the notches is true, then at least 31 men were involved with its erection. However, some descendants of Daratau who live nearby were unaware of any other example of such marking on burial stones.

Fig. 28. Willie Dohuyu, pouring blood on the menhir *Sinogindai* in a 1974 ceremony, had to make a clean jump some 3 m to the ground afterwards, in accordance with taboo.



MEMORIAL STONE FOR A PERSON BURIED FAR FROM HOME

In the past, prior to the introduction of modern means of communication and transport, people who died far away from home could not be taken back to their village for burial. Examples of this would be the cases of men employed in the police force or of men

working in timber camps on the east coast. In such an instance a memorial service would be held at his home and a stone would be erected on his land or near his family house.



Fig. 29. (Left) Menhir erected to the memory of Daratau Bin Dolinting at Kampong Sukong, Tambunan.



Fig. 30. (Right) Of the menhirs still standing in 1995 the tallest seen is 3.56 m high. It is located on a hillock used as a burial ground at Buit Hill, Putatan. Its origin is uncertain but a local resident, Limiti Miadi, believes that it was erected to the memory of a *bobohizan* (priestess) who died without children. The local people generally believe that this menhir is a "living stone"—that it is increasing in size. The presence of a few sets of 4-digit numbers scratched on its surface indicates that some people seek assistance here for success in the lottery.

In the Kampong Nodu area in Tambunan there are at least two examples of this nature. In one case (Fig. 31), beside the main stone in the padi-field there are two smaller ones. One source said that the purpose of the two smaller stones was to show that the deceased had children, not necessarily two but a number of children. There was no attempt to mark the memorial stone with any form of name or title.

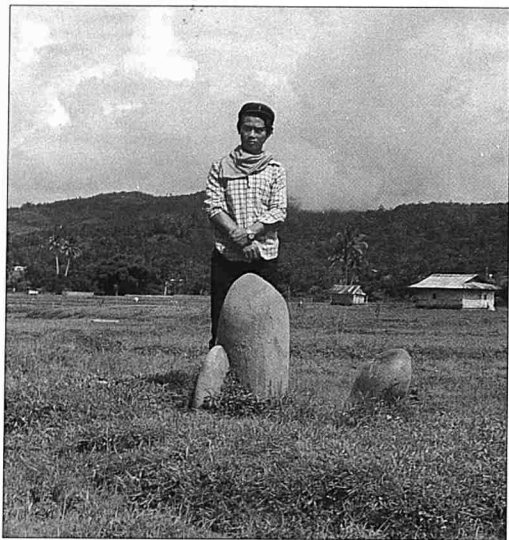


Fig. 31. Memorial stone for a person buried far from home.

STONES COMMEMORATING LEGENDARY FIGURES

BATU BAJAU

Batu Bajau is a locality in the south of the Tambunan plain. The area was named after a stone (Fig. 32) which is standing in a wooded area to the east of the new Tambunan Golf Course and overlooking the Pegalan River. This menhir is the tallest in Tambunan District and its dimensions are: height 2.34 m; breadth 66 cm; and thickness 33 cm.

The legend associated with this menhir is widely known in the Tambunan area, though there are minor variations in detail. Long ago there lived here in the locality of Kampong Solibug a man of enormous size and strength named Bajau. He was a Dusun and had no connection with the Bajau people found along the coasts of Sabah. One of the main contributions of Bajau to the people of Solibug was the help he provided in catching fish.

When they wanted fish they would ask Bajau to lie across the Pegalan River. His body was so large that it would block the flow of water. Then his neighbours would collect the fish in the dry river-bed downstream from where he was lying. When they had taken enough fish Bajau returned with them to the village.

According to one version of the story the stone that bears his name was in the river. Some people had tried to lift that stone but all had failed. Not so Bajau; he took the stone under his armpit and carried it to the village. In another version it is said that each time the villagers went fishing in the river, Bajau carried the stone with him and used it together with his body to form a temporary dam. On returning to the village he carried the stone home again.

But, as often happens, success breeds jealousy. The people inhabiting the hilly interior area across the river, known to some as the Tasapang and to others as the Koriou, became so jealous of the people of Solibug that they planned against Bajau. A number of them hid near the river with blowpipes and poisoned darts.



Fig. 32. Batu Bajau in Tambunan.

While Bajau was lying across the river and his friends were busy collecting fish, the Tasapang men shot the poisoned darts at their victim. Bajau took little notice because to him it seemed that the annoyance he felt was caused by insect bites. As usual Bajau carried the stone back to the village, but when he reached his house he placed the stone in an upright position, lay down and breathed his last. The poison had taken its effect.

After the burial of Bajau the Tasapang and Koriou people did not cease to harass the villagers of Solibug. As a result a decision was made to move from there to a new location in the south near Keningau. Since it was not possible to carry with them heavy and bulky articles, it was decided to hide them in the earth. It is a local belief that treasures in the form of ancient gongs, brassware and valued articles of inheritance still lie buried in the Batu Bajau area. The villagers were filled with sadness to be leaving their village and *moreso* since they felt it necessary to set fire to their former homes. Since then the place has been deserted; the area is overgrown and the only sign of former habitation among the trees is the stone erected by Bajau before he died.

In an account of Batu Bajau written by a student from the area (Insing 1971: 49) we get an impression of the awe in which this stone was held:

"Naturally this stone has great superstitious meaning to many people. It was thought the evil spirits guarding this stone or living in it would make anybody who dared to disturb them fall ill. Not long ago these evil spirits were very cruel and hostile to passersby. Anyone coming near this stone wearing old clothes would fall ill immediately, and would even die in some cases. The people feared this stone so much that they would either wear new clothes or they would try to avoid passing by this stone as much as possible. All this was done to please the spirits living in or near Batu Bajau."

BATU BOGU

A menhir that carries a story of origin similar to that of *Batu Bajau* is one to be seen near Kampong Kepayan Baru overlooking the Pegalan River and a few miles from Apin-Apin. This stone (Fig. 33) is very symmetrically shaped and its smooth, even surface is obviously the result of long erosion in the nearby river. It stands among fruit and cocoa trees in a well-tended orchard owned by a man named Jawi. This menhir, known locally as *Batu Bogu*, is 1.68 m tall and at mid-height has a circumference 1.32 m. Sixty cm away from the foot of the large menhir there is a small stone standing 46 cm high. What is both unusual and interesting is the presence of a number of other stones of various characteristics close to the *Batu Bogu*. One has the appearance of a piece of wood, whitish in colour. Another stone resembles a stone set inside a coconut shell and its upper part is shaped like the mouth of a jar (Fig. 34). Both of these are probably fossils. Another stone there looks like a lump of slag.

Jawi left his native Tambunan in the 1950's and came to settle in this area. His place near Kampong Kepayan Baru was overgrown with jungle. People were afraid to go near the area because of fear of the powerful spirit that lived in *Batu Bogu*. It was said that anyone who passed near the stone became sick. If one attempted to cut down trees in the vicinity,



Fig. 33. (Left) Batu Bogu, with various other stone pieces around its base.

Fig. 34. (Below) One of the curious stones at the base of Batu Bogu: shaped like a stone set within a coconut shell.



one would be risking one's life. In spite of the general fear people had of the area, Jawi began to slowly cut down some trees and gradually cleared the area where the stone is situated and, to the surprise of everybody, he felt no adverse effects.

According to one story that Jawi has heard, this *Batu Bogu* was erected by the original inhabitants of this area before the British came to Sabah in memory of one of their members, Rumahau, who was renowned for his extraordinary size and strength. Now there are no more of these people and all of the present inhabitants are migrants to the area. Rumahau was as tall as a big tree and could catch monkeys in the trees with his hands only. He had seven wives and when it rained they were able to take shelter under his chin, he was that big.

A younger brother was jealous of all the advantages Rumahau enjoyed from his great size and strength and plotted the death of Rumahau. When ordinary people constructed a dam or a weir in a river to control the direction and flow of water in order to catch fish, they used earth among the stones. Rumahau did not use earth. Sometimes he lay on the riverbed and when his huge body had stopped the flow of water, he asked his wives to collect the fish in the waterless course of the river. On one such occasion, his younger brother, who was hiding in the nearby undergrowth, used a blowpipe and shot many tiny poisoned darts which hit Rumahau, who merely thought that the discomfort he felt was caused by the bites of mosquitoes. When they all returned home, Rumahau collapsed and died as he

reached the steps leading to his house. Since his body was so big, the people were unable to carry the corpse into the house. Later they dug a grave beside the corpse and also near his house and buried him there. According to Jawi, the mound over the grave of Rumahau and also the graves of his seven wives can still be seen in one of Jawi's padi fields.

However, Jawi says that there is another story to explain the origin of this menhir. According to that story, the stone was erected long ago by the inhabitants of this area in order to give a spirit of courage and daring to their warriors when they went head-hunting. On their return after a successful expedition the heads of the enemy taken in the raid were at first hung around the stone. In conjunction with victory celebrations, *bobolian* (priests or priestesses) stood around the stone and chanted incantations to praise the spirit living in the stone. Repeated ceremonies of this nature caused the spirit to become very powerful and unpleasant.

When the original inhabitants of the area where *Batu Bogu* stands migrated or were wiped out by some sickness or disease, the stone was left strictly alone and the whole area became overgrown with thick forest. The spirit continued to live in the stone and people were afraid to pass by or even to come near it. However, after Jawi had cleared the area the spirit did not cause any harm and was considered to have become a friendly spirit. The people no longer feel afraid of approaching *Batu Bogu*.

BATU BOBOLIAN

In Kampong Kepayan Baru near Apin-Apin there is a stone which is said to have been a priestess who turned into stone (Fig. 35). This menhir is 1.09 m high; it has a breadth of 24 cm and a thickness of 7.6 cm. In 1990 it was situated within the covered porchway of a small Catholic chapel. The chapel was a wooden structure and the porch had an earthen floor. Though one could vaguely visualise a head, neck and shoulders in the shape of the stone, it was angular in form and did not have any rounded features like those of a human body.

The story of the menhir was related by a woman of the village named Paulina (alias Iton Mulayan) and aged sixty years. One day



Fig. 35. *Batu Bobolian*, named after a legendary priestess turned into stone, in Kampong Kepayan Baru near Apin-Apin.

long ago, a female *bobolian* (priestess), whose name has now been forgotten, was performing a ceremony and chanting prayers beneath her house in order to obtain a cure for someone who was seriously ill. This priestess had seven children and all of them were daughters.

While the priestess was proceeding with her incantations, she suddenly called her children who were within the house in the room above her to bring her some fire. She needed this fire as part of the ceremony; it sometimes happens that various small items are burned on such occasions to please the spirits. Unfortunately, the children were slow in bringing the fire to their mother and finally when they did, they found to their great distress that their mother had now become a body of stone. When the children embraced that stone figure, each of them also was turned to stone.

That *Batu Bobolian* was later transferred from its original location. Its original site was about 200 m from where it is now. According to Paulina, this stone was highly respected and also greatly feared by the local people. This was because a very powerful spirit lived in the stone. Any person who did not show respect to the stone would become ill. As a result people were afraid to pass near the stone. This was a problem because there were houses nearby and a pathway for the public. Mothers especially, were afraid for their young children. Consequently, all the local residents decided that the *Batu Bobolian* should be transferred to a more remote location. The site chosen was a secluded, forested area.

Another priestess, who was a descendant of the *bobolian* turned to stone, took it upon herself to perform the religious part of the ceremony of transference. A number of animals were slaughtered as an offering to the spirit; among these animals were a buffalo, pigs and chickens. When a number of incantations had been chanted and the time had come for the *Batu Bobolian* to be removed from the ground, the people were at first unable to budge it. Finally, a man named Ambon Umbot succeeded in moving it a little, and then with the help of eight men they carried it to its present location. There with full traditional ceremony *Batu Bobolian* was emplaced in its new site. The seven children were placed in a circle around it. These were in the form of rounded stones and were of different sizes according to the ages of the children.

Many years later, new inhabitants migrated to this area and some of them were Christian. When the question arose of building a chapel, the owner of the present site donated the land for that purpose in order to break the spell of the stone and in any case the land was not of any benefit to him as he could not use it with such an unfriendly spirit in control. Later the area was blessed by a Catholic priest and a small chapel built. *Batu Bobolian* was not interfered with and in 1990 it was still standing in the porch of the chapel. People have no fear of it any more and many are not aware of the story of its origin. The rounded stones representing the children are not to be seen any more; they were reportedly removed by aspiring young athletes who wished to practice for the shot-put event!

Stories such as this are not unusual in Sabah folklore. It is possible to find examples claimed to be of persons and even of whole houses that were turned to stone. But in all

such cases, the petrification came about as a punishment for some fault or for some wrong committed. Near a stream named Tompokinion in Tambunan, there is a stone which legend says was at one time a woman. She was pregnant and near to delivery and seemingly offended local *adat* by going down to the stream. As a result she was turned into stone.

In the case of the *bobolian* and her seven children who were turned into stone there is no explanation of any reason for this extraordinary incident. There is no suggestion that any wrong had been committed except that the children were slow in bringing some fire to their mother and this should hardly demand such severe punishment. Another observation regarding the story is that there is no reference to the husband of the priestess who was also the father of the seven girls.

On one edge of *Batu Bobolian* a number of small notches have been cut. I did not notice these during my first visit to the menhir and I have not had an opportunity to obtain a local explanation for them.

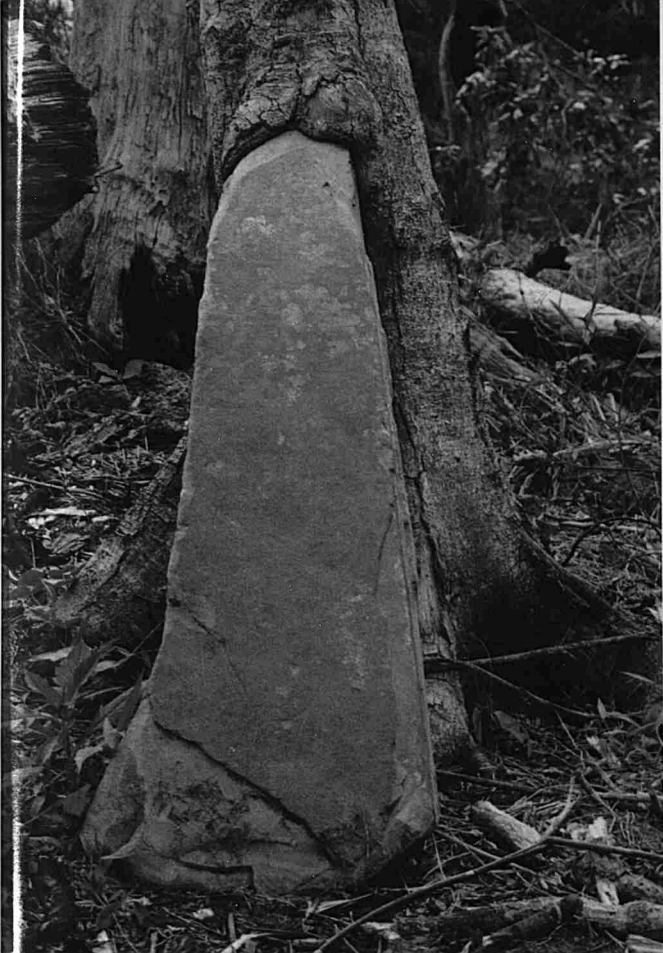
BATU GOMBONGAN

On a hill-slope about 30 m above road level on the left-hand side of the present road from Tambunan to Kampong Ragkam, there is a stone that is respected by the local people because of its historical significance (Fig. 36). The stone is an elongated slab of sandstone and its exposed length is 1.35 m. It is rectangular in cross-section with one side varying from 38 cm at the base to 28 cm at the top, while the other side is of a uniform thickness of 12.7 cm. In 1986, it could be located and seen easily because the area had been cleared for shifting cultivation. The stone is leaning against a tree; the top of the stone is embedded in the tree and certainly it was in that position during many years of the growth of the tree. One can conjecture whether (a) the stone at first was standing at an inclined angle and the tree, which grew as a sapling beside it, embraced the stone within itself as its girth extended, or (b) whether at some stage the stone was put leaning against the young tree.

Not far from the location of this stone, the top of the ridge is fairly flat and at one time this was the site of a settlement called Kampong Piasau. It is said that the people who lived there had come from other localities in Tambunan and had decided to settle there to get away from severe sickness in their own villages.

Kampong Piasau, being an upland area and not very level, was not suitable for wet padi cultivation. The people survived mainly on hill padi. They obtained their water from two streams which flowed on either side of the village. These streams are known as Mondogian and Kiupolo, and both flow into the River Tondulu. The villagers frequently descended to the main river in the valley to catch fish.

Fig. 36. (Opposite) *Batu Gombongan*; a 1983 photograph showing the top of the menhir embedded in the trunk of a tree.



In the early days of the history of that Kampong Piasau there was a young man named Gombongon of extraordinary size and strength. One day when a group of the village people was returning home from fishing in the River Tondulu, Gombongon took a large stone from the river and carried it under one arm to the place where it now is. It was recognised by all that this feat of strength demanded unusual power. Gombongon said that if anyone else wished to be compared to him in strength, he should take up the stone and carry it the rest of the way to the village. Nobody dared to take up the challenge and the stone has been in that spot since.

The legendary monument has suffered from the effects of weathering and there may have been some human involvement in causing some flakes of the outer layer of stone to fall off. The heat and resulting expansion caused by the burning of this area must have had an effect on the stone. An outer layer of about 1.3 cm thickness along much of one edge of the stone has disappeared in fairly recent time. On another edge of the stone it is possible to see many notches which have been cut or filed with a sharp instrument. It is possible to count at least 79 such notches and there may have been more along the edge that has been weathered away. This seems probable if the nicks were made after the stone took on its present position, because it is the lower or inner edge that carries the notches; the upper or outer edge would be a more likely place to incise marks.

The source of information on this stone was a retired teacher, well-versed in local folklore and tradition, and who in 1986 was aged 70 years. When shown recent photographs of the stone, he stated that in his youth there were no notches on the stone and that it did not lean against a tree; it stood in a nearly upright position. He also claimed that this stone could stand by itself and felt that there was no special spirit living in the stone. In view of the fact that three explanations have been given for similar markings on stones in Tambunan district it was surprising that this informant had no explanation to offer.

Because of lack of peace due to inter-village rivalry and the practice of head-hunting, all the inhabitants of Kampong Piasau left the place and settled elsewhere. The settlement became completely overgrown with bamboo and large trees. However, several burial stones can be seen in the locality and sometimes when some of the area is periodically cleared for shifting cultivation, it happens that broken pieces of earthenware are seen (Lilly Laudi, pers. comm. 1983).

MEMORIAL STONES FOR NOTABLE EVENTS

There are occasions when a group of people feel the need to commemorate an event. Involved in this feeling is the desire for an identity that is universally recognised. When recognition is achieved through commemoration it is natural to want to perpetuate into the future such a celebration. These features can be associated with a number of menhirs, and are even reflected in modern stone memorials such as one erected at the *Hari Besar Kaamatan* at Tambunan in 1969, in commemoration of the significance of the Harvest Festival. Some of the more interesting memorial stones of the past are described here.

WATU TINURIDUNG AT KAMPONG SUNSURON

There is a large stone standing in the middle of Sunsuron village in Tambunan known as *Watu Tinuridung* (Fig. 37). The top of this menhir is 2.13 m high; its base is 2.18 m across

and it has an average thickness of 23 cm. In the 1970's when the population of Kampong Sunsuron had grown too large to be administered by one *Ketua Kampong* (headman), it was decided to form two villages for administrative purposes; one half became known as Sunsuron Ulu and the other as Sunsuron Laut, each with its own headman. The dividing mark between the present two *kampong* is *Watu Tinuridung*.

According to local oral tradition in Kampong Sunsuron, the origin of the stone dates back to the Mat Salleh period. In 1898, a truce between the Chartered Company of British North Borneo and Mat Salleh was agreed to. As part of the agreement Mat Salleh was to stay in Tambunan. According to



Fig. 37. *Watu Tinuridung* at Kampong Sunsuron.

local comment in Sunsuron, Mat Salleh first came to Kampong Kirikot and after a short stay there he settled in Kampong Tibabar in the centre of the Tambunan plain. He visited Kampong Sunsuron and ordered the people there to follow his laws, threatening opposition with fines and punishment. The people of Kampong Sunsuron decided not to bow to this threat and prepared to defend themselves. They dug a circular hollowed-out area and used the earth to erect ramparts around it. The depth of the excavated area was such that a man standing inside it could not be seen from the outside. The defensive site was circular in shape and is said to have had a circumference of 40 m. While digging they came upon a large flat stone. They dug the earth all round it in order to remove the stone. When they saw the shape of the stone, they decided to put it standing. All the people of Kampong Sunsuron cooperated to erect the stone. In the local dialect, the action of erecting something is *monuridung* and it is from this verb that the stone got its name *Tinuridung*.

After the stone had been erected, two priestesses (*bobolian*) performed a ceremony "in order to bring to life the spirit of the stone". The names of the two priestesses are still remembered: Yundiai and Kubioh. There were male *bobolian* present also but the two women were the main functionaries. The purpose of having a spirit living in the stone was to keep away from the village any sickness or disease and also any fighting in which sharp instruments would be used. As part of the ceremony, a pig was sacrificed. Lustral water, known locally as *popodsu* was poured on the stone and also sprinkled on all those present at the ceremony.

At the present time it is believed by at least some of the people of Kampong Sunsuron that the spirit is still in the stone and this spirit is considered to be a good or friendly one. However, the spirit does not receive any special respect or attention any more. One of the reasons suggested for this fact is that the two priestesses who performed the initiating ceremony are no longer alive.

Soon after the stone had been erected, Mat Salleh came again to Kampong Sunsuron and demanded seven buffaloes from the villagers. Mat Salleh picked out a man named Gadog and asked him to hand over a buffalo. Gadog was unwilling to comply with the order, and furthermore, encouraged the rest of the people to oppose the demand. Mat Salleh could not hide his anger when he noted this action of Gadog. He left, but that night under cover of darkness he returned to invade the newly-built fort.

The people of Kampong Sunsuron had suspected that Mat Salleh and his followers would make an attack and they decided on an unusual plan of action. They left the fortification undefended but hid themselves all around the fort. Mat Salleh and his men came, found the entrance unlocked and entered. When they were inside the people of Kampong Sunsuron locked the door and had the enemy trapped inside. For three days they were unable to leave and during this time they had little or no food supplies or water. On the night of the third day, they managed to climb out and they disappeared in the darkness. Then Mat Salleh set up a post on the top of a nearby hill called Kimatan. From there he started firing a cannon at the fort in Kampong Sunsuron. It so happened that the cannon exploded and parts of it fell down the hill to a place called Goingski which is about 1 km

from the site of *Watu Tinuridung*. Years later a man named Gundalon came upon parts of the cannon when he was clearing some land in that area for hill-padi. He used the material of the cannon to make rings worn by women round the waist as part of Kadazan traditional costume.

The struggle against Mat Salleh continued. He had his main fort at Tibabar. Finally with the arrival of the government forces Mat Salleh was defeated and peace returned to the area. Because of the events connected with *Watu Tinuridung* and particularly because of the deaths of several men in defence of Kampong Sunsuron, the stone is revered as a memorial to the bravery of the people of that period (Marcella Moini Gubau, pers. comm. 1988).

Another account (Kating 1989: 61) of the menhir in Sunsuron traces its origin to a man of exceptional strength and size who took refuge in Sunsuron. Although at first the people received him well, they could not keep him for long because there was not enough food to feed him and he was a very lazy fellow who refused to work. Eventually he was told to leave. Before leaving, however, he took a huge rock from the Sinsuron river and placed it in the middle of the village, as a gesture of gratitude. He said the villagers could take cover behind the rock should a war break out. The big rock can still be seen in Sunsuron, and was apparently used as a shield against the bullets of Mat Salleh's guns during the rebellion (Kating 1989).

THE BATU TUNGAANG OF NOSOOB

There is a large, flat slab of stone standing near the foot of a small hill in Kampong Nabangkung, Nosoob, Penampang. A local name for the hill is Panggi. The stone is known as *Batu Tunggaang* (Fig. 38).

According to local residents there was formerly a village at this site. A serious epidemic swept through and it is believed that three-quarters of the villagers died. The survivors



erected this monument as a memorial to all those who had been taken from them by this terrible disease.

Fig. 38. *Batu Tunggaang*, located at Kampong Nabangkung, Nosoob.

GUMANTUNG'S STONE

A menhir that stands as a grave-marker and which is famous in local folklore is known as Gumantung's Stone and is located on a small hill in Moganibung in Penampang. A brief extract from the story told about it (Brooks 1970: 10) will indicate that the stone is not simply a grave-marker but also a memorial to a historic duel:

"The next day Monsopiad called all the villagers together and asked them to clear the flat space near the hill-top behind his house. He then took thirty of the strongest men to a spot some little distance away where lay a large monolith, and together they hauled and dragged it to the top of the hill and all stood around while Monsopiad explained his plan to them. 'This clearing you have made to-day, will be the battle ground for the fight between myself and Gumantung when he comes, as come he will. And under this mighty stone shall be buried the loser in the contest, be it Gumantung or myself, for I have sworn to bury alive this brigand or die in the attempt.'"

The duel which soon followed raged for many hours. Towards evening it ended in victory for Monsopiad and death for Gumantung. The loser was immediately buried by the people of Moganibung and the stone was erected beside his grave.

BATU HIDUP (“LIVING STONE”) AND OTHER MENHIRS

THE “LIVING STONE” OF KIMANIS

Batu Hidup in Kimanis (Fig. 39) is situated 3 to 5 km inland from the coast. It is on ground that stands about 3 m higher than the surrounding lowland. This lowland has at times in the past been used for the cultivation of wet padi. In November, 1989 this lowland was being grazed by buffaloes. The elevated ground on which *Batu Hidup* is located is covered with tree vegetation. On the highest part of the elevation there are four trees and they form a roughly-shaped rectangle. The rectangular area enclosed by the four trees has been covered with concrete.

In 1990 it was noted that *Batu Hidup* was standing beside one of the trees. The trunk of the tree was attached to the stone from ground level up to nearly 1.5 m; in other words, as the tree grew and enlarged, part of the stone became embedded in the tree. The upper half of the stone was separated from the tree. The menhir had a height of 3.66 m and at mid-level had a circumference of 1.5 m.



The site of elevated ground looks like a typical location for a burial ground, but headstones are not evident. About 1.8 m from *Batu Hidup* and within the concrete area, there was a hollow in which was a jar 61 cm deep and 46 cm in diameter. On an extension of the raised ground and about 40 m away there is a *keramat*—a place where a holy man was buried; some people sometimes come here to pray for favours. Across the road to the south there is a hill and after a fifteen-minute

Fig. 39. *Batu Hidup* (*Batu Tumbuh*) near Kimanis in 1994.

walk up that hill one can reach a tombstone marking the grave of one of the first white colonisers in Sabah; the inscription on the tombstone reads,

"In Memory of
Thomas
BRADLEY HARRIS,
late
Hon Chief Secretary
of the colony of
AMBONG AND MAROODU.
By birth
a Citizen of the U.S.A.
aged 40 years,
DIED 22nd MAY, 1866.
Erected by H.E. the Rajah
as a tribute of respect to the memory of
an old
faithful and esteemed friend
'After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well'"

In 1990 it was also noted that three strips of cloth, two white and one red, were tied around *Batu Hidup* at a height of about 1.5 m (Fig. 40). Many traces of candle-wax and the remains of burnt josticks were noticeable in the area around the stone. There is a zinc-roofed shelter nearby.

The common belief is that the stone was much smaller when it was erected; it is gradually and constantly becoming bigger. Another name used locally for this stone is *Batu Tumbuh*—the Growing Stone. It is generally revered and people from various parts of Sabah visit *Batu Hidup* to pray for favours. As part of the ritual supplicants throw a few coins into the old semi-buried jar closeby as they make a wish.

In an article on *Batu Hidup* published in a newspaper in 1978 the author (Pung Chen Choon, 1978: 21–22) based his account on information received from a 70-year-old man named Jonet Kanak Pembahan who



Fig. 40. Coloured cloth tied around *Batu Hidup* is evidence that prayers had been offered (1990).

claimed to be a descendant of Pulang, the hero associated with the origin of the stone. According to the article:

"a party of headhunters from Kampong Terawi crept into Orang Kaya Pulang's village, Kampong Belatik, in Kimanis while all the adults were out fishing, with the children left behind. A slaughter followed from which only one child, who hid in a *baongan*, a container for carrying rice, escaped. When the Belatik people returned from fishing to discover what had happened they were naturally angry and eager to march off seeking vengeance.

Orang Kaya Pulang dissuaded them, however, saying that he could use the supernatural powers he had gained some years before from eating some supposedly God-sent betel nuts, and take the whole of Kampong Terawi single-handed. The people believed him because over the years they had seen him spitting fire when he was angry and doing wonders with his awesome strength. Encik [Mr] Jonet commented that in those days, when village people relied mainly on padi and sago for food, 'chewing betel was as common as smoking in these days'.

Then like a good story-teller who knows when to move away from the main theme and when to return to it, he told me about the betel nuts which had given Pulang his strength. One day Pulang was on his way to the sago plantations when he ran out of betel nut to chew. Then he heard gongs being beaten and fresh betel nuts fell near him, 'as if from nowhere'. He was hesitant in the face of such wonder but eventually cut and chewed one. Later the same day he felled a sago palm, only to have it lodge against another tree. He pushed at it—and was amazed to find that he could move it without effort. Encik Jonet said that a full-grown sago palm weighs about half a ton. Pulang's next discovery came when he shouted to stop some boys quarrelling near his house. That was when he found he could spit fire.

With these fearsome gifts, it is not surprising that Pulang, on his mission of vengeance, was able to collect 20 heads in Kampong Terawi, including that of the man who had led the Belatik massacre, who was named Kalasip. Nor was this enough to slake his thirst for vengeance. In the months that followed Pulang made several head-hunting trips to Kampong Terawi, and to the nearby villages of Kinarut and Kurai, and he never returned empty-handed. These raids, not surprisingly, caused great alarm, till eventually the remaining people decided that they must seek peace. To do this they combined to carve out a piece of stone which they then carried all the way to Kimanis to present to Pulang. He accepted the gift, head-hunting between the two peoples ceased and when Pulang died the gift stone was used to mark his grave. It is made of a sandstone common in Sabah."

Several elderly people in Kampong Terawi were questioned in 1991 about the history of *Batu Hidup* in Kimanis, but none was aware that its origin might have any possible connection with their village. A younger person stated that he had heard that *Batu Hidup* had stopped growing because rubbish had been dumped near it.

The owner of the land where *Batu Hidup* is located is Awang Kurus. According to him the people living in the immediate vicinity of *Batu Hidup* are Bruneis and Javanese. Dusuns inhabit the area further inland. Mr Awang stated that the lowland area next to *Batu Hidup* was formerly used by him for growing padi, but now he did not have enough friends (helpers) to cultivate the area. He was aware that the stone had been erected to honour the

memory of Orang Kuat Pulang at the place of his burial and he was of the opinion that it was erected by Dusuns and that it was brought from Putatan. To Awang the title *Orang Kuat* indicated that Pulang had extraordinary strength. When the stone was first erected it was only about 1 m high and people could sharpen their *parang* on it. According to Awang a section of the top of the stone at one stage broke off and the broken part was stolen, but by whom and the location of the broken section are not known.

Awang Kurus says that he is a Brunei but that some of his ancestors were Dusuns; when Brunei people came to this area some Dusun women married them and became Muslim and when they adopted Islam, they no longer called themselves Dusun.

Awang related that a European who came here from West Malaysia and who worked on the nearby estate was cured of a foot ailment after paying a visit to *Batu Hidup*. Because of the nature of his foot ailment he was unable to wear shoes and had to use slippers. Having tried all the known remedies without success it was suggested to him that he should ask for a cure at the stone. This he did and he believed that the cure which followed was attributable to the power of the stone and, in thanksgiving, he bought a buffalo that was sacrificed at *Batu Hidup*. Some time later, he returned to West Malaysia but expressed the wish that he would one day return to visit the area of *Batu Hidup*.

According to Awang, many people come to *Batu Hidup* to pray for favours. These people are mainly Chinese but also include Indians and Kadazans; Muslims do not go there to pray. Some of those who come to pray travel from very far away such as Sandakan and Tawau. Often they arrive in the early morning and remain until afternoon; they eat a meal there and that is why the zinc-covered shelter has been erected. Awang thinks that a strip of cloth around the stone is a sign that prayers have been said and offerings made at the stone. In his view a spirit is living in the stone and this spirit is the soul of Orang Kaya Pulang.

A short distance along the road that leads inland is Kampong Gadung where the majority of the inhabitants are Kadazan/Dusun. An interview with Petrus Sayun provided further or alternate information about *Batu Hidup*. According to him, the place where *Batu Hidup* is located is known as Kampong Tinumangis. This name is related to the idea of crying or mourning because this was a place where, in former times, punishment for adultery and incest, which often consisted of the death sentence, was meted out.

According to Petrus, Pulang was at one time a poor man who had seven sons and one daughter. Every day he collected the sago left in the tree stumps by those who had cut down sago palms. While working one day he saw a flying object shaped like a boat up in the sky. When the flying object passed overhead, a man in it spat and what dropped in front of Pulang was a *hugus*—a young betelnut. Pulang picked it up and ate it and after that became a man of exceptional strength.

Some time after this enemies came and attacked the village. Pulang defeated them and killed them all. The people of the village admired the great ability of Pulang and they chose him to be the leader of their *kampong*. The Sultan of Brunei heard about Pulang and

gave him the title of Datuk. After Pulang died he was buried at the place where *Batu Hidup* now stands and the stone marking his grave was brought from Brunei. At the time when it was placed there the stone was about 1 m high.

Before burial, the body of Pulang was cut into pieces and placed in seven jars which were later buried. One other jar was partially buried at the grave site; this jar was part of the *pinananud*—items placed on or beside a grave that are considered necessary for the journey of the deceased from this world to the next and for the future life.

There is another story about the origin of *Batu Hidup* at Kimanis, offered by a Dusun who is not from the Kimanis area. According to this version, it so happened that a number of men on one raft and a number of women on another raft were competing in a race on the river (presumably the Kimanis River). As the men were leading, the women decided that they needed to do something to distract the men; so, all of them took off some of their clothing. As a result the men burst into hysterical laughter and were so amused that they forgot about the competition.

In the story the winner of the race was not mentioned but all of those concerned were later full of apprehension lest they be punished by the spirit world for such unbecoming behaviour. Both women and men acknowledged that they had done wrong. To avert punishment, which could come in the form of some type of misfortune, all the people of the locality decided to make a solemn promise that they would never behave in such a manner again; they also decided to erect a stone that would serve as a perpetual reminder of their promise. The narrator of this story had no explanation for the fact that some people claim that the stone has been growing over the years.

Traditionally, some Chinese have paid special attention to stone or rock formations. Amah Rock and *Yan Yeun Shek* or Lover's Rock in Hong Kong are well-known there. Amah Rock is situated on a hill near Shatin. It resembles the figure of a woman carrying a child on her back. According to legend a fisherman went fishing in the sea. When he did not return at the normal time, his wife became anxious; she climbed the hill with her baby in a sling on her back, to watch out for her husband's return. She waited day after day until the gods took pity on her perseverance and patience and turned her to stone. *Yan Yeun Shek* or Lover's Rock, situated at the end of Bowen Road, is visited mainly by ladies who pray and make offerings there to obtain a husband or to win back the favour of loved ones. Some Taoists especially, among the Chinese have a custom of praying to a spirit called Dato Kong (meaning very old and very grand) which they believe resides in very old trees or in standing or prominent stones or rocks. The stones may be as short as 30 cm and there is no limit to their height and volume.

According to a local Chinese in the Kimanis area, whenever some Chinese hear of anything strange or of a supernatural nature about any place which is said to make people's wishes come true, they will go there. They are not keen on exploring the meaning or background of the place. To them, what is important is that *Batu Hidup* has got a reputation as being quite effective in that many have had their wishes fulfilled after interceding there. The Chinese who visit *Batu Hidup* usually do so on the 1st and 15th

days of the lunar month. Some could not explain why these two days were so special, but one person suggested the following: on the 1st and 15th of the lunar month the nights are brighter and the shape of the moon is distinctive. To Chinese something round indicates fullness and signifies completeness and smoothness. Consequently, these two days are more favourable for praying for requests. Favours sought by a visit to *Batu Hidup* include the cure of the sick and family welfare, but in recent times it would seem that the main favour sought is good luck in the four-digit lottery; in recent years various four-digit numbers have been written on the stone with white paint.

If a Chinese group or family visits *Batu Hidup* to request favours, they will usually bring a person to act as a medium (a *sinsang*). Some individuals do not ask the help of a medium but others who do not have experience or who lack confidence in themselves employ the services of a *sinsang* to perform the rituals. Apart from the prayers said or the requests made, the rituals may include the burning of josticks and candles; the burning of paper money (imitation money); and offerings of fruits especially oranges, as well as biscuits, tea, yellow rice, and meat (especially chicken and goat-meat). A strip of cloth, usually yellow or white or black, is sometimes tied around the stone.

The mystique of *Batu Hidup* still lives on in spite of what some see as a desecration of the stone and its surroundings. In 1994 *Batu Hidup* was found to be in two pieces. A clean break occurred about 1.2 m above ground and the upper section of about 2.4 m was lying beside it. The old jar in the hollow nearby had seemingly been vandalised and pieces of the jar were lying about the area close to where it had been.

According to Awang Kurus (the owner of the land where *Batu Hidup* is situated) a few Chinese persons and a *sinsang* came to the stone to make offerings and ask for favours; during the ceremony the *sinsang* stated that there was a *keris* (dagger) inside the stone and that a treasure was buried beneath the jar. Awang believes that those individuals returned at night-time; he thinks that they used some type of acid to break the stone since it was a clean break with no fragments near it. The jar was dug out and broken to pieces and he surmises that the disappointed fortune-hunters were so angry at their failure to find anything that they damaged some of the concrete area in frustration.

Awang claims that on the night following this incident there were torrential rains accompanied by gale-force winds. The downpour continued all night and into the following day, causing the greatest flood in living memory. All of Kimanis, even the new highway, was under water. In spite of the flood some people went to see the condition of the stone when they heard that it had been damaged. They believed that the storm and resulting flood was caused by the spirit in *Batu Hidup*. A few days later, the broken section of the stone was erected about 2 m away from the shorter section by six local men. They then measured the height of the two parts and they are of the opinion that both will grow again. Their main purpose in taking the measurements was "for the sake of the next generations so that they will believe". An elderly man claimed that there is a similar *Batu Hidup* in Java; he is of the opinion that it may be the first upper part of *Batu Hidup* in Kimanis that was stolen many years ago and is now growing in Indonesia.



Fig. 41. The menhir *Bolitus* at its original site in 1971.

the bulldozing, the menhir *Bolitus* slipped down in a landslide and was in danger of being covered up in the earth. A person from the locality who was an employee of the Sabah Museum suggested that the historic stone be transferred to the grounds of the Sabah Museum. This was duly done (Fig. 42) and now on a plaque placed beside the menhir we can read:

"Batu Bolitus was collected from a hill at Kg. Sindana'an, Penampang. It was erected in commemoration of a special tree known as "*Bolitus*" by an unknown priestess "*Bobohizan*" some 300 years ago.

This *Bolitus* tree is believed to be the only tree of its kind ever existed in the area (now extincted) [*sic!*] it had fruits of the size of a coconut. This *Bolitus* tree was highly esteemed and worshipped by the people according to customs of that time."

Fig. 42. The menhir *Bolitus*, in the grounds of the Sabah Museum in 1994, some years after its relocation from its original site.

Some weeks after the flood another *sinsang* who visited *Batu Hidup* is said to have predicted another great flood, and to have made known that the *sinsang* involved in the damage to the stone was sick and was soon to die. In some nearby villages, the people seemed to be in doubt about what actually caused the damage to *Batu Hidup* but apparently were of the convinced opinion that the flood had a spiritual connection with and was related to the breaking of *Batu Hidup*.

THE BATU BOLITUS FROM PENAMPANG

An unusual function for a menhir is one which is said to commemorate a fruit tree. Such a menhir now stands in the grounds of the Sabah Museum. It has a height of 2.77 m above ground. The circumference at mid-level is 1.8 m. It has the form of a slightly curved slab, the average thickness of which is 20 cm.

Formerly this menhir, known as *Bolitus*, stood on the side of small hill in Kampong Sindina'an (Fig. 41). Part of the slope was bulldozed to enlarge a small road that skirted the foot of the hill. Because of erosion that resulted from



BATU BUBANAU IN TAMBUNAN

There is a sizeable menhir on the small hill beside the mosque in Tambunan. People refer to this stone as *Bubantau* (Fig. 43) but older people say that this is not its original name. Some also suggest that the spirit in this stone is a Christian spirit. The present name of the stone comes from the name of a former District Officer of Tambunan who was killed by a policeman. It may be of interest to record the version of the incident as told by elderly residents of Tambunan and then look at the written record. It is told that one of the policemen on duty in Tambunan had a local girl-friend. Later the girl is said to have fallen in love with the District Officer (a European) and used to visit his house. One evening, while the District Officer was playing football that policeman was on duty at the nearby police station. He called the District Officer saying that there was a message for him. It is not known what words, if any, were exchanged between the two men, but the policeman shot the District Officer. Then the policeman went to the house of the District Officer to look for the girl, but not finding her he shot himself. It is said that the District Officer did not die immediately; he was taken to Keningau hospital but failed to recover from the shot-wound.

In the British North Borneo Herald of Thursday, 16 December, 1920 we can read the following:

"It is with deep regret that we record the death of Noel Baboneau at Tambunan on 6th December. From the little news there is at present it appears that he had been playing golf and after the game went over to the Office telephone to speak to Keningau. After speaking, and when going down the office steps, P.C. 420 Lima, a dusun of Tuaran, who was on guard at the office, shot him in the back of the neck, death being instantaneous. No one else was in the office at the time and no cause for the murder is yet known. Lima committed suicide directly afterwards in Mr. Baboneau's house."

The same newspaper dated 3 January, 1921 gave further information on the incident under the heading "Mr. Noel Blake Baboneau's Death":

"We are now able to tell our readers that there was at least one witness of Mr. Baboneau's murder. The wife of one of the police at Tambunan saw him fall to the bottom of the office steps after he had been shot, and also saw his murderer make off with his rifle into the adjoining garden preparatory to committing suicide.

The cause of the murder was mutiny pure and simple. Private Lima enlisted at Tuaran two years ago as a married man and his wife is still there. He was desirous of marrying another woman of the neighbouring village Lintun, but such a marriage would have been against all Police Regulations and permission, therefore, was apparently refused. We also understand that this second marriage was opposed by his relations in Tuaran.

There is no doubt that Lima was infatuated with the Lintun woman and that he rebelled against the control of his District Officer."

A short account written recently (Tabrett 1993: 38) about Noel Blake Baboneau casts doubt on the accuracy of the newspaper report of his death:

"He [N.B. Baboneau] was shot dead in his office there [in Tambunan] on 6th December

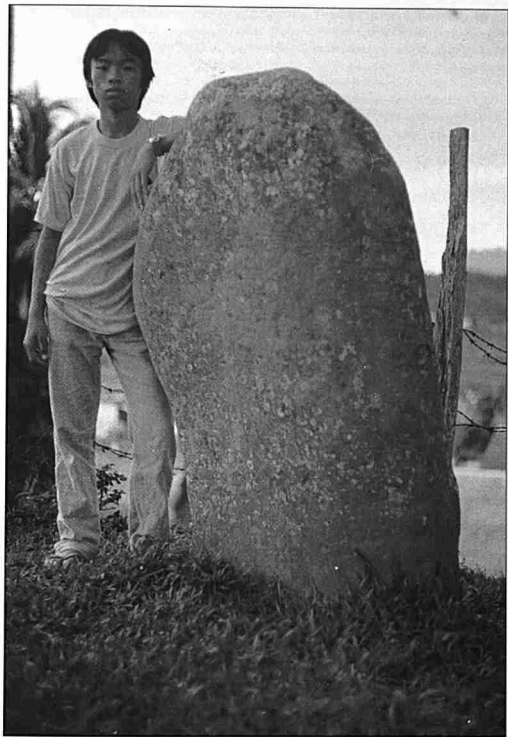


Fig. 43. The menhir known as *Batu Bunanau*, Tambunan.

1920 by the police guard, Private Linar, the jealous fiance of a Dusun girl, Tingamu, who had moved in earlier with Mr. Baboneau. Linar shot himself after an unsuccessful search for Tingamu. Herald reports of this tragedy give a very inaccurate and white-washed account of events leading up to the murder, which was described to this writer by a then schoolboy eye-witness (still living) to the shooting. Tingamu was reportedly not allowed to live in the Interior, and subsequently married a P.W.D. Overseer, living for many years in Kampong Ayer opposite Istana Hill, and a friend of this writer. Mr. Baboneau was buried in Tambunan, and exhumed and reburied in Jesselton Christian Cemetery on 24th September 1929, where his grave, with a large Celtic Cross headstone, may still be seen up behind Istana Hill Road."

The residence of the District Officer was located where the mosque stands at present and so this menhir was just in front of his house. Ever since then his name has been associated with the menhir and nobody seems to know what name, if any, it had formerly.

I have heard four different stories which have been offered as explanations for the origin of this menhir:

1. There was a village here long ago; a sickness ravaged the inhabitants and many were dying. The remainder decided to leave the area and settle elsewhere but before leaving they erected this stone so that they would be remembered.
2. Bubanau was a very strong man. He knew he was going to die. He took this huge stone from the Tondulu River to the top of the hill which was intended to be a fort. He dug his own grave, got into it, partly filled it in and then placed the stone standing on his chest and breathed his last. It is claimed that the leaves of the trees that grow over the stone shake in a peculiar way during the month of December.
3. A third account related was that this menhir was erected by a group of evil-minded people who endowed the stone with a bad spirit that would bring harm and misfortune to the inhabitants of another village whom they disliked.
4. Another explanation given suggests that the menhir was erected early this century. It is said that when Mat Salleh was in Tambunan in the 1890's he caused great division among the people and was responsible for stirring up bitter inter-village feuds. After the disappearance of Mat Salleh from the scene in 1900 it was felt that the restoration of peace among the villages was necessary. Subsequently peace agreements were made and as a lasting memorial to the promises of harmony undertaken this stone was erected.

The variety in these offered explanations shows the danger of accepting the first account heard as the genuine story, and the necessity to check and counter-check what is given as oral tradition. Hopefully, the recording of the different explanations may inspire some reader from the area to investigate the matter more fully and decide on the real origin.

The menhir known locally as *Bubanau* is 1.35 m in height. Its breadth near the base is 0.76 m but it is wider higher up reaching 0.91 m.

THE TOMBSTONE OF MONSOPIAD

Though markings in the form of nicks or notches occur on several menhirs in Sabah, there is an almost complete absence of carvings or designs. One exception is a stone said to mark the burial site of a local hero named Monsopiad. This menhir (Fig. 44) is on a low hill overlooking Kampong Kurai and Kampong Kandazon in Penampang District.

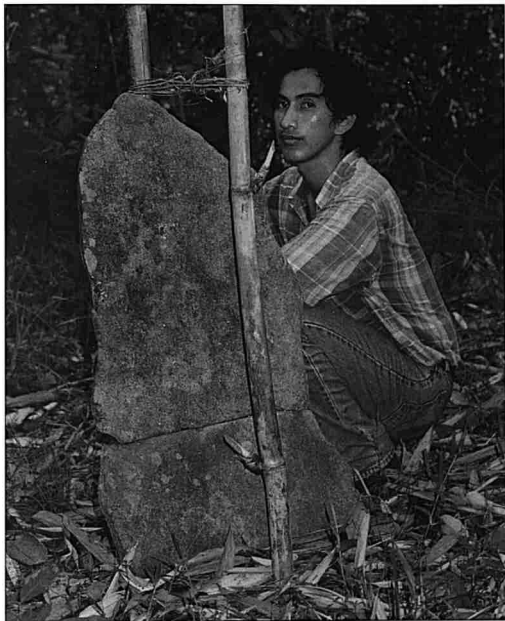


Fig. 44. The Tombstone of Monsopiad.

Before considering the details of the menhir it may be of interest to recall some facts narrated about Monsopiad. The name is well known in local literature and tradition. Gundohing Dousia Moujing of Kampong Kandazon claims to be a direct descendant of the hero. Suspended from the ceiling of his home Mr Dousia has 42 human skulls said to have been acquired by Monsopiad and handed down from generation to generation since then. Dousia estimates that Monsopiad lived about 300 years ago. He also believes that Monsopiad became a head-hunter only as a protector of the people. At that time there were no warriors in the area and the inhabitants fell prey to roaming bandits and robbers who stole their rice and farm animals. Monsopiad realized that the only way to ensure peace and safety in the area was to take the heads of those bandits and robbers.

In a story (Brooks 1970: 9) we read that Monsopiad was no ordinary man:

"As a youth he had loved wrestling, and all forms of combat and so he had sought to add to his native strength the protection of invulnerability. Under the guidance of a wise teacher versed in such secrets, he had spent seven nights in the jungle, without speaking, eating very sparingly and foregoing even the comfort of betel nut and tobacco. Each night he had cleansed himself under a chilly waterfall and had awaited the trials of courage which must come to him.

The first test had been the appearance, not a yard from where he stood, of a King Cobra, a sight by no means unknown in Borneo yet always terrifying. The creature stared at him, head raised from the ground ready to strike and swaying slightly, but Monsopiad kept his eyes steadily on it and did not move until the snake slid away into the jungle.

On the fourth night of his vigil, as he sat cold and hungry near the waterfall, a huge boulder suddenly dislodged itself and rolled down from the hill directly above him. Monsopiad instinctively half rose to dash away from its path, then he remembered to stand his ground, and the boulder, striking a tree stump in its fall, bounced over him and crashed to fragments a few yards ahead.

The final trial was the hardest of all, for on the seventh night, when he had well-nigh reached the limit of his endurance, an evil spirit appeared to him and by every means of persuasion and threat endeavoured to make him give up his quest, and only after hours of torment did he win through to the precious gift to invulnerability."

In the same story we read of how Monsopiad was called upon to bring justice to the people of Magonibung against a marauding giant named Gumantung who terrorised many villages along the west coast. In a duel that lasted from morning till evening Monsopiad eventually slew the tyrant and, as was the custom in those days, took the head of the victim home as a remembrance of his victory.

Another story (Phelan 1994: 36) tells of how a warrior named Gantang of Kampong Minintod near Inanam was jealous of the reputation of Monsopiad and tried to eliminate him. Gantang invited Monsopiad to a celebration during which he challenged his guest to various tests of strength and cultural events. When Monsopiad emerged winner in these competitions, Gantang quietly resorted to stealth: he tried to waylay and murder Monsopiad on his way home from the celebrations. Monsopiad was too alert to be taken by surprise and in the melee that ensued from the attempted murder it was Gantang who

was killed. This was another head to be added to Monsopiad's growing collection kept at his home in Kampong Kurai.

The menhir that is believed to be the tombstone of Monsopiad has a height of 96 cm, a width of 49 cm at its base, and a breadth of 6 to 7 cm. Its circumference at mid-level is 1.1 m. It is slab-like in formation. In April, 1997 it was seen that 30 cm above ground-level there was a horizontal crack in the stone and the menhir was supported in a near vertical position by two pieces of bamboo secured together with wire. As the surrounding vegetation consisted mainly of clumps of bamboo, the undergrowth was not thick.

On one side of the menhir there is a design (Fig. 45). Lines were cut into the stone to a depth of approximately 1 cm. There are five parallel vertical lines each measuring about 70 cm. These lines give four columns. The outer columns on the right and left are of roughly equal width, and measure 8 to 9 cm; they carry no designs. The two central columns are narrower, measuring 4 to 5 cm. The designs occur in these two columns and are symmetrical. If each of the columns is viewed individually, the design consists mainly

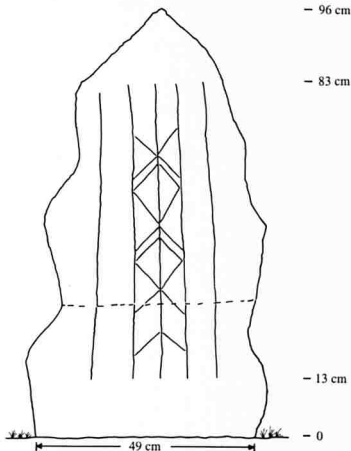


Fig. 45. The design on the Tombstone of Monsopiad.

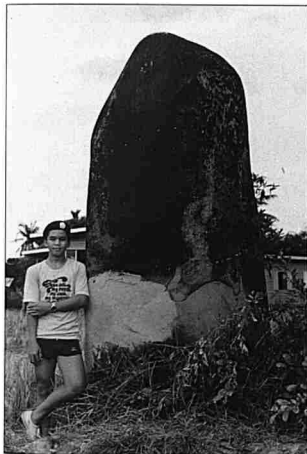
of a series of triangles; but if the two columns are viewed as a single unit, then the design appears mainly as a series of diamond-shaped figures. It seems probable that the workmanship of the design was not completed.

Up until 1996 people of this area had a great fear of going near this stone and even now very few of the local inhabitants will approach it. It was younger members of the family of Mr Dousia and relatives who decided in 1996 to risk approaching and examining the historic and dreaded stone. In the opinion of Dousia it was Monsopiad himself who cut the design on the stone which he intended to have used as his tombstone. Nobody knows if the design had any special significance or if it was for ornamental or artistic purposes only.

Near the foot of the hill where this menhir stands, the family of Dousia runs a cultural centre which has become a tourist attraction. The family members considered the possibility of moving the stone to the cultural centre so that more people and tourists could more easily see this unique monument. Before embarking on such a project they requested some priestesses to ask the opinion of the spirit world. The reply received by the priestesses was that since the spirit in this stone was so powerful, it should not be transferred.

ORIGIN OF THE MENHIRS

We have seen that menhirs have been erected in Sabah in many places and for various purposes. The number to be found at present is only a fraction of the number that existed in former times. With economic progress, people have been gradually losing interest in traditional customs. Lack of interest is soon followed by loss of information about objects and practices that were once considered important in the lives of the people. Due to lack of awareness, relics of the past are not recognised and appreciated, and, consequently, not protected. The two main factors that cause the obliteration of ancient stone monuments are the erection of new buildings and the construction of roads. Many areas most suitable for land-use and human habitation are today areas of prime land near urban centres.



The number of reasons for which menhirs were erected in Sabah is numerous. All except one type of menhir can be readily explained. But the one type that is most puzzling to researchers is the type that is most numerous and, moreover, this type of menhir is on average the largest in size (Fig. 46 and Fig. 47). It is the type found in areas of wet rice cultivation. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to an attempt to offer a satisfactory and conclusive solution to this phenomenon.

Fig. 46. *Sansaabon* in Sugud, Penampang, probably the largest menhir by volume in Sabah. Its name comes from *ahaab*, which means "big and wide". *Sansaabon* is 2.5 m high and has a circumference of 3 m. A local resident feels that this stone has, over the years, sunk deeper into the ground, a real possibility as it stands in a wet rice field. It is believed that this menhir was transported by a hundred men from a small river valley about 2 km from its present location. It is said that this took one month and that log rollers were used for haulage over solid ground.



Two inter-related characteristics of its location are the cultivation of wet padi and the rearing of buffaloes. Harrison & Harrison (1970: 131) point out that several scholars have associated megalithic activity in Asia with the development of irrigation agriculture—"an association which certainly happens to hold rather good in the Borneo context. The Penampang - Kota Kinabalu plain and the Kelabit plateau are the most 'advanced' rice irrigation (*sawah*) locations on the island."

There are similarities between the menhirs of the rice fields of Sabah and those of the Kelabit area of Sarawak. In discussing the megalithic monuments of the Kerayan-Kelabit area Schneeberger (1979: 85) states:

"The bearers of megalithic traditions are the various tribes of the Kelabit tribal group and closely related tribes. The *sawah* rice farmers and cattle breeders of the Kerayan-Kelabit highland are entirely surrounded by *ladang* [hill] rice farmers and manihot growers who are lacking in any knowledge of irrigation technique and are, with the exception of the Kolor, without megalithic traditions. It is thus obvious that buffalo breeding and *sawah* rice cultivation are here an integral part of the megalithic complex."

A geographical feature noted about the location of several areas in Southeast Asia where megalithic remains have been found is the fact that these areas are usually in highland regions. In commenting on the stone monuments of the Kelabit area Schneeberger (1979: 85) also states:

"There may be more than just coincidence in the fact, that similar to Sumatra and Sulawesi, where megalithic cultures were centred on highlands (Pasemah) or highland lakes (Toba, Korinci, Poso) also in central Northeast Borneo megalithic traditions are centred on a highland and around a former lake of whose previous existence there is traditional (the saga of Kwor Asai) and scientific evidence (a geologically young river capture)."

The intermontane basin of Tambunan in Sabah which is about 600 m above sea-level could be identified with this characteristic but not the coastal plain area around Putatan, Penampang and Kinarut.

The social and economic conditions of the builders of stone monuments is another factor that has been considered (Harrison & Harrison 1970: 130):

"Megalithic activities have well established roots in the distant past. They are generally associated with a prosperous culture, abundant populations and excess energy. Carrying great stones from long distances, in order to erect them for religious, ritual or other reasons, is a form of exuberance and group expression comparable at its particular pagan level to temple building among Hindus, or putting up chapels by Christians in later days."

Since several authorities have suggested a close relationship within Southeast Asia between the introduction of wet rice cultivation and the beginning of megalithic activity, many questions come to mind. Why are menhirs found in the rice-fields of the Penampang-Putatan-Kinarut plains and not in the Tuaran plain, Kota Belud plain or Papar

Fig. 47. (Opposite) This menhir with an unusual base stands in the midst of padi-land at Kampong Limbutong in Kinarut.

plain? Why are menhirs found in the rice-growing areas of Tambunan but not in Keningau or Ranau? When and from where was wet rice cultivation introduced to Sabah? Which was cultivated first in Sabah, dry hill padi or wet padi? In which area in Sabah was wet rice first cultivated?

Because readymade answers do not seem to be available to these questions, it will be necessary to look at any existing comments that have been made on the topic. T. & B. Harrison (1970: 130) have recorded the opinion of the Kadazans of the megalithic belt of the west coast but this opinion is not very helpful: "As these people have no precise way of backdating events, what they ordinarily say is that a stone belongs to 'long, long ago', or to the beginning of human occupation of the plain." More helpful is the Harrissons' own opinion (1970: 131): "our own view is that in the absence of a Borneo 'bronze age' these megalithic activities probably began after the advent of iron in Sabah." They do not clarify further but in another section of their book (p. 17) it is stated that the iron age in Sabah began about 700 A.D. However, more recent opinion (Cleary & Eaton 1992: 28) suggests that the Iron Age in Borneo came at a later period.

Reference has been made in the opening chapter to the opinion of Chandran (1978: 129), namely, "The megalithic period in South-east Asia is only very roughly estimated to have occurred about the time of the Bronze Age, which itself has no definite time span and can be said to have fallen between 3000 B.C. and 500 B.C."

In his book dealing with the geography of Southeast Asia, Dobby (1967: 350) refers to the introduction of rice to this region and states that "the plant was apparently introduced by Indian colonists some time about the middle of the first millenium. Since then, thousands of varieties have evolved to suit the subtle differences of local climate, seasons and soil." Dobby also notes that Hindu traders came first to South Borneo rivers. We may wonder if the introduction of wet rice cultivation to Sabah lagged behind the major areas of Southeast Asia.

Appell & Harrison (1969: 213) were rather vague when they suggested that wet rice agriculture was introduced to Sabah at some time in the remote past. However, they made an interesting remark when they stated that the introduction of wet rice agriculture affected the indigenous patterns of land ownership: "Originally rights over land were held by the village, but with the introduction of wet rice individually-held rights developed, eroding the power of the village in matters of land."

This point is significant because it is necessary to consider whether the erection of stone monuments was a village community endeavour or an achievement of an individual supported by his family and relatives.

Another characteristic formerly claimed to be associated with megalithic culture in this region was the existence of a social structure. W.J. Perry (1918: 44) stated that "the cromlech of the Dusun of British North Borneo is placed on the spot where a chief and his followers were killed in battle; thus showing that the distinction between warriors and ordinary people is also made by people who erect megalithic monuments."

Perry maintained (1918: 44) that the existence of megaliths in certain areas was due to the social stratification of the group of people inhabiting that area:

"The abrupt discontinuities in the use of stone which have just been adduced serve to show that it is not possible to invoke local circumstances to account for the presence or absence of stone-work in any place. On the contrary, the presence or absence of stone-work in any place seems to depend principally upon the presence or absence of a chiefly class distinguished from the commoners by a special use of stone."

Though this proposition may not carry much weight, if any, today, it is, nevertheless, worth recording here.

It has been suggested that the Austronesian ancestors of Sabah's indigenous peoples have inhabited northern Borneo for at least 5,000 years, and that they originally came from Taiwan via the Philippines from about 4,000 B.C. (Bellwood 1984: 85-87). But it is claimed that the vast majority of the present-day inhabitants of the islands of Southeast Asia are descendants of migrants from mainland Asia. The historian Hall (1964: 7) informs us:

"Their migration into South-East Asia occupied several centuries before the beginning of the Christian era, and although opinion today does not favour the Sarasin's theory of two main waves, the first, of 'Proto-Malays' bringing an advanced neolithic culture, and the second of 'Deutero-Malays' bringing a bronze-iron one, it is still impossible to be precise about what happened. Hendrik Kern, the pioneer of research into the origin of the Indonesian languages, thought that the linguistic evidence pointed to the region of Champa, Cochin-China and Cambodia as the birthplace of the neolithic culture. Von Heine-Geldern traces the original home of the people, who introduced it, farther back to the region in western China where the great rivers of east and south-east Asia have their origin. Their tools show them to have been excellent wood-workers. They decorated their wooden houses with beautiful carving, produced pottery and are thought to have made woven fabrics. There seems to be evidence also that prior to their arrival in the islands they knew how to cultivate rice."

In further reference to these migrants to Southeast Asia, Hall (1964: 8) states:

"Another marked characteristic was the association of megaliths with their religion. These monuments comprise images, usually of ancestors, grinding stones with a magical significance, troughs in which skulls were preserved, menhirs which may have been phallic symbols, dolmens at burial places, burial chambers of long flat stones, and terrace graves."

Hall concludes that when Southeast Asia felt the first impact of Indian culture, it possessed a culture of its own. Some of the characteristics of that culture he points out were the following:

- (i) the cultivation of irrigated rice-fields,
- (ii) the domestication of the ox and the buffalo,
- (iii) animism,
- (iv) the worship of ancestors and the god of the soil,
- (v) the location of shrines on high places,

(vi) burial in jars or at dolmens,

(vii) a mythology imbued with a cosmological dualism of mountain versus sea, winged beings versus water beings, men of the mountain versus men of the sea-coast.

All of these characteristics are generally familiar in the traditions of the native people of Sabah.

A story that is widespread in the folklore of Sabah is a narrative of how the first man and woman—the ancestors of the people of Sabah—came forth from a huge stone that cracked open. Perry (1918: 83), an authority on megalithic activity in Southeast Asia, proposed that the existence of such a belief in the folklore of any group indicated that particular group had migrated to its present location after it had acquired the use of stone:

"The tale which recounts the origin of a people from ancestors who emerged from a stone is reported in Luang-Sermata, Formosa, among the Tontemboan of Minahasa, the Tangkul, Kubui and Maikel Naga of Assam, and the Chin Tribes of Upper Burma. The form of origin myth, in which the first ancestors are said to have come out of a stone, therefore appears to be recorded only among people who have migrated after acquiring the use of stone."

Another detail related to the idea of migration points to an association between the use of stone and the practice of warfare (Perry 1918: 119):

"There is good reason to believe that the stone-using immigrants are responsible for the introduction of the practice of warfare among the indigenous peoples, who, prior to their arrival, were peaceful. The evidence further suggests that head-hunting, which is the most prevalent form of warlike activity in Indonesia, is a modification of the custom of human sacrifice, which appears to be so intimately associated with the stone-using immigrants."

From all of the foregoing it seems reasonable to assume that megalithic activity in Sabah was introduced by people who migrated here from an area in mainland Asia which would now correspond to North Cambodia or south-west China. The arrival of these people in Sabah was probably between 500 B.C. and 500 A.D. The custom of erecting oath-stones is a living culture. Though nobody now living can recall the erecting of menhirs in padi fields, it is believed that the tradition was practised up to about one hundred years ago.

Over the years explanations or suggestions have been offered to account for the presence of the tall stones standing in the rice-fields. In the 1920's J. Staal (1925: 944) wrote about the religion of the Dusuns and while dealing with superstitions he described a number of customs related to the padi crop. He stated, "As soon as the padi ripens a fowl is bled to death in the field, and a little drink poured over it; this is called *memantas*." A footnote that accompanies the foregoing sentence runs, "Formerly, I was told, slaves were killed in the padi-field. At the present time one can see here and there huge stones planted in the field, to which offerings are made. Elsewhere, carved posts are met with."

An explanation commonly given for these menhirs is that they are boundary stones. In describing land tenure in the Penampang plains Monica Glyn-Jones accepted this theory but noted also the prestige that resulted from the erecting of a menhir. She wrote (1951: 15):

"Although the issuing of Titles was only begun in this century, the private ownership of land is not a new idea to the Dusun, but is part of their ancient custom. Their fields were clearly marked out by the surrounding bunds, but in the fallow season these might get trampled down, and in places they became obliterated: nor did the bunds always correspond with the boundaries. Where the boundary was questionable wooden posts or small stones were set up as markers, but many a man found that it was temptingly easy to move his neighbour's landmark. This led to bitter quarrels and even bloodshed if the disputed boundary lay between two villages rather than between two families of the same village. In Kolopis they still possess some heads from neighbouring Pagunan which may well have been taken in just such a feud. The solution to this boundary moving was to set up so great a stone that it could not be moved overnight. It is said that many of these stones were brought over the sea from the island of Gaya, and others from far away in the hills. Many men were needed with teams of buffaloes to drag these stones into the field and set them up. The men employed had to be fed while at work—a young buffalo would be killed daily—and they were given rice wine to drink. Sometimes the stones were fetched from as much as ten days' journey away so that it was an expensive undertaking. Thus to set up a great and secure boundary stone became a mark of prestige, and often when a rich man died his heirs would use half his wealth to set up a stone in his memory. When the Government surveyed the land the fields were marked by small concrete posts. These could be very easily removed, and many an enterprising Dusun extended his lands overnight until it was realised that the surveyors had the seemingly magical power of discovering these changes when next they came that way, and ordering the marker to be restored to its original position. So now the field boundaries are clearly established and should any serious dispute arise it leads not to a battle but to the law-courts."

Another observer (Regis 1977: 14) reported that the local people considered these stones as ancient boundary marks but that they also inspired trespassers with fear: "People living in the district explain them as stones of 'long, long ago', or *hugu vatu*, Kadazan for boundary stone. They say the stones were erected to mark the boundaries between one person's padi land and another's. The story has it that these *hugu* were inhabited by evil spirits which were very effective in keeping off trespassers."

Some local people explain that these stone monuments were erected by individuals who possessed such prodigious strength as to be able to carry such a stone single-handedly. One such story, for example, deals with a legendary heroine named Loguyon who was said to have erected a stone each time she acquired a new piece of padi-land (Colman 1992: 15): "The large stone was usually 8 to 10 feet [2.4–3 m] long and 2.5 to 3.5 feet [0.8–1 m] wide and weighing as much as 400 to 500 kilos. She would then proceed to carry the stone on her back, back to her newly claimed rice field 9 kilometers away. The large stone would then be planted to mark the boundary of her rice field in Kohizan Village (Nosooob Lama Village)." As a genuine explanation for the existence of these stones such stories need not be taken seriously.

Another explanation (Zaini 1969: 66) suggested to account for these menhirs is that they were erected by the people who first cleared the area; the stone monuments were to

commemorate a promise or oath between them and the spirits that were believed to inhabit the place. The purpose of the agreement was to prevent the occurrence of any disturbance or annoyance between them. While this is a plausible point, it raises the question of the uneven and irregular distribution of the menhirs in the areas of wet rice cultivation.

In a study of these menhirs in the padi-fields, Harrison & Harrison (1970: 131) stated that these stones "have nearly always been explained as 'oath stones' or 'boundary stones'." However, they felt that though there existed genuine oath-stones, those in the padi-fields did not fit into this category. The concept of these menhirs as boundary stones was also dismissed: "A study of their distribution on the Kota Kinabalu plain in relation to any conceivable boundary-marking logic soon adds up to nonsense, except in so far as one can recognise the possibility of a specific stone marking a place for some purpose, which could include both a property settlement or an 'oath' connected therewith."

Harrison & Harrison (1970: 139) suggested four themes that expressed four main situations to explain these menhirs, namely:

1. The distribution of property by the heirless (*Minagang*);
2. Status feasting and "bravery testing";
3. Funery rites; and
4. Memorialising.

They further pointed out that each of the foregoing need not necessarily be a separate category but that a menhir might be erected with two or more of the themes in mind.

In dealing with the distribution of property by the heirless, Harrison & Harrison assume that wooden monuments (*sininggazanak*) erected on the land of those who die without living children are substitutes for stone monuments. In my opinion, the wooden figures are monuments in their own right and are not substitutes. It is true that some people will say that the stones are erected on the land of those who die without direct heirs; even on a few occasions I have been told that the stones are substitutes for the wooden figures because the people involved would not go to the trouble of getting a wooden monument carved—the erecting of a stone involved less labour! Moreover, the theory of the stones representing owners of land who died without leaving children does not appear plausible when one is confronted with numerous menhirs in a small area, for example the 17 menhirs in an area of less than 60 acres (24 ha) at Kampong Kitauu, Penampang.

The second possible explanation presented by Harrison & Harrison is "status feasting and 'bravery testing' ". It is true that both of the aspects presented here were involved in the erecting of a menhir, but I would consider them to be consequential or supplementary to the primary purpose (to be presented later). The theory of bravery testing is not acceptable in the case of Kampong Tindai in the Kolopis area of Penampang. There are several menhirs in this small valley. It is said that the people here were so keen to obtain suitable stones to be erected that they agreed to exchange a piece of their land for a stone. This exchange was made with people of Kampong Pogunan, beside Penampang River. Even today some people in Pogunan own small lots of land in Tindai and the little-known explanation for this unusual phenomenon is the exchange of land for stones suitable for erection as menhirs that took place in the distant past.

The third situation dealt with by Harrison & Harrison is "funery rites". In their account it is clear that they are here referring to stones erected on hills or on raised ground where people were buried. These are different from the stones erected in the areas of wet padi: these latter are not associated with a place of burial. Consequently, "funery rites" would not account for the menhirs in the padi-fields.

The usual offering made to a spirit that is believed to reside in a menhir is food or some symbol of food. In the past an earthenware jar was sometimes partially buried close to the menhir as an additional offering. The jar is an item that has been traditionally esteemed by these people and the offering of a jar was considered a considerable gesture. While it was true that there was a custom in parts of Sabah of burying the dead in jars, this fact may have led commentators in the past to erroneously suggest or conclude that the presence of jars or broken pieces of jars near menhirs indicated that the menhirs marked places of burial.

The final motive as given by Harrison & Harrison for erecting these menhirs is "memorialising" and they suggest that this function was a by-product of the previous three. As is stated by the Harrissons, I have also been told that each stone bore in the past the name of the person responsible for erecting it or in whose name it was erected. If this were universally true it is strange that almost all the names that were intended to be immortalised have been forgotten.

An anonymous commentator (Borneo Bulletin, 30 Sept. 1978) has suggested that there may be a scientific explanation to account for the existence of these menhirs, though the source drawn on seems to apply more to cromlechs—stones erected in circular formation. In commenting on the menhirs in the rice-fields in Penampang, it is stated:

"Folk stories also tell of energetic dances, or *modsuau*, around the stones during which the dancers were said to have experienced trances or seen ghosts. A correspondent in Kota Kinabalu suggests that such stories are not necessarily nonsense. He quotes a writer, T.C. Lethbridge, as saying that if you have a large number of excited people dancing wildly around in a ring, you obviously generate a great deal of bio-electricity. 'If you carry out this performance in rings formed of stones with gaps between them, you have a form of dynamo.' Stones and trees can absorb this 'bio-electricity', he continues in a book called *The Legend Of The Sons Of God*, 'and this is the probable reason why some people see ghosts in situations which are favourable to such images being preserved.' Certainly various rituals involving dancing around stones or trees have been recorded in many parts of the world, and it would be reasonable to seek a common explanation for them all."

Some modern popular writings have postulated that many of the ancient monuments throughout the world are not the result of human endeavour but are the work of benevolent beings from outer space. Such claims have been condemned by serious scientists as entertaining fiction written by commercial writers (Story 1978: 63). At no stage of my research have I heard any suggestion that the menhirs in Sabah might have been erected by creatures from outer space.

Another explanation I have heard but never seen in writing is that people were very eager

to acquire these stones which were used as edging stones to sharpen swords in the period when head-hunting was practised—these stones endowed the swords with special powers. If this were the purpose, it is strange that stones of such a large size would be needed. Another reason for dismissing this suggestion is the fact that as far as is known, no signs exist on any of the stones that they were ever used for this purpose. Moreover, the commonly accepted fact that people had great fear of these stones would make it improbable that they would be used for sharpening swords.

Could the erection of menhirs have been undertaken in order to alleviate boredom? Story (1978: 130) stated, "There is also the perennial problem of boredom. Throughout history, man has sought new ways of alleviating his boredom, from casual amusements and distractions to arduous journeys and colossal construction projects." When we consider the struggle for survival that was needed in the past against equatorial conditions, it would seem that this theory is not applicable in the Sabah context.

In some parts of Ireland it is still possible to see standing in the middle of a field a stone similar in size to the menhirs in Sabah. Such a stone was placed there by the farmer so that cattle could scratch against it. In several instances reference has been made to buffaloes rubbing against menhirs in the padi-fields of Sabah, but it has never been suggested that the menhirs were erected for the benefit of the buffaloes!

It is possible to see outside some old taverns in England a stone that stands 0.5 to 1 m high. The purpose of such a stone was to enable horse-back riders to mount into the saddle with greater ease. For some who may have imbibed more copiously, this stone must have been particularly useful. As far as is known, no example of a standing stone having a similar purpose exists in Sabah.

ASSOCIATION WITH RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

After considerable research into the origins of these menhirs I felt that they must be associated with the religious beliefs of the people who erected them. The use of stones as monuments was part of the development of the people of this area in mankind's universal and constant search and yearning for relationship with the unseen, hidden force that animates man's inner being. When people devote time to thinking about their existence, they become convinced that there is a supernatural power which is the source of their being, which is an influencing factor in their daily lives and to which they feel drawn in the after-life. It can even be said that each individual is capable of making progress in an approach to an awareness of the supernatural because God desires the salvation of all humankind and since God has this desire it is certain that he will act on it. A term by Knitter (undated) for the disposition to respond, which is necessary in the human being is "infinite openness to infinite mystery". The erecting of menhirs in the rice-fields together with the ritualism and symbolism that accompanied it was an acknowledgement to the supernatural that man was not complete and sufficient in himself. The motivation that man experiences through spiritual animation is probably the most powerful of all, leading him to perform extraordinary physical feats. The results of these physical exertions may

appear inexplicable to those who have never understood the spiritual animation that motivated them.

"Popular religiosity" and "folk religiosity" are terms that have been introduced into studies of the religion of mankind. One opinion (Tysmans 1991: 2) tells us: "Popular religiosity is as old as the world itself and is found in all cultural milieus. People, from the more primitive traditional cultures to the more advanced civilizations, have always been aware of the divine, and have tried to keep in contact with the divine, praising the greatness of God, thanking God for favours received and petitioning for their needs."

And "folk religiosity" is explained (Swyngedouw 1991: 7) as "that undefinable whole of ideas and practices which have little to do with orthodox doctrines and obligatory observances prescribed by religious functionaries, but which nevertheless express an innate, albeit vague, familiarity with the divine."

The foregoing concepts can usefully be borne in mind while considering what the earlier inhabitants of Sabah wished to express when they erected menhirs in the rice-growing areas.

In this age of modern transportation we tend to ignore the enormous physical exertion and organisation required to transport the menhirs from their place of origin and to put them in an erect position. According to traditional accounts most of the menhirs in the west coast lowlands were obtained along the coast or on some of the off-shore islands. A large menhir in Nosoob, known as *Batu Rajah*, shows evidence of honey-comb weathering, and this type of weathering is typical only by the sea in contact with splash and spray. Menhirs were carried on a huge raft or in a type of boat known as a *padan* and transported up-river to a point as close as possible to its desired destination. Then the menhir had to be transferred onto land and hauled overland. This task was done during the period prior to rice planting when the padi-fields were muddy so that the menhir could slide more easily. For the purpose of hauling a wooden framework in the form of a rack and known as a *kangga* was fastened to the menhir (Fig. 48) and both men and buffaloes pulled it to the place where it was to be erected. Great expense and energy was expended on such a project. Further inland menhirs were usually obtained in river valleys in the hills. Transporting them often involved passing through enemy territory. To overcome the various problems and dangers involved elaborate organisation and force were needed. It is obvious, therefore, that exceptional motivation was involved in the erection of a menhir, especially the larger ones.

Beliefs that people have and practices that they observe with regard to these stones indicate a definite religious element in relation to their origin. The belief that a spirit dwells in each menhir has been very strong and widespread. The spirit entered the stone and made it its dwelling-place during the ceremony to inaugurate the monument. According to the belief of some people, particularly the elderly, there are numerous spirits and usually a special spirit is associated with any notable physical feature. But the spirits in the menhirs are believed to be very powerful and in the Penampang area are referred to

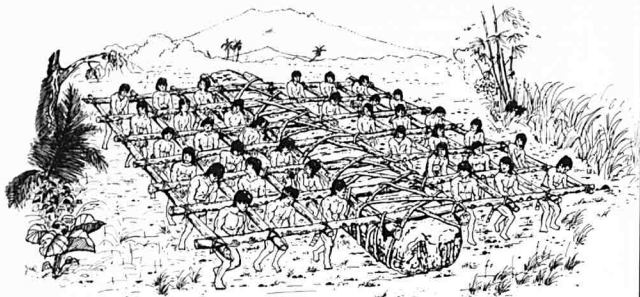


Fig. 48. On its way to where it will be erected, a menhir is hauled through the padi fields. Drawn after Fig. V/3 in Harrison & Harrison (1970) by Yap Yun Hun.

as *agazo gono*. The spirit in a menhir is considered to be either good and helpful or evil and troublesome. The general opinion seems to be that the number of menhirs possessing evil spirits is greater than those inhabited by good spirits.

The people who believe in the presence of spirits in these menhirs feel that some spirits are more powerful than others. An explanation offered (Helen Richard, pers. comm. 1971) for this variation in power among the spirits was:

"When more is spent in procuring and erecting a stone, the spirit that comes to dwell in it feels itself to be above spirits dwelling in other stones where the expenditure incurred was much less. The lavishness of the inaugurating ceremony, the number of people attending, and the size of the stone are factors that determine the power of the spirit. There is an acknowledged hierarchy among the spirits of the menhirs; more powerful ones become extremely proud and have a greater tendency to bully than the others. If they are not respected and given offerings, they create troubles in the form of sicknesses which might even lead to death, either to their owners or to anyone who angers them perhaps by provoking them as they pass by even with innocent laughter which might be taken as insulting laughter by the spirits."

Before beginning to plough a padi-field where a menhir stands, the owner would inform the spirit in the stone of his intentions, and during the work involved in planting—

ploughing, harrowing, levelling, transplanting—every action in close proximity to the stone would be carried out in such a way as not to cause any offence to the spirit. Similarly, at harvest time work would be carried out with due respect for the spirit. People who walked past a menhir would request the spirit to allow them to pass unharmed; in the past some were very afraid to pass by such a stone at night-time. In a reference to a large menhir standing in padi-land in the Penampang District it has been stated (Binjua 1991: 10):

"According to villagers in Sugud, the 'Sansaabon' megalith is believed to have supernatural powers. If one were not spiritually strong, one could fall ill by passing by without a word of courtesy to the spirits."

At the beginning of an important ceremony, such as a *magang* ceremony, the priestesses would visit the stone, sing chants there and invite the spirits in the menhirs to come and take part in the celebrations.

Some informants have said that it is only the people who own the land where the stone stands who request the help of the spirit in warding off sickness and troubles; and this request is made mainly by the presentation of offerings to the spirit rather than by actual prayer. The offerings are made during ritual celebrations such as during a *monogit* ceremony or on special occasions such as the commencement of harvesting.

In 1991 Binjulip, the most senior priestess in the Penampang area, gave her opinion that two spirits are associated with each menhir. When a hole is prepared in the ground but before the base of the stone is inserted, the *bobohizan* invite a spirit named *Penanambangan* to inhabit the area underneath the stone. And when the stone is put standing in position, a spirit named *Tampuvan* is installed in the stone. This spirit is the same one that lives in the banyan tree.

According to Binjulip such a stone is known as *tontohob*. She explained that having a *tontohob* on one's land and carrying out the ceremonies required by tradition to honour the spirit living in the stone would increase one's prosperity, particularly through a high yield of padi, fast growth and fattening of pigs, healthy buffaloes and poultry.

The owner of a menhir will at times receive a message, probably through a dream, that the time has come for the spirit in the stone to receive an offering as well as prayers. If this message is ignored or action is postponed too long, a reminder will be received. A common form of such a reminder comes after *tapai* has been made and allowed to ferment. When the jar is opened a small frog or tiny fish may appear. Such an omen is taken as a warning to the owner that further delay in honouring the spirit in the stone would probably have dire consequences.

Because of the annual celebration of the Harvest Festival it is generally known that the rice-farmers of Sabah believed that there was a special spirit named *Bambaazon* or *Bambarayon* to protect the rice from disease and to enhance its yield at harvest time. At the end of the harvest a ceremony is held to take *Bambaazon* from the field to the rice-barn where the rice is stored so that *Bambaazon* will continue to look after the rice. This

ceremony is known as *magavau* and is the central theme of the Harvest Festival celebrations.

Nowadays, however, many are unaware that the animists of old in Sabah believed that there were seven types of rice-souls under a chief rice-soul and that *Bambaa'zon* was a general title for all the types. The main explanation to account for the menhirs, sometimes called *tontolob*, in the padi-fields is associated with one of the seven types of rice-soul. A quotation from "The Religion of the Tempasuk Dusuns" (Evans 1953: 216) referring to the rice-soul helps us to understand the thinking of the people who probably erected these menhirs:

"there are seven kinds of rice-souls and a class of chiefs in addition; a rich man may possess one of each kind, while a poor man, poor in rice for that season, may have only one or two. The eight categories are:

1. *Ohinopot*
2. *Ohinomod*
3. *Sambilod*
4. *Gontolobon*
5. *Momiaud*
6. *Momiudan*
7. *Sompidot*
8. *Kambang*

The names of the *bambara'iyon* indicate their qualities or duties. *Ohinopot* are the chiefs and the name means 'inexhaustible', as will be the padi of those whom they favour. One man may have much padi, but it will be finished quickly, while another, favoured by *Ohinopot*, with comparatively little in his store bins, will find his supply inexhaustible.

Ohinomod is derived from *asamod*, 'generous', as are the *Samod*, the spirits who give, and look after, coconut toddy. *Sambilod*, 'one grain of broken rice', comes from *ombilod*, 'broken rice', and it is the duty of this class of *bambara'iyon* to look after broken rice and see that there is not too great a proportion of it. *Gontolobon* give rice piled up in huge quantities like boulders (*tontolob*) (Fig. 49) and it is to please these rice-souls that a stone is placed in the field when the rice-soul is taken. The *Momiaud* and *Momiudan* give padi like springs of water that well up

Fig. 49 A well-rounded menhir whose surface has been made even smoother by the rubbing of buffaloes; this exists close to the river at Maras-garas, Tambunan.



ceaselessly, their names being derived from *aud* and *tudanon*, both meaning 'a spring of water'. *Sompidot* give *opidot*, full grain in the ear, while *Kambang* make the rice grains swell (*kambang*) and become large in the cooking-pot.

I am told that at Kadamaian the belief is that if a poor man has only one rice-soul it will be a *Sambilod*, or, if two, an *Ohinopot* and a *Sambilod*. Even the one soul may desert him to go to a rich man's house, where there is plenty of padi, only returning when the poor man has a little padi in store. The *Ohinopot*, too, like to go backwards and forwards and to visit rich men's houses."

However, the information that is very significant in the foregoing interesting extract from Evans is that "it is to please these rice-souls (*Gontolobon*) that a stone is placed in the field when the rice-soul is taken". Perhaps Evans did not fully understand the information given to him; his statement could be interpreted to mean that a new stone was placed in the padi-field at the end of the harvesting of each crop and that Evans was thinking in terms of relatively small stones. However, any doubts that might exist regarding the connection between the menhirs and the rice-soul, *Gontolobon*, is cleared up in another source: in a talk about the Sabah Harvest Festival prepared for Radio Malaysia Sabah, Dr. James Ongkili (1970: 2) stated:

"*Gontolobon* was to assist in returning a harvest which would be plentiful and piled up in huge quantities like a *tontohob* or boulder. It is for this reason that one may sometimes find a big boulder planted upright in Sabah rice fields. The stones were erected in honour of *Gontohobon*."

(In the Kadazan/Dusun language the letters 'h' and 'l' are often interchangeable, consequently *Gontolobon* in one area may be *Gontohobon* in another.)

At the present time few, if any, are aware of the names of the seven kinds of spirits. In 1990 a senior priestess in Penampang was unable to name them. However, there is a possible relationship between the seven spirits and an item used during the *Magavau* ceremony which is held at the time of the Harvest Festival. The central item to which the main attention of the priestesses is devoted is an object known as *tinumpuun*. This consists of seven elements which are arranged together symbolically and one of them is a small stone named *pangasa'an*. Frequently a piece of sharpening stone is selected. The stone continues to endure in spite of constant use and this is a symbol of constancy in the supply of padi—all the padi will never be used up.

Another example of the symbolism of a stone in relation to the supplication of the padi-spirit for a plentiful and enduring supply of rice is found in the Tambunan district. Here in the large containers of padi (*tangkob*) one can still occasionally see a stone resting on part of the *tangkob* or on the rice grains. The stone chosen for use may be an ordinary rounded one but the type usually found has a peculiar shape—this peculiarity can take any form, frequently a hollow worn in the stone by the erosive action of river water. The normal place to go to select such a stone is a river course and the section particularly auspicious is a river confluence. The selection should be made by an elderly person. Such stones vary in volume from the size of an egg to that of a football.

Such a stone is said to be a symbol of plenitude; the main idea here is that the supply of rice will be as enduring as stone. Elderly informants stated that the name by which the stone is known is *Bambarayon*. This is the general name in Dusun/Kadazan of the rice-spirit. In the past it was believed that the padi-spirit (*Bambarayon*) lived in this stone. At certain times of the year, but especially when the new harvest was stored in the *tangkob*, prayers were recited and *Bambarayon* was wined and dined with rice, chicken and *tapai* (rice wine). Most of the farmers no longer call upon a priestess to recite prayers to the spirit of the padi and to place the stone in the *tangkob* of newly harvested rice; however, in some instances where the tradition has ceased, this type of stone has not been got rid of and is still kept in the *sulap* (rice-hut).

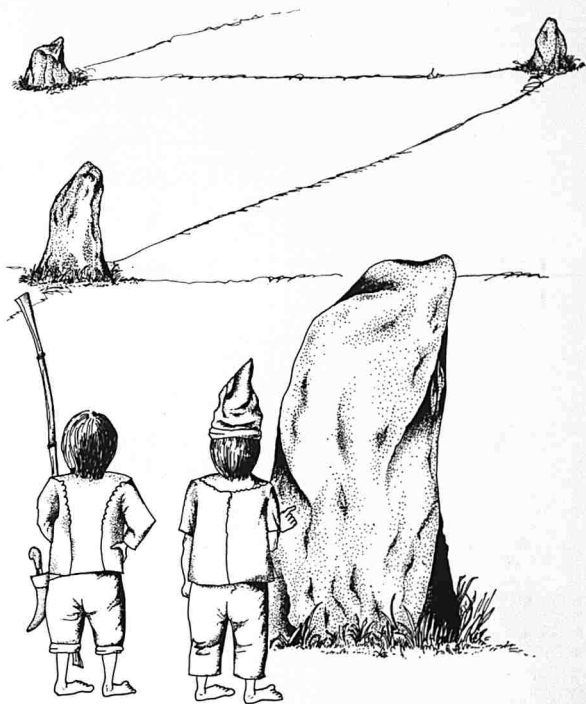
The erection of the stones in the padi-fields emanated from a spiritual motivation to seek the fertility of the rice crop. It is probable that each menhir in the padi-fields was erected by a family rather than by a village: Gotowik, a male *bobolian* in Tambunan, feels strongly that this was the case. In order to enhance the fertility of the soil and procure an abundant yield of rice the name of a prosperous or successful farmer was sometimes associated with a menhir. This is the case with the menhir named *Motinggam* in Tambunan: Motinggam is reputed to have been a recognised expert in deciding when to proceed with the work of preparation for planting rice, and we may presume he proved himself an expert in all stages of the cultivation of the crop (see also Chapter 1).

This custom of erecting menhirs as a fertility rite is recorded among the people of the Naga Hills in Assam, even though this function was considered to be less important than the erecting of menhirs as memorials for the dead and as memorials for a feast of merit. In reference to the findings of von Furer-Haimendorf (1939), W.F. Schneeberger (1979: 70) states:

"According to the author, there is also a third element involved in so far as the ceremonies held in connection with the erecting of menhirs, i.e. the sacrificing of buffaloes, the dowsing of the stones with the blood of those animals by the host and his wife, and the formulas accompanying the act, are pointing to a fertility rite. He is excluding a phallic significance of the menhir, though, and writes on the subject as follows: 'The beneficial influence of the menhirs on the fertility of the crops seems to lie in their function of establishing a connection between the living and the dead, rather than in their phallic character. The magical "virtue" inherent in a man of exceptional wealth is believed to emanate from him and to enter the stones he sets up, dwelling there after his death and benefitting the whole community by increasing the fertility of the crops.'"

These comments about traditions in Assam remind us of the custom in Sabah of pouring on menhirs the blood of animals offered to the spirits during a *magang* ceremony (Phelan 1994: 33). One animist sect among the Kadazan of Sabah pour rice-wine on the menhirs. At the opening of a seven-day *magang* ceremony held in 1974, such a group visited all the menhirs and wooden monuments in the rice-growing area between Kepyayan (Kota Kinabalu) and Kampong Sindina'an. In all, nine monuments were visited and annointed

Fig. 50. (Opposite) "One thing is sure boss: some people will be cracking their nut in future years wondering what we were up to". (Drawn by Ireneus Soimon)



with rice-wine while prayers were being chanted. This custom seems to be very old and is possibly a genuine remnant of the original inauguration ceremony of a stone.

This theory of devotion or attention to the rice-soul for the procuring of fertile harvests can lead to speculation with regard to localities within the megalithic belt where menhirs abound: the greater number of stones erected in the rice-fields can lead us to muse on the following possibilities:

- (a) The people here were more prosperous than average; only those who would obtain good yields from their rice would erect menhirs. Before the introduction of a monetary economy, the concept of wealth was based mainly on the quantity of the rice yield and the number of buffaloes owned.
- (b) The people of such a locality were more religious in sentiment than the average in so far as they had greater recourse to a supernatural power for successful harvests.
- (c) Suitable stones were more abundantly available in, or close to, the locality.

In summary, it can be stated that the erecting of the menhirs in the padi-fields of Sabah was associated with the religious beliefs of the people. Each menhir was erected by a family with the dual purpose of honouring one of the seven kinds of rice-soul, namely *Gontolobon*, while at the same time asking from that spirit greater fertility for the rice crop. No doubt several other elements, such as feasting and memorialising, were involved in so spectacular a project. The custom of erecting the menhirs probably commenced in Sabah at a time between 500 B.C. and 500 A.D. and the practice was continued up to about the end of the nineteenth century. Over the centuries, various new customs and beliefs were associated with the stone monuments with the result that their original function has almost been forgotten and their origin is mainly a mystery even to the descendants of the people who erected them (Fig. 50).

SININGGAZANAK—WOODEN MONUMENTS TO THE CHILDLESS

THE TRADITION OF ERECTING SININGGAZANAK

Prior to the middle of the twentieth century a custom widespread in practice among the Kadazans of the Penampang-Putatan-Kinarut region was the commemoration of a childless person. With appropriate celebration a wooden monument, known as a *sininggazanak* (Fig. 51 and Fig. 52), was erected on the deceased person's land by the member of the family or relative who had the strongest claim to inherit the property. This



Fig. 51. (Above) This *sininggazanak*, reaching a height of 4.3 m, was the tallest seen. Puuntunoh Primary School, Penampang, is much hidden by the trees in the background (1973).

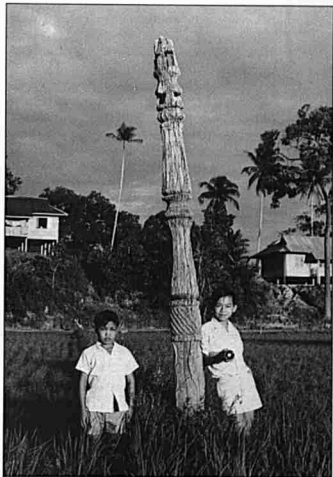


Fig. 52. (Right) A *sininggazanak* at Kampong Baru, Putatan (1971).

served (a) to commemorate the name of the deceased person, and (b) to establish lawful claim to the property.

The property could not be handed down in the direct line because no direct heir existed, but it was "passed on sideways" to a blood relative, usually to a brother or sister, nephew or niece. A relationship resulting from marriage, as wife or husband, brother-in-law or sister-in-law, of the deceased was not considered sufficient to qualify for inheritance rights. The property reverted to the relatives of the original owner.

Glyn-Jones (1951: 21) explained the inheritance in the following manner:

"All inherited land—known in Malay as *pusaka*—belongs strictly to the family. If a man dies childless his *pusaka* will go back to his brothers or nephew, not to his wife. Similarly a woman's *pusaka* will go to her relatives and not to her husband and his family. Occasionally the childless couple will adopt a son or daughter—frequently the child of a close relative. If this adoption is certified before the Headman then the child may inherit. Land or other property which a man and his wife acquire during their life-time is called, in Malay, *pencherian*. This will be handed on to the children and become their *pusaka* but if the couple have no children, two-thirds of the *pencherian* belong to the man and must go to his relatives on his death. The wife may not keep it. Similarly the one-third belonging to the woman must go to her relatives and cannot be kept by the man."

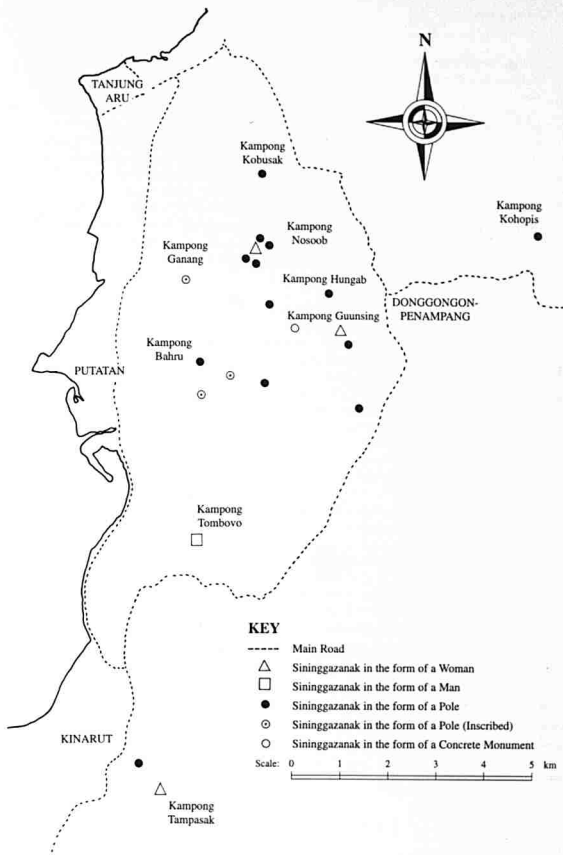
Some Kadazans of the Kinarut area maintain that this custom of all of the property of a partner in a childless marriage reverting to the original owner's next-of-kin need not necessarily happen. There is a practice known in Kadazan as *koimanan* by which the owner of the property may, for personal reasons, give part of his/her property to the other partner in marriage: for instance, if the husband feels that his wife has been very devoted to him throughout their married life and for that she deserves to have some of the property. But unless the husband has given word that she should acquire some of his land she has no right over it because "the property belongs to other people". Moreover, the amount given in this way cannot exceed one half. (In Kadazan the word *koimanan* is rarely used but it may be used to indicate any kind of gift.)

In "The Prehistory Of Sabah" Harrison & Harrison (1970: 147) suggest that in 1969 there were only two *sininggazanak* commemorating childless persons; but, in fact, there were at least twenty (Fig. 53).

Of these twenty *sininggazanak* still in existence in 1974 three were carved figures of women; one was the carved image of a man; and another sixteen were carved poles. Inscriptions occur on three of the *sininggazanak*. The erection of a concrete and tiled monument in a padi-field in Kampong Suok as recently as 1970 also was inspired by the tradition of perpetuating the name of a childless person by using a *sininggazanak*.

From Harris (1969: 3) we get the impression that in former times these *sininggazanak* were more numerous. However with the establishment of the Lands and Survey Department and the granting of Title Deeds from 1902 onwards, the necessity for

Fig. 53. (Opposite) Distribution of *sininggazanak* in the Penampang-Putatan-Kinarut region in 1976.



continuing the tradition was not always felt even though the custom was in some cases still practised. It would also seem from Harris (1969: 3) that the region where this custom was honoured was more extensive than suggested by Harrisson & Harrisson, extending southwards at least as far as Kimanis.

During the past century several references have been made to what most likely were *sininggazanak*, but the authors of those references seem to have been unaware of the real significance of the wooden monuments. John Whitehead visited North Borneo in the 1880's to make a study of the flora and fauna of Mount Kinabalu. In his book describing his experiences he stated (1893: 26) that he spent two days in Putatan and he described a visit he made to a Dusun house there. In his account he remarked, "On our way home we came across a peculiar carved wooden figure which was placed as a landmark." It seems very probable that he was referring to a *sininggazanak* but unfortunately it is not possible to determine the exact locality.

In a description of the Putatan district as it was in 1884 (Tregonning 1965: 32), we read: "The rich alluvial plain, which lay at the foot of towering Mount Kinabalu, was used mainly for rice cultivation of a most elaborate kind, with dykes, sluices, levels and methods of work comparable to Burma. Private ownership was clearly marked; boundaries firmly shown by stone and wooden landmarks, some standing seven feet [2.1 m] high, and in many cases carved to represent a human figure. The inhabitants were mainly Dusuns who for years had suffered the depredations of their Brunei Malay masters."

Here again it is probable that the observer was unaware of the traditional custom of erecting *sininggazanak* and considered them to be "wooden landmarks".

During the 1920's another commentator, Staal, made a brief reference to such monuments when he wrote (1925: 94): "At the present time one sees here and there huge stones planted in the field, to which offerings are made. Elsewhere, carved posts are met with." The word "elsewhere" in this quotation may suggest that huge stones and carved posts were not found in the same locality; this would be a false impression, as there are instances of stone monuments and wooden monuments being within easy sighting distance of one another.

Owen Rutter (1929: 231) was aware of the name *sininggazanak* but his knowledge of it was second-hand and probably inaccurately expressed. He wrote:

"Mr. A.N. Garry, making some enquiries on my behalf when District Officer, Jesselton, informs me that in some villages of the Putatan group beyond the sphere of influence of the Roman Catholic Mission, wooden images are carved into rough semblance of human beings, usually only a head being formed. This image is known as *singinanak*. It probably represents the guardian spirit of the house but, though held in awe and never mocked at, it is propitiated only in cases of illness which are definitely ascribed to its influence by the elders of the village."

A Kadazan dictionary (Antonissen 1958: 255) gives: *sininggazanak*, doll, statue; ...*do sambaon*, idol. *Sininggazanak* is also the word used for a mannequin in the display window of a drapery store. The use of this word for a carved wooden monument even when the monument is an ornamented pole indicates that it is the representation of a person. Some elderly Kadazans say that the word *tomboizu* or *tinomboizu* may be used instead of *sininggazanak*; however, this word was unknown to many people who were consulted.

The carved wooden object may take any form, the usual being the figure of a man or woman or a decorated pole. No agreement can be found for the idea of "male" and "female" monuments as put forward in "The Prehistory Of Sabah". According to local opinion the type of monument is a question of skill in carving: if a person has the ability to carve a figure he will do so; otherwise he will carve or have carved an ornamental pole.

It was customary in some places, for example in Kampong Bahang, to erect a carved wooden post at each of the four corners of a grave. These posts vary in height from 1 m to 2 m above the ground and are made of hardwood (*tomindaaton*). Frequently they enclose a burial plot of two or three graves. They bear a similar pattern of carving to many of the *sininggazanak*. Sometimes a grave has a roof over it and in this case the supports at each of the four corners again bear the same style of carving. Younger people refer to the cornerposts as *todsok* which means a pillar or column (supporting a building). Older people say that the correct name is *tinomboizu* or *sininggazanak*. It seems, therefore, that the carved shape of the tall wooden poles in padi-fields commemorating childless individuals who were former owners of these padi-lands is derived from the design of the cornerposts of graves (Fig. 54 and Fig. 55).

The carving of the monument was sometimes done by the family of the deceased but in some cases a craftsman was employed. According to Harrison & Harrison (1970: 148) if a craftsman was hired to carve the *sininggazanak* the traditional fee was "a bundle of



Fig. 54. *Tinomboizu*: corner-posts round a grave at Kampong Bahang, Penampang (1970).

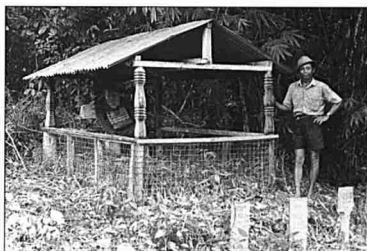


Fig. 55. Roof over a grave and supported by four carved corner-posts in Kampong Gusing, Penampang (1970).

padi, 10 *gantang* (27 kg) of rice, a black *sarong* cloth and a chicken". It seems probable that a misinterpretation is involved here. "Bundle" should probably read *bandu* which is equivalent to 10 *gantang*. It is usual to speak of a *bandu* of padi and a *gantang* of rice.

According to Harrison & Harrison (1970: 147) the type of wood from which the *sininggazanak* is carved is "locally known as *tembusu*, scientifically *Fagraea cochinchinensis* [*Fagraea fragrans*]. *Tembusu* or *tempasuk* is a Malay name. It is sometimes referred to in English as 'iron wood'. In Kadazan the name of the tree from which the wood is obtained is *tomindaaton*. This tree, like some others, has a distinct hard core. If the bark and the wood next to the bark are removed to a depth of a few centimeters (depending on the size of the tree) one will come to a yellow or orange-tinted layer. From there inwards the wood is extremely hard and durable. Kadazans refer to it as *hugu* (*lugu*). A phrase that is used to describe it is *tuhang do kazu*—the bone of the wood.

The *hugu* is very durable. However its durability may have been underestimated. Harrison & Harrison (1970: 147) state: "The local view is that the wood would not last more than about 50 years in the open." This may be a very 'local' opinion. One *sininggazanak* which is still in a very sound state bears an inscription and the year 1912 (Fig. 56). If it was erected in 1912 (as it seems to have been), it has been standing up to the elements well for 80 years and it is likely to last as long again. Some of the existing *sininggazanak* are older than the most senior inhabitants.



Sometimes a piece of wood that had been already cut down and seasoned underneath the house might be used. However, according to custom the branch or tree should not be felled during the first half of the moon: if this requirement were not adhered to, the wood would not last long but would decay rapidly. This same belief is still held by many elderly people and it applies to timber of any kind used for any purpose.

In the Kinarut area it is said that the man who carves the wooden monument must eat well throughout the duration of his work; he must have chicken to eat and not fish. It is also said in the same area that a woman or girl may not look at the object while the carving is in progress.

Fig. 56. *Sininggazanak* erected in 1912 at Kotiduvan to commemorate Ginanjil (a 1971 photograph).

Many people believe that there is a spirit in the existing *sininggazanak*. The spirit looks after the fields for the deceased person. If it happens that a *sininggazanak* leans to one side the owner of the field will not attempt to straighten it. Even if it falls, nothing will usually be done. Only if a *bobohizan* (priestess) is brought to the *sininggazanak* can it be interfered with.

It is said that once when a group of people were working in the padi-fields in Kodundungang a man, for fun, put a cigarette in the mouth of *Sininggazanak Tondu'*. Later when he reached home he was stricken with pains—a sort of rheumatism. The people believed it was a punishment for belittling the monument. However, he must have made sufficient reparation for his misdemeanour because it is reported that he recovered and died a natural death.



Fig. 57. Female figure atop a *sininggazanak* at Kampong Dovunsu, Penampang (1972).

Less fortunate was the man in the Dovunsu area. Located there in an old cemetery was what must at one time have been a well executed carving (0.8 m in height) of a woman on top of a pedestal (1.9 m high) (Fig. 57). The man was responsible for a fire in the cemetery, seemingly in connection with the collection of fruit. Many people considered it a miracle that the *sininggazanak* was not burned but only blackened. The belief in the presence of a spirit or spirits in the monument was reinforced next morning when the thoughtless man was found dead in his house.

The ceremony of erecting a *sininggazanak* was accompanied by a certain amount of ritual. Prayers were chanted by the *bobohizan*. They installed one or more good spirits into the monument. While the prayers were being recited women formed a circle around the *sininggazanak* and fanned with winnows so that the spirit of the *sininggazanak* would not be able to land on any of those present—an eventuality that could result in death.

In Kadazan there is a word for a childless person, namely *nopunso*. The Kadazan dictionary gives: *nopunso*, childless, to have been exterminated (Antonissen 1958: 212). In Kadazan culture very high regard is given to the idea of having offspring. It is not easy to obtain a clear explanation for the importance placed on having direct heirs. One or several of the following reasons are usually given:

- The *nopunso* will have no one to look after them in their old age;
- The *nopunso* will have no one to arrange their funeral;

The *nopunso* will have no one to pay them respect;
The *nopunso* will have no one by whom they will be remembered;
The *nopunso* will have no one to take over their inheritance.

Possibly the most important factor is not mentioned in this list. Kadazans accept many things as being "natural". It is doubtful, however, if the people of the Penampang region have as absolute a view on this topic as that portrayed of the Sunsuron area by Williams (1965: 84):

"It is believed a man or woman's duty is to marry and have children. A bachelor or spinster is considered to be 'unfair', and it is commonly said of such persons, *atebat au asukog*, 'they have wasted themselves in not having children'."

This notion of the importance of procreation and the leaving of direct descendants is widespread in the cultures of the world and is also a very ancient concept. In an account of the Dusun of North Borneo written in the early 1920's Staal (1924: 968) stated: "Being very ready to curse (*manau*) there are a good many curses. The principal are: 'may you fall dead', 'be seized by a crocodile', 'remain childless' (*nopunso*), 'may your children die', 'your plantation be destroyed'." Of the five examples of principal curses given, two refer to the question of having direct descendants. In the past the only desire or purpose in life that was greater was the instinct to preserve one's own life.

There is no word in Kadazan for either bachelor or spinster, except for a young unmarried man (*tanak vagu* or *tanak vadsut*) and an unmarried girl (*sumandak* or *huahangai*).

If there is a *sininggazanak* already on a property, then another cannot be erected even on a separate piece of padi-land in another locality. After repeated discussion on the reason for this, the following explanation was provided by Alice Joseph (1972: pers. comm.): "When the first *sininggazanak* was erected, it signified that the land belonged to a person with no direct heir (*nopunso*). Even when the land passed on to the owner's next-of-kin it still belonged in name to the late owner; in other words, the land passes from generation to generation with the *nopunso*'s name always attached to it. (But this does not mean that the name must be retained in the Title Deeds, which at any stage reveal the real (legal) owner of the land). Only the *sininggazanak*, as long as it lasts, helps to retain the name. If a second *sininggazanak* were to be erected on the same property, and since that *sininggazanak* commemorates another person, it would mean that the first person's name would sort of be erased or would not be as important anymore. The two *sininggazanak* would give the impression that there were two owners at the same time which would not be true at all".

When erected, the *sininggazanak* should bear the name of the childless person whom it commemorates, for example *Sininggazanak Gudang* at Kinoundau, Nahabus or *Sininggazanak Tokihou* at Masang, Nabangkong. However, in some cases the name of the person commemorated has been forgotten and only the name *sininggazanak* is used. In the case of a very old figure of a woman at Kodundungang the common reference to it is *Sininggazanak Tondur*—woman statue (Fig. 58); there are four *sininggazanak* in the form of carved poles in the same plain.



Fig. 59. (Right) Minogindai, or visiting a *sininggazanak* during a *magang* ceremony; *hisad* leaves are placed on the *sininggazanak* (1974).

Fig. 58. (Left) The *Sininggazanak Tendu* at Kodundungang Nosoob, Penampang (1973).



It is interesting to compare this custom with a similar event recorded in the Bible (2 Sam. 18: 18) (Good New Bible 1979: 321): "During his lifetime Absalom had taken a pillar and erected it for himself in the King's Valley, for he said, 'I have no son to perpetuate my name'. The pillar which he named for himself is called Yadabshalom to the present day."

There are probably many proverbs and axioms in various languages that refer to this instinct of self-propagation and the perpetuation of one's memory; one such maxim is, "He does not die who leaves behind a son". A well-known Malay proverb is related to the concept of having one's name remembered after death:

"Harimau mati, meninggalkan belang;

Gajah mati, meninggalkan gading;

Manusia mati, meninggalkan nama."

Translated, this means:

A tiger dies, it leaves its stripes;

An elephant dies, it leaves its tusks;

When someone dies, they leave their name.

These monuments are still part of the living culture of the people. When a *magang* (feast lasting seven days) is held, any *sininggazanak* and *pampang* (menhir—stone monument) in the locality must be visited and ceremonies performed there. On 6 April, 1974 four *sininggazanak* and four *pampang* in Nosoob area were visited by a group of about twenty men led by a "priest" from Sukang named Lobinjang. The *sininggazanak* and *pampang* were treated similarly. Five men carrying flags stood round the monument (Fig. 59); they

recited prayers and at intervals the rest sang in chorus; a piece of *hisad* (a leaf belonging to the *Licuala* palm) was inserted into the ground beside each monument (if there were cracks or suitable cavities in the *sininggazanak*, the *hisad* was inserted into the wood); some *tapai* (an alcoholic drink made from rice) was poured on the monument; four men carried specially prepared pieces of bamboo (*tobuii*) through which they blew at intervals and produced sounds similar to those made by a trumpet (Fig. 60). This took place on the first day of a *magang* that was held at a house in Kampong Koidupan. Three *bobohizan* waited at the house for the return of the group.

How widespread was this tradition of erecting a *sininggazanak* to perpetuate the name of a childless person? The straight-line distance between the most northerly and the most southerly of the twenty known *sininggazanak* is slightly over 11 km. However, as stated earlier, this custom seems to have been practised in the Kimanis area, about 48 km further south.

The customs of the Kadazan/Dusun are far from uniform. Owen Rutter (1929: 11) writes that "it is rarely, if ever, safe to say that such-and-such is a Dusun custom unless the statement is qualified by the name of the group among whom the custom has been noted; for custom may vary to a surprising degree in areas no more than a day's march apart." And I.H.N. Evans (1953: 6) states: "You cannot speak generally about Dusun religion—it varies from village to village."

Writing about the Dusun of the Tempasuk valley (north-east of Kota Belud), Evans (1953: 130) states: "At Kadamaian, if a rich man dies without children, his property—gongs, brass-ware, etc. may be buried with him." But he makes no reference to any wooden monument being erected on his padi land. Later he gives a short account of the funeral of a childless person, in whose memory we might expect a *sininggazanak* to have been erected, but there is no mention of such: "On 19th March, 1947 Gampus, a retired headman of the village, passed away at Tambatuon... At first, as Gampus was a



Fig. 60. The playing of the *tobuii* during the *minogindai* (1974).

universally admired and much-loved character, there was talk of making the funeral public, but his elder brother, who inherited the property, there being no wife or children, decided that custom would have to be followed in paying *sogit* and *pamanggor* and that, therefore, the burial should be private as, otherwise, the property would not be able to stand the charges for these customary payments. It was, therefore, intimated to me that I was not expected to attend."



Does any custom similar to that of erecting a *sininggazanak* exist outside Sabah? It is interesting to read the following (Ogden 1973: 15) about the Batak people of the Lake Toba region of Sumatra:

"In the old, spirit-haunted Batak culture, the rites of passage were more important, probably, than any other in human life. To lay the ghost of one who had died without descendants, a life-size image was made, the *Si Galegale* (pronounced "see-golly-golly")."

Each wooden monument found in Sabah has a story to tell and an account of some of these may help to make the custom more vivid. The accounts of some *sininggazanak* that follow refer to the commemoration of childless individuals who died and were buried far away from their place of origin. Perhaps there was a stronger desire to carry out the ceremony and continue the tradition in the cases of those who died far away. But it seems that the majority of *sininggazanak* commemorate childless persons who are buried within their own district.

THE *SININGGAZANAK* AT KAMPONG TAMPASAK, KINARUT

The most celebrated *sininggazanak* is the one of Kampong Tampasak near Kinarut (Fig. 61). Beside the bridge where the Kota Kinabalu-Papar Road crosses the Sungei Kinarut there is a narrow road that goes eastwards along the north or right bank of the Kinarut River. This road passes near Kampong Sondoton, Kampong Sunag, Kampong Tampasak and Kampong Pinsodon on its way to the Satellite-Earth Station at

Fig. 61. The *sininggazanak* at Kampong Tampasak commemorating Zinggami (the length of the portion drawn here is 1.7 m). (Drawn by Susan Willie)

Binulang. The *sininggazanak* is located on the left side of this road and 2.4 km from the Kota Kinabalu-Papar Road. It is in a padi-growing valley which is sparsely populated: nevertheless, all available padi-land is cultivated.

The plot of land on which the *sininggazanak* is erected was surveyed by the Lands and Survey Department in 1913 and this piece of padi-land is recorded as being located in Kampong Tabangkas. But the name of Kampong Tabangkas is not in use nowadays. However, the stream that runs nearby is called Tibangkos. If local residents are now asked the location of the monument, they will probably answer 'Kampong Pinsodon'. But, strictly speaking, Kampong Pinsodon is the elevated ground or small hill to the northeast of the *sininggazanak*, where there are a few dwellings. Both Kampong Tabangkas and Kampong Pinsodon would be within the larger region named Kampong Tampasak: the *Ketua Kampong* of Kampong Tampasak is the *Ketua Kampong* of the people of Kampong Pinsodon.

The original wooden *sininggazanak* was removed by agreement with the owner from its original site to the Sabah Museum in 1965. The terms of this agreement are given by Harrison & Harrison (1970: 148):

"As these figures are safely in the Sabah Museum they can be more exactly studied than was possible in the field and we hope someone will do this presently. Their removal was initiated when E.J.H. Berwick was the first Curator (1963-64) and involved considerable negotiations as the whole community felt implicated while admitting Lajumin's personal property right. In the end the transfer was agreed against payment of a water-buffalo, a pig and a chicken (together worth 230 Malaysian Ringgit) and 50 Malaysian Ringgit in cash, provided concrete replicas were put up to replace the figures in exactly the same positions. This offer was accepted and the wooden originals were taken to Kota Kinabalu in November, 1965. The Public Works Department there, first made exact wooden replicas, then concrete cast copies for erection back in the fields (Fig. 62). The results, now to be seen in the Sabah Museum and on Kemuje's rice-fields, do great credit to craftsman Charles Jonioh and foreman Ho Chen Hwei, working under mechanical engineer M.H. Leonard."

The authors of "The Prehistory of Sabah" are referring above to two wooden monuments one of which they term as "female" and the other as "male". Their account is inaccurate in that only one of the monuments (the "female" figure) was removed to the Sabah Museum and replaced by a concrete replica. The other wooden monument is still (1995) in its place in the padi-field. It was removed and an attempt at producing a concrete replica was unsuccessful. This was strange because it should have been a much simpler task than producing a replica of the *sininggazanak* depicting a woman in a sitting position. It was said that there were too many crevasses in the wood to make an accurate copy possible. The museum authorities then offered to make a wooden replica and erect it in the padi-field. The owners would not agree to this because they felt that the wood that would be used in the replica would not be durable—the P.W.D. workers are reputed to have said that they could not get any *tomindaaton* wood. Eventually, the *kampong* folk demanded that if a concrete replica could not be erected, then the original *sininggazanak* should be returned to its place. This is what was finally done: the *sininggazanak* was not only put back in its

former position but was put leaning at the same angle and restored as far as possible to the state in which it had been before removal. There was no alteration, however, in the payment originally agreed to. The Museum authorities felt that they could not re-negotiate since they had not carried out their side of the agreement.

It is misleading to use the name "Lajumin" in the context of the foregoing quotation. The authors probably wish to refer to Komuje bin Lajumin, whom they mention on Page 147. Komuje bin Lajumin means "Komuje, the son of Lajumin". However, the father of Komuje was Mohunggal and today relatives say that they have never heard of anyone with the name Lajumin. In any case, the father of Komuje (Komuji) married into the family and, consequently, had no 'personal property rights' over land owned by his wife, Kiayam, or by his wife's aunts. His son, Komuje (Komuji), being a son also of Kiayam did have the right of inheritance.

The *sininggazanak* of Kampong Tampasak consists of a female figure in a sitting position on top of a pedestal. The original, including figure and pedestal, is one continuous piece of wood and from top to bottom measures 2.6 m. A length of 70 cm was below ground level and so the top of the figure was 1.9 m above ground level. The height of the actual figure on the pedestal is 1 m.

The seated figure is very erect. The hands are resting on the knees. There is a conical hat of the type locally made and worn by Kadazan women. The craftsman who carved the



Fig. 62. The *sininggazanak* at Kampong Tampasak, Kinarut, 1973; the figure is that of a female.

monument did not provide the figure with any further form of clothing. The pair of small breasts indicate that it is a woman. According to Harrison & Harrison (1970: 147), "The treatment of the face, and particularly the hollowing of the 'eye' is unusual in Borneo wood-carving."

The posture of the figure is unusual in so far as it is rare to see a rural Kadazan lady in a similar position. Normally, when seated, Kadazan women farmers sit on the floor with their feet stretched out straight in front of them or with their feet tucked in beneath them, or they adopt a "tailor's" position, that is, sitting cross-legged on the floor. When this incongruity was pointed out to some kampong folk, an immediate reply was made to the effect that the wood in the monument would last much longer when the figure was carved in this more upright position—there is better run-off for rain water and the figure could better withstand the elements. Another possible explanation for this posture of the figure is, of course, the size and shape of the carving material available. In this case the trunk of the *tomindaaton* tree is used, which, though common, is not plentiful. The circumference of the monument at knee-level is 84 cm; the width at the elbows is 34.3 cm; therefore, the trunk of the tree worked on must have had a diameter of at least 53.3 cm.

On the pedestal immediately beneath the feet are carved lines or bands that gently spiral around the pedestal. This section is 10 cm in depth. It is a feature found on practically all cylindrical *sininggazanak*. Beneath it is another common feature of bowl-shape design and 33 cm from top to bottom. Next, between two inset carved rings 8.9 cm apart, is a pattern of X's—six in all—encircling the pedestal. This particular feature is unusual as it is not found on any of the other *sininggazanak*.

The similarity between this figure and the *sininggazanak* at Kampong Tombovo (Kampong Kapazan), which commemorates a man, is so great that it is likely that the maker of the second must have seen the first and it is possible that the same craftsman carved both. The *sininggazanak* at Kampong Tombovo is probably the older. A notable difference between the two is the absence of ornamental carving on the pedestal section of the Tombovo *sininggazanak*. The similarity between the two monuments is brought out by a comparison of the following measurements:

	Tampasak	Tombovo
height above ground	1.9 m	2.1 m
height of the figure	1.0 m	1.1 m
circumference at knee-level	0.8 m	0.9 m
circumference of waist	43 cm	44 cm
pedestal to the top of knees	29 cm	32 cm
distance between the knees	12 cm	12 cm
distance between the feet	11 cm	12 cm
circumference of neck	29 cm	30 cm
height of block used as a seat	20 cm	25 cm
width of block used as a seat	21–23 cm	15 cm
width of square section of pedestal	21 cm	25 cm

THE *SININGGAZANAK* AT TANGA, KINARUT

The second wooden monument referred to in "The Prehistory of Sabah" is located about 0.4 km from the main Kota Kinabalu-Papar Road. It is centrally situated in a padi-plain and to the local farmers that particular area of the plain is known as Tanga (*tanga* means "centre"). According to the District Land Register the lot of land on which the *sininggazanak* is situated was surveyed in 1913 and recorded to be located in Kampong Langsat.

The *sininggazanak* is situated on the side of a padi-bund approximately mid-way between both ends of a padi-field. It consists of an ornamental pole carved from the wood of the *tomindaaton* tree. Though it has no resemblance to the figure of a person, it is still called a *sininggazanak*.

The length of the *sininggazanak* above ground is 1.93 m. In 1976 it was inclined at an angle of about 54° from the horizontal or 36° from the vertical. Though it looks very old, the usual patterns for such *sininggazanak* are readily discernible.

It was impossible to collect any information about the history of this *sininggazanak*, and its origin probably dates back to the second half of the last century. One of its main points of interest is the fact that it is one of two *sininggazanak* on lots of land that are owned by the same family.

The "Prehistory of Sabah" states: "Both figures at Kinarut stood on land now belonging to a Christian Kadazan, Komuje bin Lajumin." The plot of land at Tanga is owned by Lokuna, an aunt of Komuji and living with him. In 1976 the Native Title of the land in Kampong Tampasak was still in the name of Komuji's mother, Kiayam, even though she had passed away in 1974. But the land was being worked by Komuji and he assisted in the management of the lot at Tanga.

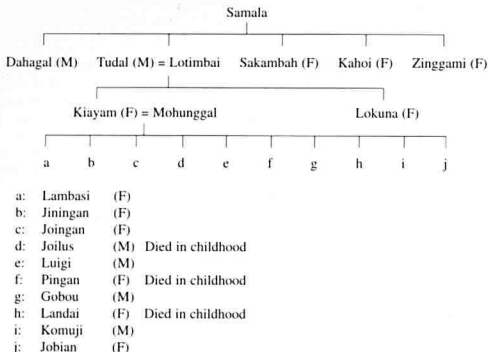
The *sininggazanak* at Kampong Tampasak was erected to perpetuate the name of Zinggami, an aunt of Lokuna and childless. A brief look at part of the family tree and a short account of some of the family history is of interest in understanding the origin of the *sininggazanak*.

Zinggami was the youngest in a family of five. She had two brothers, Dahagal and Tudal—the first and second in the family respectively, and two sisters, Sakambah and Kahoi—the third and fourth in the family. Each of them received their own share of lands from their parents.

Sakambah lost her eyesight as a result of an illness. She never married. The other four married but only Tudal left any surviving children; these were two girls, Kiayam and Lokuna.

When Dahagal died, his lands went to Tudal, the eldest of the remaining family. It was Zinggami who was next to pass away. Her share of land went to Tudal also. Then, when

Tudal died, his two small children and his lands were taken care of by Kahoi and Sakambah. The two girls were grown up before Kahoi passed away. It was probably soon after the death of Kahoi that the Kinarut area was surveyed by the Lands and Survey Department (1913). Most of the lands belonging to the family were recorded under the name of Sakambah, the only one left of the brothers and sisters.



Titles to twelve lots of padi-land were issued to her in 1913. The area of these lots amounted to 28.45 acres (11.5 ha). In 1914 another title was issued to her for a padi-nursery (*semai padi*) but this was cancelled in 1915. The fact that land belonging to her nieces was put in her name seems to be true, because no individual was permitted to receive Native Title exceeding 15 acres (6 ha). No title was issued to Lokuna; but titles to two lots of padi-land were issued to her sister Kiayam (entered in the Land Register as "Kiaiam bin Tudal") and it is on one of these lots that the *sininggazanak* was erected to Zinggami. The area of this lot is 2.26 acres (0.91 ha) and the second lot is 1.25 acres (0.5 ha). On the original survey plan of this area ancient stone monuments or menhirs were marked but there is no indication of the existence of a *sininggazanak*. According to the Lands and Survey Department the first plan was executed by Plane Table Method and no field book or note-book, in which such a record might exist, have survived.

It seems that Sakambah suggested that a *sininggazanak* be erected since most of the family died childless. But she chose to commemorate Zinggami. Lokuna was asked why the name of her youngest aunt was being perpetuated by the monument when three other

members of the family also died childless. Lokuna does not know; she said that it was the decision of the elders and the rest followed it. She added, however, that Zinggami was Sakambah's favourite, having been the youngest and also the prettiest in the family. Moreover, she died at a younger age than the others. The practice with regard to this commemorative custom is that a *sininggazanak* cannot be erected on an individual's property if one already stands on any part of it. We can presume, therefore, that the plot of land at Tanga, where there is another and older *sininggazanak* and which land was included in the Title Deed of Sakambah, had not been owned by Zinggami but by one of her brothers or sisters. It would also explain why at least one of them was not commemorated by a *sininggazanak*.

The two sisters, daughters of Tudal and nieces of Sakambah and Zinggami, were married before Sakambah died. At her death all the land was divided between Kiayam and Lokuna. The year in which the transfer of title was made in the Land Register was 1938.

Kiayam was married to Mohunggal and they had ten children. Three of them died in childhood and the other seven were still living in 1976. Kiayam herself passed away in February, 1974, aged about 80 years.

Lokuna married twice. Her first husband, Bantazon, died of sickness—possibly cholera—in 1939. There was no child from this marriage. Later she married Mesawin. They had a son but he died in infancy. Mesawin died "from old age" about the year 1952.

Both Bantazon and Mesawin owned land but all of it was inherited by their blood relatives; Lokuna did not receive any of it. This is the tradition that property of a partner in a childless marriage reverts to the owner's next-of-kin. Though exceptions could occur, particularly if the surviving partner owned no land, it was not likely in this case since Lokuna possessed property of her own.

Lokuna is not poor: seven titles to padi-land amounting to almost 13 acres (5.26 ha) were transferred to her name from that of Sakambah in 1938. (At the same time Kiayam received five lots amounting to 15.46 acres (6.26 ha) that had been in Sakambah's name). Lokuna obtained by transfer of title 1.3 acres (0.53 ha) of padi-land in 1926 and 2.73 acres (1.1 ha) of padi-land in 1931. Apart from at least these 16.03 acres (6.49 ha) she acquired in 1922 titles to three lots of sago-land amounting to 1.76 acres (0.7 ha). All of this property will probably be divided among her seven nephews and nieces. It is likely that Komuji will receive the largest share since Lokuna is staying with him in Kampong Suang. Even though Lokuna is childless, no *sininggazanak* will be erected for her when she dies because there is a *sininggazanak* on land that she owns.

One significant observation that is borne out by the facts concerning the *sininggazanak* at Kampong Tampasak is that this custom of commemorating the heirless was carried out by well-to-do families. This is further proven by the succeeding account of the *sininggazanak* at Tombovo which was erected by an *Orang Tua* to the memory of his deceased and heirless son.

THE *SININGGAZANAK* AT TOMBOVO, PENAMPANG

Of this (Fig. 63), Harris (1969: 2) commented:

"The 'Lady of Kinarut' proves that an artist of some development was working in the area some years ago, and that his work was valued. That she was a local product seems to be proven by the fact that there was until recently the wreck of another in the same village nearer the road, and that she has a boy friend disintegrating badly, faceless now, in Tombovo where he guards a bend in the stream."



Fig. 63. (Left) The *sininggazanak* at Tombovo, Penampang (1972).



Fig. 64. (Above) A farmer on his buffalo passes the *sininggazanak* at Tombovo, on his left, as he moves through the water channel (1972).

Tombovo is situated about 3 km inland from Km 11 on the main road that goes from Keparayan to Papar. There is a road that leads through Kampong Tansau or Papason to Kampong Kapazan. The *kampong* may also be reached by following a path that leaves the Penampang-Papar Road just south of Kampong Potuki. A further line of approach is to go through the Military Camp at Lok Kawi (Lok Kawi Cantonment).

Research was carried out on the *sininggazanak* in Tombovo in 1974 but when a check was made in 1994 it was found that the *sininggazanak* no longer existed. At the end of a long dry spell there had been a bush-fire and the monument was destroyed.

The *sininggazanak* at Tombovo was situated at the junction of two small streams, or more correctly, drainage ditches and it was surrounded by padi-fields (Fig. 64). The bund between the *sininggazanak* and the adjoining padi-field was used as a path-way and over the years had probably been the route most utilised in travelling to and from the *kampong*. When one stood on the path at the point nearest to the *sininggazanak* one was about 1 m away from it and on a slightly higher level. The *sininggazanak* was facing eastwards, so that when one walked along the path one saw the back of the monument. In 1974 the site of the *sininggazanak* was not very conspicuous. It appeared odd that it was separated from the field to which it belonged by a stream or ditch. It seems most probable that the ditch was made or enlarged at some period in time after the *sininggazanak* had been put there.

The pedestal section of the monument was 1 m above the edge of the stream and its width was 2.5 cm. The seated figure had a height of 1.1 m. Its posture was similar to that of the figure of the lady in Kampong Tampasak near Kinarut. However, the wood was not so well preserved; the arms and hands had completely disappeared and there were no facial features discernible. The front of the head was very high which suggests that the carving originally incorporated the traditional head-dress worn by Kadazan men, namely a *sigu*.

The present owner of the padi-field with which the *sininggazanak* was associated is Mr. John Draily. He inherited this land from his father, Sikatil bin Tanggang, who, in turn, had inherited it from his father, Tanggang bin Sinaga.

Tanggang had a number of children, the eldest of whom was a son named Kansim. It seems that Kansim predeceased his father and was unmarried. His father, Tanggang, took on himself the duty of erecting a *sininggazanak* to perpetuate the name of Kansim. The purpose of this was to remind the future generations about the life of Kansim, who had no wife or child.

To use the words of John Draily (1974, pers. comm.):

"The year after Kansim died Tanggang had the *sininggazanak* made similar to his appearance as a mark of respect to him. (It is not known whether a special craftsman was engaged to carve the *sininggazanak*.) The monument was made from a hard wood which the people used to call *Hugu Tonimbaton*. It is believed that the carving of the *sininggazanak* took about a month. The *sininggazanak* was well constructed, like a real human, as even the private part was also made therein."

Estimates of the age of the *sininggazanak* vary from 70 years to 45 years. Similarly there are varying accounts of the celebration that accompanied the erection or installation of the *sininggazanak*. One account has it that two buffaloes were slaughtered for a three-day celebration. However, all agree that the *sininggazanak* was installed in its place by a number of *bobohizan* in the presence of a large number of people, and that the event was a great and memorable one.

According to the District Land Register the first title for the property on which the *sininggazanak* was situated was issued on 10 May, 1920 to Tanggang bin Sauogoh. The area of the lot of padi-land was 3.81 acres (1.54 ha) and it was stated to be in Kampong

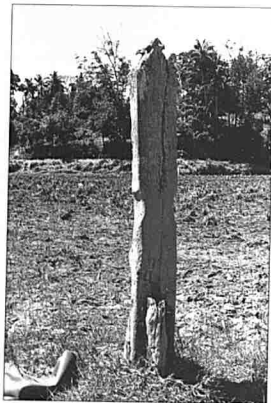
Memboo. The name Memboo is no longer used—it is said to have been “the old name”. It seems also that “Tanggung bin Sauogoh” should read “Tanggung bin Sinaga”.

Was the *sininggazanak* there in 1920 when the Land Title was issued? It is not marked on the original plan. Some personnel in the Lands and Survey Department say that the first surveys made in Sabah were by means of the Plane Table Method, in which case probably no Field Books were used. And if any notebook was kept by the surveyor, it was probably lost in the movement of documents during and after the Second World War.

No celebration had taken place in recent times in connection with this *sininggazanak*. In 1974 the people of the *kampung* did not seem to have any special respect for it. The owner said that they did not consider it to possess a spirit, and there was no special name on it.

The locality, including the padi-fields surrounding the monument, was known locally as *sininggazanak*. Sometimes passers-by struck it with a stick or a parang, “especially those people who were drunk”. The lack of respect for the monument was attributed to the fact that the people of the *kampung* were influenced by the modern world and old customs were no longer carried out.

THE SININGGAZANAK AT KAMPONG KOPUIAN, PUTATAN



There is a road that goes from Putatan to Ramaya (on the Penampang-Papar Road). It passes through Kampung Baru, Kampung Terawi, Kampung Kandazon and Kampung Kurai. Between Kampung Baru and Kampung Terawi there is, on the right-hand side as one travels in that direction, a pathway that leads to Kampung Kopuian. It is about 3 km from Putatan Township. Some refer to the locality as Kampung Diompong.

In a padi-field of Kampung Kopuian there is a *sininggazanak*. This is one of the three wooden *sininggazanak* that have carved inscriptions (Fig. 65). The translation of the inscription on the monument reads: “In Remembrance of The Death of TOLOMPOK on 13-7-47 Aged 30 Money spent \$170/-”.

Fig. 65. The *sininggazanak* to Tolompok at Kampung Kopuian, Putatan (1974).

The *sininggazanak* is erected on the side of a bund between two padi-fields. There is a wooden boundary mark about 45 cm high beside it. This boundary mark was there before the *sininggazanak* and marked the dividing line between land owned by Tolompok and land owned by Golin, his brother. The monument is 1.3 m in height it has an average width of 19 cm and a thickness of 18 cm. It is made of the usual hard-wood, *tomindaaton*.

As the inscription on the monument states, the *sininggazanak* was erected to the memory of Tolompok. He was the fourth and youngest child of Molunjang and Ladian who lived at Kampong Kandazon. The children were: 1st, Binjinau (girl); 2nd, Golin (boy); 3rd, Motoiing alias Juminin (girl); and 4th, Tolompok (boy).

Tolompok was a very handsome youth. He was dearly loved by his family. In his early twenties he was asked by a man—a Kadazan and a stranger to him and his family—to go to Sandakan. At this time Tolompok's father had already passed away and Tolompok had received from his father some of the property: two pieces of padi-land in separate locations of about 2 acres (0.8 ha) each and one piece of sago-land on 0.75 acre (0.3 ha).

Even though the rest of the family was opposed to his going away, yet he left. The family was very sad at his going and cried bitterly at his departure. Tolompok was very moved and he bought a present of shoes and a shirt for his nephew, Jitilip Golin: he asked the child to return home and told him that one day he might come back to them again.

Years passed and the family received no news from Tolompok; he was not able to read or write. Then unexpectedly in 1947 Golin, his elder brother, received a letter written in red ink informing him of the death of Tolompok. Golin presumed that the letter had been written by the stranger who had invited Tolompok to go to Sandakan. Golin was also illiterate.

Golin was considered to be the head of the family and he took on the responsibility of erecting the *sininggazanak* and of organising the appropriate ceremonies. The monument was carved by Golin himself with the help of some friends. The wood used—"iron wood" or *tomindaaton*—was already dry and seasoned. Golin received the padi-land formerly owned by Tolompok and the 0.75 acre (0.3 ha) of sago-land was divided between the two sisters, Binjinau and Motoiing.

According to Golin the letter telling of Tolompok's death arrived about three months after he had died and the erecting of the *sininggazanak* was about three months after that again. The ceremonies for the erection of the *sininggazanak* lasted three days. There were three *bobohizan* present; one of them was Loijim, who was still living in 1975. The names of the other two (now deceased) were Gialim and Binayah.

The first day of the celebration was held at the house of Golin; this was not the house where he was born but his new house at Kampong Kotiduvan. The *bobohizan* chanted various prayers. A big buffalo and a pig were slaughtered for the occasion. As on all such occasions the *sumazau* dance was also performed. The carving of the inscription on the monument was done by some carpenters who came for the feast. The words of the

inscription were composed by a man named Liajim; the complete work of making the *sininggazanak* was done on a *gotong royong* basis—"Golin and his family were so sad that they could not do a thing".

On the second day the wooden monument was carried from the house to the padi-field. According to custom the *sininggazanak* cannot be kept inside the house. The wife of Golin claims that some "miracles" took place just before they left the compound to go to the padi-field. The members of the family claimed that the *sininggazanak* took on the likeness of Tolompok in life, but other people present did not notice this.

The wooden monument was carried to the padi-field in the same manner as a coffin is carried at a funeral. The three *bobohizan* went in front of the procession chanting prayers. Just before the monument was placed in the ground more prayers were chanted. The Kadazan traditional gongs were also beaten. The spot chosen for the erection of the monument is on the edge of the padi-field and in such a location that it is between the land formerly owned by Tolompok and the land of the inheritor—in this case, Golin.

There was eating and drinking also in the padi-field. No food or drink or any form of sacrifice for the deceased person was left near the monument. When the ceremony was over "at least the people who brought the monument to the padi-field had to go back to Golin's house, there to eat and drink *tapai* the whole day and night."

THE SININGGAZANAK AT SODOMON, PUTATAN

Sodomon is the name of a small locality in the area of Kampong Ganang and is situated in the wet-padi district of Putatan-Penampang. At Sodomon there is a wooden monument in the corner of a padi-field. It is about 45 m from the east or right bank of the Petagas River and somewhat less than 1.5 km upstream from the road and rail bridges over the same river.

The monument is about 2.5 m high and is carved from the *tembusu* or *tomindaaton* wood. The design of this monument is different from monuments erected for a similar purpose: this is the only such known monument with a sphere at the top. The section beneath the sphere is cuboid in shape and on the east side, facing the padi-field, there is an inscription in English. The rest of the monument has a recognizable resemblance to similar monuments, though the craftsmanship may not be so elaborate.

In 1975, 28 years after the erection of the monument, it was possible to read 38 of the 44 letters that make up the inscription. A little investigation gave the full inscription which reads: "THIS IS THE SIGN OF BINIDIN DIED IN S.KAN PLANTED TODAY 2-5-47".

This is another of the three known wooden *sininggazanak* that bear inscriptions (Fig. 66). Surprising is the fact that the inscription is in English, since the two brothers of Binidin did not speak English. The words of the inscription were compiled and carved by a man named Sipain, now deceased.



Fig. 66. Detail of the *sininggazanak* to Binidin at Sodomon, Kampong Ganang, Putatan (1972).

Binidin was the second son in a family of three boys. His elder brother was named Botu and his younger brother Jimbitan; both were still living in 1975. Binidin was a big man and was known for his strength and, seemingly, he liked to fight. He had two nicknames namely "Moliwan" and "Bahagi". Moliwan is short for "Mari lawan" meaning "Let's fight"; "Bahagi" from another of his expressions, namely, "Saya bagi" indicating "I'll cut" and short for "I'll cut your head off".

Binidin married in 1943, but the marriage came to an end after a few months when Binidin went to the *Ketua Kampong* and obtained a divorce. Then he went to Sandakan and was employed by the Japanese—this was the period of the Japanese military occupation. In 1944 in the course of his work he was killed in an exchange of fire between the Japanese and Australian allied forces. His brothers received information of his death from a man named Mandakor. They waited about one year for

confirmation by letter. Binidin had inherited 2.5 acres (1 ha) of padi-land from his parents. According to their local Kadazan tradition the land should now become the property of his brother. And so Botu took possession of the 2.5 acres (1 ha).

At this time there was no properly organised constitutional form of government. The Chartered Company took charge of Sabah (then North Borneo) in 1880. Though there was a Lands and Survey Department under the Chartered Company, many owners of property did not become aware of or understand the significance of possessing Title Deeds to their properties. Neither did they know anything about the making of wills. After the Second World War, in 1947, North Borneo became part of the British Commonwealth, an arrangement that was to last for 16 years, that is, until the formation of Malaysia in 1963.

The *sininggazanak* commemorating Binidin was carved by his two brothers, Botu and Jimbitan. When asked why the monument was not erected until three years after the death of Binidin, Botu replied that they were not free and that it took a long time to carve the wood. The type of wood is very hard; to obtain a suitable piece of wood (4–5 m long and 1 m in circumference) may not have been easy. Moreover, it was a very disturbed period. Less than 3 km from here 176 men were executed and buried in mass graves by the Japanese on 21 January, 1944 in connection with the uprising that had taken place the previous October.

When the *sininggazanak* was erected, a *magang* was held at Botu's house. Three buffaloes, one pig and some chickens were slaughtered on the eve of the feast. All the food and drink that were available for consumption during the feast were considered to be sacrifices or offerings to the spirit of the deceased person. This idea applied especially to the three buffaloes, the pig, chickens, rice and *tapai*. Four *bobohizan*, all now deceased, were present at the *magang*. One of them was Lugian of Kampong Buit.

Many elderly people believe that all objects have spirits; in this case Binidin, in receiving the spirits of the buffaloes, pig, chickens, rice and *tapai*, received the offerings themselves. Botu is of the opinion that there are many spirits, including Binidin's, residing in the *sininggazanak*: the *bobohizan* invited them to stay there.

THE MONUMENT AT KAMPONG SUOK, PENAMPANG

The two wooden monuments erected in 1947—one at Kampong Ganang and the other at Kampong Kopuian—to commemorate the passing of individuals without direct heirs show that the practice of erecting a *sininggazanak* is part of a living culture. However, a much more recent event shows that the tradition is still followed.

In a padi-field in Kampong Suok, Penampang there is a concrete monument 1.77 m high, decorated with coloured tiles; it was erected in 1971 (Fig. 67). The inscription on the inlaid metal plate tells a large part of the story:

In Loving Memory of GEORGE LOJIGA MALINGGANG
Died in U.S.A. on 17th May, 1970
Aged 60 years

Nohodi Mantad Kampong Hungah Penampang di town 1910. Minugad Humazag di-town 1928, om Nokodipot doid pogun do U.S.A. di-town 1932. Tindooi nodi isido do doiho gisom Nakasavo om Kitanak do iso no, nga Napatai ngavi izioho. Mantad no di do au nodii isido Nokouhi po oi pogun sondi do yisom napatai di ontok 17-5-1970. Mondom Tomoimo ngavi Disido do doiti om nga Tobpinai ngavi dau do Kusai om tondu. Ko'uolisan om Tambahut ngavi.

*Koundoong No Daa Doid Kababasan
Oh Koduduvo Dosido*

A translation into English:

Born at Kampong Hungab, Penampang in 1910. Set sail in 1928 and reached the U.S.A. in 1932. There he settled down, married and had one child—but the wife and child died. Ever since even up until his death on 17-5-1970, he never returned home. He is ever in the memory of all here—his brothers and sisters, relatives and friends.

May His Soul Rest In Peace.

Also inserted into the monument is a marble slab 15 cm by 20 cm which bears a photograph of the family group of George Lojiga Malinggang, his wife and daughter.

George became a sailor at the age of eighteen. His parents had already passed away at this time. He did not originally have the intention of settling in the U.S.A. But once, when the ship on which he worked was in port in New York, he decided to make a living there.

He married the daughter of a doctor, an Italian American. They had one child, a daughter. Both wife and child predeceased George. The fact that he had planned to return to Sabah in 1971 made his death in 1970 all the more poignant for his brothers and sisters.

George was the first son and third child in a family of four boys and two girls. He inherited 3.5 acres (1.4 ha) of padi-land, 2 acres (0.8 ha) of sago-land and 6 acres (2.4 ha) of rubber-

land from his parents. Within the family this land was, up to the time of his death, considered to be his property. During the forty odd years of his absence the land was worked by Jiohis, the fifth in the family. After his death it was agreed by the members of the family that the 11.5 acres (4.7 ha) should be divided among the three brothers. His two sisters, both older, had married before he left home, and had received their share of the inheritance.

All his brothers and sisters contributed to the feast and the monument perpetuating his memory. The feast lasted seven days. A pig was slaughtered on the first day and another on the second. The remainder of the days were spent in constructing the monument. On the seventh and final day a buffalo was slaughtered.

The monument was designed by Jiohis (his brother) who was also mainly responsible for its construction.

Fig. 67. The monument to the memory of George Lojiga Malinggang in a padi-field in Kampong Suok, Penampang (1972)



The tiles were put on by a Chinese from Sarawak who was in the employment of a local building contractor. The Kadazan inscription was compiled by Lawrence Lokupi, the husband of a niece of George. The metal plate was made locally and the photograph on the marble slab was ordered from Singapore by Jiokis.

Neither Christian priest nor *bobohizan* was present at any part of the ceremony; none were invited because the body of the deceased was not there. George became a Christian while he was at school. His brother, Lojinga, became a Christian about 1965.

TANDA NOPUNSO AT KAMPONG LIMBUTONG, KINARUT

In 1987, a concrete monument was erected in the corner of a padi-field in Kampung Limbutong, Kinarut to the memory of Sianggim Binte Lakangon (Fig. 68). She had been married but had no children. She had one sister named Nogin who also died childless. Sianggim was buried in the burial ground of the *kampung* which is located on a small hill named Pompod.

The padi-land owned by Sianggim was inherited by a first-cousin named Asimih Binte Lapungai. The erection of the monument did not take place until several years after the death of Sianggim. Asimih said that this was because at that period she was employed and staying in Kota Kinabalu. When she returned to live in the *kampung*, she decided to put up the *tanda nopunso*—the sign in memory of a person who died without leaving any children. For the inauguration of the monument Asimih did not invite any *bobohizan*; instead, since she is a Christian, she invited a Catholic priest to bless the monument.

The base of the monument is 51 cm by 51 cm. It is 1.68 m tall. Inserted into the front of the monument is a plate bearing a photograph of Sianggim and the photograph is covered with a sheet of glass. The picture measures 19 cm in height and 16.5 cm in width. Below the photo the name "SIANGGIM BTE LAKANGON" is written with paint and above the photo there is a cross painted with the same type of paint.

A knowledgeable person in local custom who lives nearby, Valentine Mohutal, stated that this monument is known as a *tanda nopunso*; the word *sininggazanak* in his view is used if the monument has the shape of a person. He added that nowadays there are no more craftsmen to carve figures from hard wood.



Fig. 68. The *tanda nopunso* to the memory of Sianggim Binte Lakangon at Kampung Limbutong, Kinarut (1990).

WOODEN MONUMENTS THAT SERVE AS GUARDIANS

TENINGKIANAK—GUARDIAN OF THE LOCATION OF A *MONGOI* LABOT CEREMONY

M*ongoi labot* is an ancient fertility ceremony and is practised if there is a threat to crops, especially to the rice crop. This threat may arise from disease or pests or lack of rain. The location of the intercessory prayer is usually near a clump of tall bamboo. The bamboo overhang the area and the dry leaves that fall from the bamboo prevent the development of undergrowth. A figure in the form of a human head carved from hard wood is erected at the site to serve as a guardian. This figure is known as *Teningkianak* as is the spirit that is invited to take up residence in the statue.

In 1973 an intercessory ceremony to obtain rain was held at Kampong Dambai near Menggatal. The dry season, which usually ends in April, extended much longer that year. The people could not proceed with the preparation of the padi fields. And having waited in vain for nearly two months past the normal planting season it was decided to have a ceremony known as *mongoi labot*.

Seemingly no such ceremony had taken place for a long time at Kampong Dambai because the figure guarding the place of prayer had disintegrated. In such circumstances a new one is carved and installed. This was duly done. In this case the craftsman was a man named Ewon. In the course of the *mongoi labot* ceremony, at which *bobolian* Tugau and *bobolian* Lampayak officiated, the wooden figure was imbued with a spirit named *Teningkianak* (Fig. 69). A couple of days after the ceremony the first heavy rain of the wet season fell. A *mongoi labot* ceremony had also taken place at Kampong Kaliangau and Kampong Dombong in the same Menggatal area.

In an account of a ceremony to ask for rain held in 1941 at Piasau, Kota Belud (Evans 1953: 256) there is no mention of any wooden figure. One point of interest is that the ceremony was carried out during heavy rain and that rain had been falling for a few days before the ceremony; but since the promise of a ceremony had already been made to the spirit world, it had to be fulfilled.

TINGUNGULUN—GUARDIAN OF THE GRAVE OF A *BOBOLIAN*

A Dusunic group known as Kimaragang found in the northern part of Sabah marks the

burial of a *bobolian* with special features not attributed to ordinary people. One of these features is the carving of an image of the deceased. The figure is carved from hard wood and usually depicts the head and neck only. The craftsman tries to make it resemble as far as possible the appearance of the deceased *bobolian*, and from the figurine it will be possible for a stranger to determine whether the *bobolian* was a man or a woman. The statue is coloured and decorated to make it more life-like. This carved image is known in the local dialect as *tingungulun* (Fig. 70).

The grave of the *bobolian* is covered by a hut-structure and the *tingungulun* is erected nearby facing the grave. The base of the wood from which the statue is carved is inserted in the ground. The pedestal section of the monument is about 40 cm above ground level and the figurine extends about 50 cm above that. The *tingungulun* is erected in order to serve as a guardian of the grave and as a reminder to the public that this is the grave of a *bobolian*, the chief custodian of traditional beliefs and customs. The erection of such a statue was recorded by Jamail (1991).

In the early part of the twentieth century the custom of placing a wooden figure on or near a grave was recorded further south among the Dusun near Kota Belud. Under the heading 'Graves and Burial in Tempasuk' Evans (1912: 391) wrote:

"Under the hut [covering the grave] is sometimes placed a modal of a human figure in wood, but whether this represents the deceased or is a remnant of some custom of human sacrifice (i.e. takes the place of a sacrificed slave) I have not been able to gather from the natives whom I have questioned."

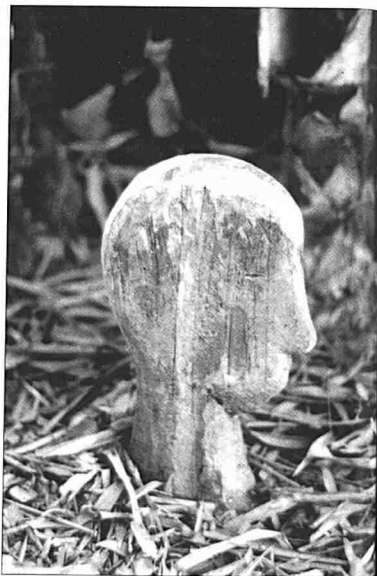


Fig. 69. A *teningkianak* at Kampong Dambai, Menggatal (1974).

THE FOUR PREHISTORIC FIGURES OF BATURONG CAVES

In 1968 four wooden figures (Fig. 71) were discovered in Baturong Caves on the east coast of Sabah. Three of the figures were found close together and consisted of a man, a woman and a child. The fourth figure was found about 18 m away from the others. The *belian* posts on which the figures were carved were 2–3 m long. The lower section of each post consisted of a stem base and the upper section was a carved figure. Harrison & Harrison (1970: 106) suggested that the three ancestral figures found together were support pillars of a wooden trestle or platform erected for the support of coffins. The sculptured figures that constitute the upper section of the posts are 1 m tall in the case of the three figures found together, and the solitary figure is 66 cm tall. A feature of the carving is the absence of ears. A suggested explanation was that a person in mourning should not be exposed to loud noise, especially merriment.

Harrison & Harrison (1970: 106) estimated that these prehistoric figures were over 700 years old. One can only conjecture about the purpose of these figures and whether there is any link between them and the custom of erecting *sininggazanak*.

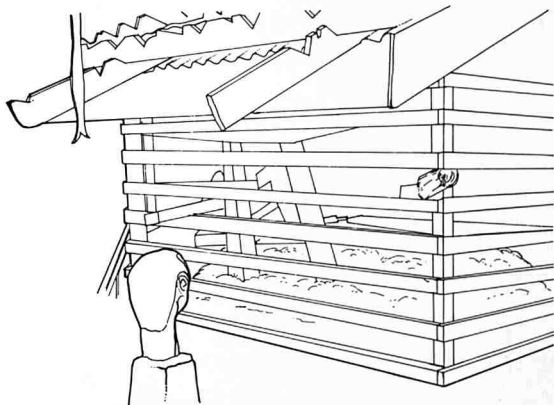


Fig. 70. A *tingungulun* guards the grave of a *bobolian*. (Drawn by Yap Yun Hun)

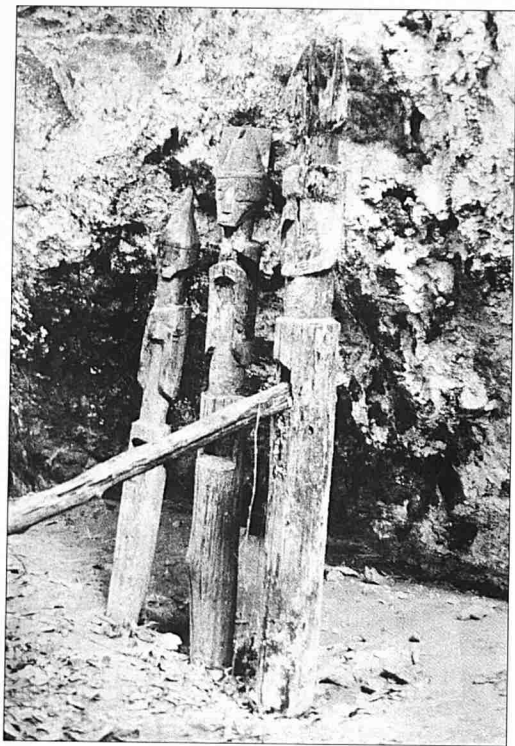


Fig. 71. Prehistoric figures found in Baturong Caves. (Photo: Courtesy of Sabah Museum)

EPILOGUE

A discussion on culture has it that: "It is one of the properties of the human person that he can achieve true and full humanity only by means of culture, that is through the cultivation of the goods and values of nature. Whenever, therefore, there is a question of human life, nature and culture are intimately linked together" (Flannery 1981: 958). The traditional stone and wooden monuments that survive in Sabah are but one facet of an ancient culture; however, they are now probably the oldest and most enduring symbols of that culture; they are reminders of society's rituals as a people sought a meaning to life and progressed and developed along their journey through history (Fig. 72).



Fig. 72. Now a link between the present and the past, a *tontohob* still stands in a sea of padi.

The megalithic culture in Sabah has many similarities with ancient megalithic cultures in other parts of the world, although with varying emphases. Eliade (1979: 116 ff) points out that the cult of the dead played a central role in megalithic practices. Ancestors were transmuted into stone either (a) by a menhir as a "substitute" body, or (b) by incorporating an essential element of the dead—skeleton, ashes, soul—into the monument. The dead person animated the stone; he inhabited a new body that, being mineral was imperishable. Hence the menhir constituted an inexhaustible reservoir of vitality and power. It is possible to relate this concept to the *sininggazanak* and the custom of a man standing beside a menhir to defend his property.

Another proposition (Eliade 1979: 123) was that menhirs insured an eternal postexistence, both to those who raised them during their own lifetime and to those for whom they were built after death. In addition, megaliths constituted the unrivalled connection between the living and the dead; they were believed to ensure the fertility of men, cattle and harvests. The stories of the menhirs of Tebilong, Tambunan and the legend of *Batu Hidup* would fit into this category.

But from what we know of the megalithic culture of Sabah the principal ideas seem to coincide with Jaffé's (1974: 233) concept that man felt that a living god or a divine spirit was embodied in the stone and that the stone became a symbol. In some of the Sabah cultures described in this book, by means of an oath stone a power from the spirit world would punish a broken promise (stones of allegiance), cheating (a stone at a *tamu* ground), or a lie or false oath (oath stones associated with a Native Court).

In a positive vein, a power from the spirit world inhabiting a stone would assist mankind by providing fertility of crops and animals (by means of menhirs in padi fields) and would protect people from illness and calamity (through guardian stones and *batu sinaluang*).

Although the information in this book has been collected and compiled with limited resources during sporadic periods of spare time, it is hoped that it will have some beneficial results:

- (i) that a greater interest will be shown in these unique, historical symbols;
- (ii) that some individuals will feel encouraged to record the stories about many other monuments; and
- (iii) that greater attempts will be made to preserve these remnants of history for future generations.

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GLOSSARY OF LOCAL WORDS

Abbreviations used: (C) for Chinese; (D) for Dusun; (K) for Kadazan; (M) for Malay; (T) for Murut.

adat (M)	traditional practice or customary law
agazo gono (K)	great spirit
ampator (T)	oath
anak (M)	child
aruol (T)	sick; sickness
asas (M)	foundation; traditional
baju kebaya (M)	a long outer garment worn by women
balai raya (M)	a community centre building
bambaazon (K)	(the same as <i>bambarayon</i>)
bambarayon (D)	the guardian spirit of the rice plant
bandu' (K)	a measure for unhusked rice, 10 <i>gantang</i> (approx. 27 kg)
bangkaha' (K)	bamboo structure that serves as a repository for skulls
bangun (D)	compensation
baongan (K)	container for carrying rice
batu (M)	stone
Batu Intok Ampator (T)	Oath Stone
batu sumpah	oath stone
bobohizan (K)	Dusun/Kadazan priest or priestess or ritual specialist
bobolian (D)	another name for <i>bobohizan</i>
bogu (D)	a standing stone or pillar
buzuk (M)	baton-like piece of wood used by a <i>bobolian</i>
gantang (K/D)	measure for husked rice, about 2.7 kg
gotong-royong (M)	a voluntary group effort
haahangai (K/D)	unmarried girl; virgin
hidup (M)	alive; living
hisad (K)	the <i>Licuala</i> palm, or its leaves, or shreds from its leaves
hugu (K)	the most durable part of a hardwood
hugus (K)	a young betelnut
kalabangan (D)	a house-structure over a grave; a burial ground
kampung (M)	village or settlement
kangga (K)	rack for hauling or carrying objects
kazu (K)	the wood of a tree
keramat (M)	place where intercessory prayers are said
keris (M)	Malay dagger

ketua kampong (M)	headman of a village
koimanan (K)	gift or behest left by a husband to his wife
kuat (M)	strong
luang (T)	hole
lugu (D)	(the same as <i>hugu</i>)
lugus (D)	(the same as <i>hugus</i>)
magang (K)	ceremony, usually of 7 days, to honour spirits believed residing in skulls taken in head-hunting raids
magavau (K/D)	principal ceremony of the Harvest Festival to bring the rice soul from the padi field to the rice-barn
makan (M)	meal; food; to eat
manau' (K)	to curse
modsuau (K)	a dance
mohoiang (K/D)	grandparents; ancestors
mondou (K/D)	lion
<i>mongoi labot</i>	a fertility ceremony
monogit (K)	ceremony performed by several <i>bobohizan</i> to bring the rice soul from the rice-barn to the padi field
nopunso (K)	person who dies childless; destroyed
padan (K)	type of boat
padi	rice in the husk
pagon (D)	name in the dialect of the Patau area for a guardian stone
pampang (K/D)	large stone; rock
pangasa'an (K)	small stone used as one of the 7 elements of the <i>tinumpuun</i> .
pangilala (T)	to scare away
parang (M)	a long knife, mainly for outdoor use
pencarian (M)	property acquired from the fruits of one's labour
pinananud (K)	items placed on or near a grave
popodsu' (K)	lustral water
pusaka (M)	property inherited and which is kept within the family
siga (K)	traditional headgear
sininggazanak (K)	wooden monument erected on land of a person who had died without leaving a child to inherit his or her land
sinsang (C)	a person who acts as a medium; medicine man
Sibah (D)	a dialect in the Tambunan district of Sabah
sogit (K/D)	payment as penalty, atonement
sokid (D)	a dialect in the Tambunan district of Sabah
sumandak (K/D)	an unmarried girl
sulap (D)	a rice-hut
sumazau (K/D)	a popular Kadazan/Dusun dance
sumpah (M)	an oath
sumpitan (M)	blowpipe
sungai (M)	river
tagazo (K)	big, huge
tahas (T)	the <i>belian</i> tree, <i>Eusideroxylon zwageri</i> ; also "tagas"

tamu (D, K, M)	a village open market, usually held weekly
tanak vadsut (K)	a young unmarried man
tanak vagu (K)	a young unmarried man
tanda (M)	a sign
tandus (D)	a baton-like piece of wood used by a <i>bobolian</i> ; a spear
tangkob (K)	rice-storage container made from tree bark
tanom (K/D)	to plant
tapai (K/D)	an alcoholic drink made from fermentation of rice or tapioca
tembusu (M)	a hardwood tree, <i>Fagraea fragrans</i>
tempasuk (M)	an alternative name for <i>tembusu</i>
teningkianak	a wooden figure erected to guard a place of prayer; the spirit that resides in such a figure
tingolig (K/D)	a guardian stone
tingungulun	a carved wooden image of a deceased <i>bobolian</i> erected near his/her grave
tinomboizu (K)	an old name for the cornerposts of a grave
tinumpuun (K)	collection of seven elements used by a priestess at a <i>magavau</i>
tobuii (K)	simple bamboo flute made specially for a <i>magang</i>
todsok (K/D)	one of four cornerposts at a grave; pole; stake
tomboizu (K)	an old name for the cornerposts of a grave
tomindaaton (K)	a hardwood tree, <i>Fagraea fragrans</i>
tondu' (K/D)	woman
tontolob (D)	large stone erected in an area of wet rice cultivation
tuhang (K)	bone
tulung (D)	a stone (in the dialect of Tenghilan)
tumbuh (M)	grow, growing
vagas (K)	husked rice
vatu (K)	a stone; a menhir
watu (D)	alternative word for <i>vatu</i>

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